

The Church of England
Responding Well to Domestic Abuse:
Policy and Practice Guidance

**A Summary for Parishes in
The Church of England – Birmingham**



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Introduction

In March 2017 the Church of England published its revised policy and practice guidance on Responding Well to Domestic Abuse which replaces the previous 2006 policy.

Under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 all PCCs, churchwardens, clergy, Readers and Commissioned Pastoral Visitors must have **due regard**¹ to the House of Bishop's policy.

In February 2014, the General Synod approved the following motion on gender-based violence:

'That this Synod, believing that all people are made in the image of God and that all forms of violence based on gender represent an abuse and violation of that image:

- a. Affirm work already undertaken in dioceses, deaneries, parishes and Church of England schools in raising awareness and caring for survivors of gender-based violence in all our diverse communities;
- b. Support measures to bring alleged or known perpetrators to account and provide support for changed lifestyles;
- c. Encourage boys and men to stand against gender-based violence;
- d. Commend Anglican Consultative Council Resolution 15:7 on preventing and eliminating gender-based violence to dioceses, deaneries and parishes and urge them to seek practical approaches to its implementation.'

The following is a summary of the House of Bishop's policy and practice guidance on Responding Well to Domestic Abuse most relevant to the local church. The full policy document is available on the [Church of England website](#)

All extracts from the Church of England policy and practice guidance on Responding Well to Domestic Abuse appear in this font in blue.

¹ A duty to have due regard means that the person under the duty is not free to disregard it but is required to follow such guidance unless there are cogent reasons for not doing so

What Is Domestic Abuse?

Definition of Domestic abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic abuse is:²

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 additional categories of

- neglect
- spiritual
- digital

For more information and facts on Domestic Abuse see Appendix 1 on page 11 of this summary.

² (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>)

Our Theological Approach

When considering theology and domestic abuse we have to realise that religious or spiritual factors can be central to the victim's understanding and response. His/her own faith and the support of Church can be vital in helping the healing process, while a lack of understanding regarding the Biblical perspective on abusive relationships by the victim or those he/she turns to for spiritual guidance and support can add to the emotional, physical and financial hurdles already faced.

The basis of our theological approach is summarised as follows:

- Human beings are created in the divine image to live in relationships of love, respect and mutual self-giving. This should be reflected in how intimate relationships are conducted.
- Tragically, the corruption of human nature which Christian theology names 'sin' means that the mutual dependence and shared vulnerability which are inseparable from intimacy can instead become the vehicle through which one person can inflict profound hurt, damage and abuse upon another.
- The pattern of living that is revealed through Jesus in his relationships with others entails that abuse of any kind is contrary to the will of God and an affront to human dignity. This entails a heavy responsibility upon the Church and its members to do everything possible to prevent or halt it.
- The good news of Christ promises God's redeeming presence and power in situations of pain and suffering. Through rejection of patterns of violence, and support of those who have been abused, the Church is called to be a vehicle of God's work of healing for both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of abuse.
- The Church is committed to doing justice to the truth about God and human beings that is revealed in the Christian Gospel.

A summary of Biblical verses that have been used to justify abuse and more helpful interpretations of these verses is given in Appendix 3 on page 29 of this summary.

The Church of England Policy on Domestic Abuse

The Church of England is committed to raising awareness about domestic abuse and its impact on individuals, children, the wider family and community.

It will work to ensure that:

- the safety of individuals suffering abuse or seeking help is the first priority, and to be aware of the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good safeguarding practice;
- teaching and worship reflects awareness-raising about domestic abuse, uses appropriate language and says clearly that domestic abuse is wrong;
- inappropriate behaviour is challenged, this needs to be done in an extremely careful way, in a way that does not place any individual including a victim at increased risk.
- clergy and clergy spouses have the same access to support and resources as others who are experiencing domestic abuse. In addition, the Diocesan Bishop will appoint a Bishop's Visitor³ whose role is to support the clergy or clergy spouse at the time of the breakdown of the relationship, and for as long as possible after, as required.

It is committed to all Church Bodies:

- adopting and publishing a local policy on domestic abuse, including who to contact if there are concerns;
- having clear procedures in place to respond to concerns about domestic abuse in line with Responding to Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance and Responding to Serious Safeguarding Concerns Against Church Officers Practice Guidance.
- ensuring signage is in place in local venues to demonstrate that your Church or setting is willing to talk with everyone about domestic abuse and how to access support;

³ See The Church of England Responding Well to Domestic Abuse policy and practice guidance. Paragraph 2.5.1 for more details

- appointing a named individual who has responsibility for domestic abuse and violence and who is a point of contact for any advice and support. This maybe the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser, for a diocese, or a Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator, for a parish, or the nominated safeguarding lead;
- training those in leadership positions, safeguarding roles and with pastoral roles on domestic abuse;
- discussing domestic abuse and violence in appropriate contexts such as marriage preparation, youth groups, ordinand training and in church settings;
- organising and promoting training and awareness-raising sessions;
- working with Statutory agencies and other support bodies. Supporting and publicising their work

What do you need to do in a Parish?

The table below summarises what a parish needs to have in place:

Must Do:

PCC to agree a parish domestic abuse statement including who to contact if there are concerns (see Appendix 5 on page 33 for template Parish statement);

Appoint a named individual who is a point of contact for any advice and support. This may be the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator;

Follow the process on how to respond to concerns about domestic abuse set out in this summary on page 8 and in Appendix 2 on page 21. If parishes are in any doubt as to what action to take they should refer to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.

Support those in leadership positions, pastoral and safeguarding roles to engage in Diocesan domestic abuse training.

Consider the best place to display the domestic abuse statement including information about helplines and local services.

Discuss domestic abuse in appropriate contexts such as marriage preparation (see Appendix 4 on page 31 for good practice guidance).

Challenge inappropriate comments and behaviour by church members

Recommended good practice:

Encourage leaders and those who preach to speak against domestic abuse in teaching, sermons, prayers and parish magazines - remember that many of the congregation may have a personal experience.

Offer some awareness raising activities e.g. invite speakers from local domestic abuse agencies, organise an activity around 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women)

Consider including activities around healthy relationships within activities for children and young people.

Develop links with any local domestic abuse organisations.

Organise courses in parenting and confidence-building.

The Parish Response to Domestic Abuse

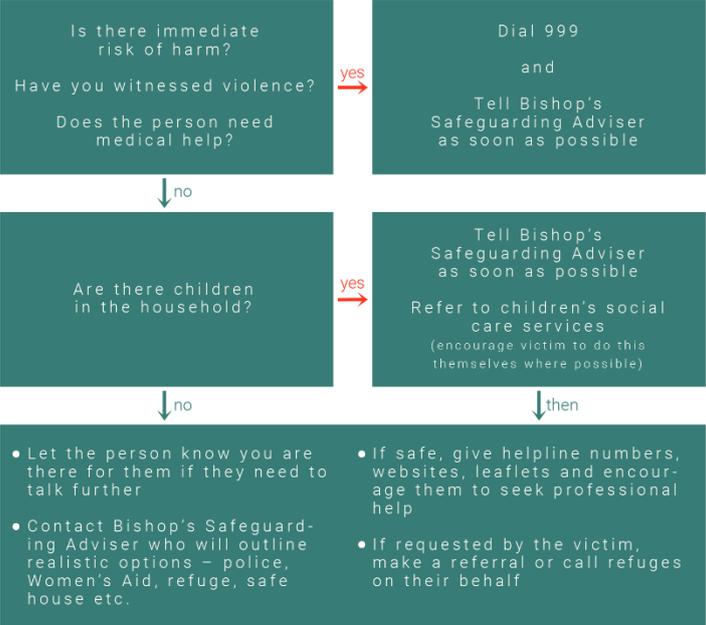
Domestic Violence & Abuse

Responding If You're a Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Think Safety First

- All actions should carefully consider the risk to the safety of the victim, any children in the household and yourself
- Take care not to increase the danger to the victim, or any children, by offering helplines or communicating in ways that may alert their abuser that they have told someone else or are seeking help.

START HERE 



Record

- Keep a brief objective note of date, facts and context of what you have been told.
- Pass a copy of the record to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser, when you have discussed the concern with them or are required to tell them
- Keep records confidential and store securely on church premises

You MUST tell the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser if:

- Both victim and alleged perpetrator are members of your church
- The alleged perpetrator is a church officer
- Before discussing any safety or exit plan with the victim
- There is the potential for damage for the Church



Domestic Violence & Abuse – Responding if You're a Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator

DO

- Be aware of who could over hear you speaking to the victim, to maintain confidentiality
- Take time to listen – and believe
- Affirm the strength and courage it takes to survive and speak about the abuse
- Reassure that the abuse is wrong and not their fault
- Be sensitive to background and culture – how do these affect the person?
- Be aware of protective factors such as support from friends and family
- Encourage them to focus on their own needs – they may not have done this for a long time
- Ask what they want to happen and what they need from the church – offer help in response to need which lets them keep in control
- Agree safe ways to contact and stay in touch
- Tell person that you have made a record and who you must share it with
- Seek consent before sharing information outside The Church of England – Birmingham procedure as described in the flow chart on the previous page

DON'T

- Ignore what someone is telling you
- Promise to keep the abuse a secret
- Share any information about the victim with the alleged perpetrator
- Discuss with church members who could inadvertently pass information to the alleged perpetrator
- Make judgements about the person or the level of abuse
- Investigate or ask for proof
- Recommend any form of couple counselling
- Ask the victim to forgive

USEFUL CONTACTS

Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser	07342 993 844
Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid	0808 800 0028
West Mercia Women's Aid	0800 980 3331
Staffordshire Women's Aid	0870 2700 123
Black Country Women's Aid	0121 552 6448
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327
Galop (LGBT)	0800 999 5428
Action on Elder Abuse	0808 808 8141
National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247
Emergency Injunction Support	0844 8044 999



Domestic Violence & Abuse – Responding if You're a Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator

For more details and information on how to respond to domestic abuse in the church context see Appendix 2 on page 21 of this summary

Training

Please note: You are reminded that the “due regard” duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 applies.

The Church of England requires domestic abuse training to be undertaken by those who will have roles with survivors and alleged or known perpetrators.

The specialist safeguarding training module, S3 - Responding to domestic abuse/violence, aims to examine issues relating to domestic abuse, especially for vulnerable groups and children in the context of adult abuse, and how the Church can respond well to this.

The following parish roles are required to attend this module:

- Ordained ministers
- Ministers with PtO
- Readers
- Commissioned Pastoral Visitors
- Pastoral Visitors
- Paid workers and volunteer leaders with responsibility for activities with children, young people, families and at risk adults
- Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- Parish Domestic Violence Contact

Further information about safeguarding training in The Church of England – Birmingham, can be found on our website at <http://www.cofebirmingham.com/safeguarding/safeguarding-training/>

Appendix 1: Domestic Abuse Fact Sheet

This fact sheet aims to increase awareness of domestic abuse. The statutory definition of abuse and specialist types of abuse, its prevalence and effects. It provides guidance on how to recognise both victims/survivors and alleged perpetrators. The information is offered as best practice reference material.

1. Definition of Domestic abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic abuse is:⁴

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 additional categories of neglect, spiritual and digital abuse.

Examples of all these categories are:

Psychological/emotional

For example, 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.⁵

⁴ (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>)

⁵ For further details in relation to this offence see Appendix 2 'The Legal Context' of The Church of England Responding Well to Domestic Abuse policy and practice guidance 2017

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

For example, 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

For example, the illegal or unauthorized 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

For example, 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 terrorize 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

For example, 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 abuse⁶

⁶ For further details see Appendix 1 '[Domestic Abuse Fact Sheet](#)' of The Church of England Responding Well to Domestic Abuse policy and practice guidance 2017

2. Who experiences domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse can occur to anyone regardless of age, race, disability, sexuality, class, or income. Most domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women, but the perpetrator of domestic abuse can be of any gender, and the victim can be of any gender. Victims can be male, although the majority are female, and abuse can occur in same sex relationships, between siblings or by adult children against a parent. Many victims will only disclose that a partner was violent and abusive after leaving a relationship.

- Women are particularly vulnerable to abuse when pregnant or seeking to leave a relationship.
- Older people and disabled people can be particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse.
- Children experience domestic abuse in many ways including through directly intervening to protect one of their parents, being forced to join the adult perpetrator and hearing or witnessing violent attacks or verbal abuse.
- Coercive and controlling behaviour in a domestic abuse situation can be exerted over the whole family so any children suffer as well as the victim
- Many women come to the UK to work and improve their lives, and many can then become trapped in relationships characterised by abuse with no avenue to seek safety and support
- Domestic abuse happens within the Church; Church leaders, members of the clergy, and spouses of clergy have been found to be victims of domestic abuse.

3. Statistics

Domestic abuse statistics for England and Wales

General

- 2 women are killed every week in England and Wales by current or former partners (Office of National Statistics, 2015) – 1 woman killed every 3 days.
- 1 in 4 women in England and Wales will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes and 8% will suffer domestic violence in any given year (Crime Survey of England and Wales, 2013/14).

- 6.5% of domestic violence incidents reported to the police result in a conviction (Women's Aid 2014).
- 8.2% of women and 4.0% of men reported experiencing any type of domestic abuse in 2014/15. This is equivalent to an estimated 1.3 million female victims and 600,000 male victims (Crime Survey for England and Wales March 2015).
- Overall, 27.1% of women and 13.2% of men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 4.5 million female victims and 2.2 million male victims (Crime Survey for England and Wales March 2015).
- Domestic violence has a higher rate of repeat victimisation than any other crime (Home Office, July 2002).
- On average, a woman is assaulted 35 times before her first call to the police (Jaffe, 1982).

Children

- 20% of children in the UK have been exposed to domestic abuse (Radford et al. NSPCC, 2011).
- In 90% of domestic violence incidents in family households, children were in the same or the next room (Hughes, 1992).
- 62% of children in households where domestic violence is happening are also directly harmed (Safelives, 2015).
- 1 in 5 teenagers have been physically abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend, with boys much more likely to be the perpetrators (Barter et al (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships. NSPCC and Bristol University).

Health

- 30% of domestic violence either starts or will intensify during pregnancy (Department of Health report, October 2004).
- Foetal morbidity from violence is more prevalent than gestational diabetes or preeclampsia (Friend, 1998).

4. 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 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. With one in four women affected in the UK, it is extremely likely that there will be those in your church who have been affected by domestic abuse.

5. Recognising domestic abuse in adult victims/survivors

It is very difficult to create a definitive list of signs that domestic abuse is happening because abuse can occur on many levels and both victims and alleged or known perpetrators can behave and respond in a range of different ways. The following list of signs of behaviour for victims is not exhaustive, and should not be used as a definitive list but should be used as guidance.

- Has unexplained bruises or injuries;
- Shows signs of feeling suicidal;
- Becomes unusually quiet or withdrawn;
- Has panic attacks;
- Has frequent absences from work or other commitments;
- Wears clothes that conceal even on warm days;
- Stops talking about her/his partner;
- Is anxious about being out or rushes away;
- May never be seen alone, and is always accompanied by their partner;
- May become more isolated, possibly moving away from home, withdrawing from friends and family;
- Go along with everything their partner says and does;
- Check in often with their partner to report where they are and what they're doing;
- Receive frequent, harassing phone calls from their partner;
- May have unexplained injuries, and may give other reasons for the injuries which refer to them being accidental

Survivor View

The abuse went on for six years before I realised that what I was experiencing wasn't just a bad marriage. Everyone says marriage is difficult so, at first, I thought it was that – our adjustment to married life.

There was pressure to make marriage work and to sacrifice yourself. After all the church says 'till death us do part'. I bent over backwards to make it work.

From the outside most people thought we were the perfect happy couple. But I was walking on eggshells in my own home, never knowing what mood he would be in when he came home.

It was such a lonely time. I didn't think anyone would believe me if I told them what it was really like at home. I was desperate for some hope.

6. Recognising domestic abuse in children

Living in a home where there's domestic abuse is harmful. It can have a serious impact on a child's behaviour and wellbeing. Parents or carers may underestimate the effects of the abuse on their children because they don't see what's happening. Indeed, a child who witnesses domestic abuse, could be the subject of a care or supervision order⁷. This is because impairment caused by seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another (e.g. witnessing domestic violence or abuse) is included in the definition of 'harm' in the Children Act 1989.

Domestic abuse can also be a sign that children are suffering another type of abuse or neglect⁸. The effects can last into adulthood. However, once they're in a safer and more stable environment, most children are able to move on from the effects of witnessing domestic abuse.

Younger children who experience and witness domestic abuse may:

- Become aggressive;
- Display anti-social behaviour;
- Become anxious;
- Complain of tummy aches and start to wet the bed;
- They may find it difficult to sleep, have temper tantrums and start to behave as if they are much younger than they are;
- They may also find it difficult to separate from their abused parent when they start nursery or school;
- Children may be clingy, have behavioural difficulties, may be tired and lethargic, and struggle in social settings and at school.

Older children/young people who experience and witness domestic abuse react differently:

- Boys seem to express their distress much more outwardly, for example by becoming aggressive and disobedient. Sometimes, they start to use violence to try and solve problems, and may copy the behaviour they see within the family;
- Older boys may play truant and start to use alcohol or drugs (both of which are a common way of trying to block out disturbing experiences and memories);
- Girls are more likely to keep their distress inside. They may become withdrawn from other people, and become anxious or depressed;
- Girls may think badly of themselves and complain of vague physical symptoms. They are more likely to have an eating disorder, or to harm themselves by taking overdoses or cutting themselves;
- Girls are also more likely to choose an abusive partner themselves;
- Suffer from depression or anxiety.

⁷ See section 31 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002

⁸ Stanley 2011

Children of any age can develop symptoms of what is called 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder'. They may get nightmares, flashbacks, become very jumpy, and have headaches and physical pains.

Children dealing with domestic violence and abuse often do badly at school. Their frightening experiences at home make it difficult to concentrate in school, and if they are worried about their abused parent, they may refuse to go to school.

Long term impact on children and young people

As adults, children who have witnessed violence and abuse are more likely to become involved in a violent and abusive relationship themselves. Children tend to copy the behaviour of their parents. Boys learn from their fathers to be violent to women. Girls learn from their mothers that violence is to be expected, and something you just have to put up with.

However, children don't always repeat the same pattern when they grow up. Many children don't like what they see, and try very hard not to make the same mistakes as their parents.

Even so, children from violent and abusive families may grow up feeling anxious and depressed, and find it difficult to get on with other people.

Survivor View (13 years old)

It's only in the last year or so that I began to think that a family could be a good place to be...a home". I'm the eldest, and I took a lot of my Dad's fury – or just being drunk which is what it often was. I know my Mum wasn't always a saint – she could really wind him up - in fact she does it to me sometimes and then I get terrified that I'll react like him.

Anyway, sometimes they would just argue and shout, but then I'd seen what he could do when he loses it. I had to take Mum to hospital once and it was just horrible. In fact I remember being amazed how she looked almost normal when they'd cleaned her up. But seeing it or even worse just hearing it was ... don't know ... I couldn't bear it, and I wanted to kill him. I couldn't I know – even if I was strong enough – so I just used to hold on to the little ones and sort of hide with them till it was over. But it did get so difficult. I didn't want to go home after school, so I'd stay out late sometimes with my mates. Then my Mum started saying I was just like him. That was the worst time ever.

One day my mum spoke to someone on a helpline. After that, they had a big row and then he left home. Things sort of calmed down, but I was still scared that he would come back or I'd be like him. Then we had this counsellor who talked to my Mum, and me and my sisters together. Somehow it all began to seem better and I felt it was possible to move on.

7. Who are the alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse?

Most alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse are men. This is partly a reflection of the position of men in our society but may also reflect the potential under-reporting of domestic abuse by men.

- Anyone across the social spectrum can perpetrate domestic abuse – a perpetrator's outward appearance may be outgoing and friendly, and/or very confident; whilst the victim may be withdrawn and considered by many as unfriendly, but a disclosure of domestic abuse by an individual should always be taken seriously.
- There is no excuse for abuse. People who abuse their partners make a choice to do so. Often alcohol, childhood problems (such as a violent/abusive childhood), drugs and mental health are cited as causes of domestic abuse. Whilst they certainly may be factors in the situation the reality is that domestic abuse is caused by a misuse of power by one person over another. Individuals who perpetrate domestic abuse generally do so to get what they want and to gain control.
- Domestic abuse happens within the Church; Church leaders, members of the clergy, spouses of clergy and prominent lay members have been found to be alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- Seeing change in alleged or known perpetrators is a long-term process. Perpetrator programmes are long term groups or one to one interventions which challenge the underlying attitudes and beliefs that drive domestic abuse. For more details and the availability of local domestic abuse perpetrator programmes contact Respect (<http://respect.uk.net>) or the local authority.

8. Recognising alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse

Alleged or known perpetrators are very good at hiding their behaviour. The following list of signs of perpetrator behaviour is not exhaustive, and should not be used as a definitive list but should be used as guidance:

- Presents confidently;
- Focuses on themselves and has no empathy with partner;
- Assertively claims victim status;
- Finds no fault in themselves;
- Makes unfounded accusations;
- Puts partner down and portrays partner often as unreasonable or unstable;

- Does not consider the children's experiences;
- Makes disparaging remarks about their partner in public;
- Uses their wedding vows as leverage to keep their partner tied to them - "you promised...";
- Expresses suspicion about legitimate activities of partner;
- Restricts access to partner's family and friends;
- Recruit others to back them up against their partner;
- Uses inappropriate humour, especially about compliance;
- Tries to engender pity in order to manipulate and recruit colluders;
- Shows changeable behaviour in order to hold onto control;
- Uses scripture to justify behaviour or requests;

9. Specialist Types of Domestic Abuse

Further information on the following types of domestic abuse are available in The Church of England, Responding Well to Domestic Abuse [policy and practice guidance](#)

- 'Honour Based' Violence
- Forced Marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Women and girls in black and minority ethnic (BME) communities
- Domestic abuse and young people
- Same sex domestic abuse
- Child and adolescent to parent abuse
- Elder abuse

Appendix 2 The Church's Response to Domestic Abuse

Please note: You are reminded that the “due regard” duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 applies.

2.1 Responding to victims/survivors

It is sometimes tempting to minimize the survivor's experiences. After all (we might wrongly reason), we've all been in arguments, so if they can't cope, then it's their problem. Yet an abusive relationship is not about an ordinary, everyday argument in which both people have a bit of a yell and then make up. It is very different indeed and often involves repeated behaviour. We must guard against deciding which abusive behaviour is worth bothering with, and which is not. We must offer help and support to all who ask for and need it.

Responding to Domestic Abuse: Guidelines for Those with Pastoral Responsibilities, 2006 (p24) Church of England. Archbishops' Council.

The guidance below aims to assist you in responding to people disclosing abuse. If you feel ill-equipped to deal with the situation, please contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser for advice and guidance. The safety of children and victims is paramount. All actions should carefully consider the risk to their, and your, safety. Telephone calls, holding information about support services for domestic abuse, the use of texts and e-mails and accessing relevant websites all create potential risks for those experiencing abuse.

For information on the statutory definition of abuse, its prevalence and effects, and how to recognise both victims/survivors and alleged perpetrators please see Appendix 1. This also includes information on specialist types of domestic abuse.

Initial disclosure

If a victim discloses abuse, the following factors are important:

- Most victims/survivors want to be asked. If you are able to broach the subject, your offer of help could be the first step in enabling them to seek help; e.g. 'How are things at home?' and if it becomes appropriate, 'Is anyone hurting you?'
- Do try wherever possible to talk in a safe, private place where you will not be interrupted, or arrange to talk again (but someone in distress may start talking anywhere).
- Do try to make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, depending on the nature of what is disclosed. Whilst you might respect an individual's right to

confidentiality this cannot be guaranteed i.e. when someone is being hurt and a criminal offence has been committed, someone is in danger, or when children are involved.

- Do take plenty of time to listen and believe what they say. If they sense disbelief they may be discouraged from speaking again.

Immediate action

- Do dial 999 (112 in Europe) if you are witnessing a violent incident or if the person needs medical care. If the victim is in immediate danger, the Police should be called. Be aware that intervention may heighten risk, but it is important to explore how to ensure people are safe.
- The safety of children is paramount. If children are involved, a referral to children's service needs to be made in addition to calling the Police, if possible, encourage the victim to make the referral themselves, perhaps supporting them through the process. The Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser will also need to be informed.

Your response to the disclosure

- Do be sensitive to people's backgrounds and cultures and check your own and their understanding of how the cultural issues affect them. Ask them about what support is available to them from friends and family.
- Do affirm the strength and courage it takes to have survived the abuse and even more to talk about it.
- Do encourage them to seek professional help from a local domestic abuse service who will be able to offer practical safety planning advice, even if they do not want to leave their home. In addition, give information about national specialist helplines and websites, as required⁹.
- Do express concern for their safety and immediate welfare. Do they have somewhere to stay?
- Do ask about the children and their safety and welfare. You may need to persuade them to report any concerns to children's social care. You have no option but to do so if you have received information that a child is at risk.
- Do encourage them to focus on their own needs, something they may not have been able to do since the abuse began but which is critical in helping them to change their situation.

⁹ For a list of organisations, websites and helplines see Appendix 9 '[Resources](#)' of The Church of England Responding Well to Domestic Abuse policy and practice guidance 2017

- Do reassure them that, whatever the circumstances, abuse is not justified and not their fault.
- Do ask them what they want from you and the parish. Offer help which is in response to their needs and preferences and which lets them keep in control

Record keeping and follow up

Summary guidance is as follows¹⁰:

- Do check if it is all right to contact them at home before doing so. Ask them what their preferred means of contact is and confirm that this is safe.
- Do keep information confidential and as a general rule only share with informed consent where appropriate and if possible, respect the wishes of those who do not give consent to share confidential information. You should note that it may still be possible to share confidential information without consent if, in your judgement, it is necessary and proportionate to do so (i.e. there is a good reason), such as where the safety of the victim or (an) other(s) may be at risk. Always keep a record of your decision and the reasons why you decided to share (or not). In doubt, contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and the Diocesan Registrar.
- Do make a brief objective note of date, facts and context of what you have been told but keep your opinions separate. This should be kept in strict confidence but could be useful in any future prosecution ([see Safeguarding Records: Joint Practice Guidance for the Church of England and the Methodist Church \(2015\)](#)).
- You must **share the incident with someone who is qualified within 24 hours** and can support you to help you to think through the issues and action. This may be the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser or local safeguarding officer/lead.
- Do seek advice from the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser or local safeguarding officer/lead to review the safety and risk issues in relation to the alleged perpetrator if they are in the same Church. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place in line with House of Bishops practice guidance¹¹. This work needs to be undertaken in consultation with the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.
- Victim safety planning should be conducted by a professional, ideally from a domestic abuse service or a statutory agency. There may be an occasion when a victim wishes to discuss their safety with you. It is essential that you seek advice from

¹⁰ For further details on confidentiality and data protection see Appendix 7 '[Confidentiality and Data Protection](#)' of The Church of England Responding Well to Domestic Abuse policy and practice guidance 2017

¹¹ [Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](#)

the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser before entering into detailed safety planning discussions.

- If the **alleged perpetrator is a church officer**, you must talk to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and follow the House of Bishops practice guidance on responding to serious safeguarding concerns in related to Church Officers.¹²
- **Do not give information about the victim's whereabouts to the perpetrator or to others who might pass information on to the perpetrator.** Do not discuss with the parish council/other members of a congregation who might inadvertently pass information on to the perpetrator.
- When victims are leaving a controlling perpetrator, they often have to leave with nothing and have access to very limited financial support. Consider how your church can provide practical support to survivors.

Key telephone numbers for sources of help

- National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Legal support (National Centre for Domestic Violence): 0844 8044 999 – provides a free, fast, emergency injunction service for victims of domestic abuse
- Male victims (Respect): 0808 801 0327
- Helpline for domestic abuse in same sex relationships: 0800 999 5428

2.1.1 Disclosure Flowchart

It is recognised that it can be difficult to make a referral, which can be with or without the permission of the victim. Local Authority Social Care Departments are aware of the issues and sensitivities in relation to domestic abuse, and will ensure that they operate with professionalism and an awareness of the situation. Nevertheless, it is important that they are aware of the information concerning domestic abuse, so that they can act on it appropriately.

It is not the role of the Church, nor anyone employed within the Church, to investigate the issues and incidents – only social care and the police have these statutory powers.

Please follow this process when you become aware of an incident of domestic abuse and violence.

¹² [Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](#)



2.2 Responding to alleged or known perpetrators

The Church has an important role in challenging inappropriate behaviour. This can, however, lead to increased risks for both the victim and the person who challenges the alleged or known perpetrator. This needs to be done in an extremely careful way, i.e. one that does not place a victim at increased risk. Factors to consider include:

The Church has an important role in challenging inappropriate behaviour. This can, however, lead to increased risks for both the victim and the person who challenges the alleged or known perpetrator. This needs to be done in an extremely careful way, i.e. one that does not place a victim at increased risk. Factors to consider include:

- Ensuring that the victim is at the highest priority in terms of safety and wellbeing, and that any action is victim/survivor centred.
- If the alleged perpetrator is to be met, ensuring that it is in a public place, and that there are others in the meeting.
- Maintaining an awareness of the danger that the alleged perpetrator may pose to you, and ensuring that you and others are safe.
- You must **share the incident with a properly trained professional within 24 hours** who can support you to help you to think through the issues and actions. This may be the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser or local safeguarding officer/lead. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place in line with House of Bishops practice guidance¹³. This work needs to be undertaken in consultation with the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.

¹³ [Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](#)

- If the **alleged perpetrator is a church officer**, you must talk to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser and follow the House of Bishops practice guidance on responding to serious safeguarding concerns in relation to Church Officers¹⁴ .
- Co-operating and working with the statutory authorities ensuring that information is only given to them and not to the alleged perpetrator concerning the victim.
- Sharing information about helplines and services.

Record keeping and follow up

Please see the previous section on 'recording keeping and follow up' above. Additional guidance in relation to responding to alleged or known perpetrators is as follows.

Do try to make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Whilst you might respect an individual's right to confidentiality this cannot be guaranteed. Information has to be shared without consent when someone is being hurt, a criminal offence has been committed and/or a child or adult is at risk. If you are unsure whether or not to share information, contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.

Do seek advice from the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser or local safeguarding officer/lead if the alleged perpetrator threatens self-harm, as they may require urgent support.

These are some actions to avoid in responding to alleged or known alleged or known perpetrators:

- Do not collude with, excuse or minimise their behaviour.
- Do not meet with them alone and in private. Meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around.
- Do not try to investigate or offer/provide treatment. Only those professionally trained should discuss any issues formally with them.
- Do not provide a character witness in any proceedings and be involved in any processes which may seem as if the Church supports their position. Do not advocate for the perpetrator.

¹⁴ [Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](#)

2.3 Additional guidance for clergy and licensed lay ministers

Responding to victims

- Do help the victim/survivor with any religious concerns¹⁵.
- Do emphasize that the marriage covenant is broken by the violence from their partner.
- Do not pursue couples' counselling/mediation with them and their partner if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship.
- Do assure them of God's love and presence.
- Do pray with them.
- Don't encourage them to forgive the alleged perpetrator and/or take them back.

Responding to perpetrators

- Do address any religious rationalizations they may offer or questions they may have.
- Do not allow them to use religious excuses for their behaviour.
- Do name the abuse as their problem, not the victims/survivors. Tell them that only they can stop it and seek assistance.
- **Do not pursue couples' counselling/mediation with them and their partner if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship.**
- Do not be taken in by his "conversion" experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as they proceed with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.
- Do pray with them.
- Do assure them of your support in this endeavour.

Please see the Faith and Order Commission paper on 'Forgiveness and Reconciliation' for further information¹⁶

¹⁵ A helpful book is 'KEEPING THE FAITH: GUIDANCE FOR CHRISTIAN WOMEN FACING ABUSE' Marie. M. Fortune

¹⁶ [Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the aftermath of Sexual Abuse](#)

Perpetrator programmes

The attitudes that underpin domestic abuse are often deeply-rooted and difficult to change. Some success has been achieved through Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes for alleged or known perpetrators. These are extended (often six to nine months) one to one or group-based sessions which challenge the attitudes and behaviours of alleged or known perpetrators. Parallel groups may be organised for their partners to ensure that they are held to account.

Attendance at a perpetrator programme is often mandated by a court but it is possible in some parts of the country for men to self-refer to such programmes. Contact Respect (<http://respect.uk.net/>) or Local Authority for more details of local provision.

2.4. Pastoral issues

There are real issues for parishes where both parties continue to attend church. Parishes need to be aware of any legal restrictions around those perpetrating abuse and ensure these are not undermined. They need to consider how to support both parties safely, noting that the vicar cannot support both individuals. If they need further advice in relation to providing support, they should contact the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser.

If the victim/survivor or perpetrator is a member of the clergy, please talk urgently to the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser to review the action required to ensure safety.

There is also the opportunity to form pastoral teams in order to provide emotional and pastoral support to those who are affected by domestic abuse. Training and awareness raising sessions should be available to the teams. These teams can consist of those who are available to support victims, a pastoral element, a trainer, and the safeguarding adviser in the parish and/or diocese/cathedral. The focus of the team is to ensure that there is support to victims/survivors within the church and that policies and practice guidance have been adopted. There may be a long-term need to provide pastoral support for survivors of domestic abuse, including support to couples when one or both parties have experienced abuse in a previous relationship.

Appendix 3 Theology

The table below lists some scriptures that have been used unhelpfully with regard to victims of domestic abuse together with how the same scriptures could be applied helpfully.

SCRIPTURE	UNHELPFUL APPLICATION	HELPFUL APPLICATION
Submission “Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord” <i>Ephesians 5.22</i>	Obedience The woman must obey her partner Not submitting causes abuse If a man abuses his partner it is because she is not being submissive enough.	Mutual submission The previous verse 5.21 says “submit to one another” and 5.22 must be read in light of the mutual submission we should be giving to one another. To submit does not mean to obey, it means to choose to place oneself under another. Submission is a choice Submission cannot be forced, it must be chosen. Not submitting can never justify abuse.
Headship “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the Saviour” <i>Ephesians 5.23</i>	The asserting of power The man is the head; therefore, he has all the power and the right to assert it. Superiority Headship means being superior and having the right to take more than give.	The laying down of power The example given of headship is of Christ’s headship of the Church. When Christ came to earth, he gave up all his heavenly power for his bride, the Church. The original Greek word used for head in this passage is Kephale. This word means the head of a river or the source of the river. It does not imply superiority.
Rulership To the woman he said, “... Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.” <i>Genesis 3.16</i>	Rulership: a Right God determined men should rule their wives, therefore that is how it should be	Rulership: a Result A consequence of sin is that a man will rule over his wife, it is not God’s best plan for humanity, before the fall men and women were equal.
Creation of Woman “The Lord God said, “it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” <i>Genesis 2.18.</i>	Inferior To help means to serve, this verse shows that God created women to serve men and suggests they are inferior to them.	Equal The word “helper” here referring to women, most often refers to God in the Old Testament usage (e.g. 1 Samuel 7.12; Ps 121.1-2). Therefore, there is no suggestion of female inferiority

SCRIPTURE	UNHELPFUL APPLICATION	HELPFUL APPLICATION
Forgiveness “And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors.” <i>Matthew 6.12</i>	Disregard Forgiving someone should mean disregarding what they have done and maintaining the same relationship with them regardless of whether they change.	Consequences Sin has consequences and forgiving does not remove those consequences. Forgiveness is a process and must not nullify the consequences of abuse or mean that the situation must continue as it always has. Women should not have to stay in an abusive situation in order to forgive their partner.
Original Sin “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” <i>Genesis 3.6</i>	Sin: Women and weaker Eve took the fruit, and gave some to her husband; this shows women are weaker and more likely to be sinful.	Sin: Equal responsibility Man and woman were both participants in the Fall: Adam was no less to blame than Eve. Romans 5.12-21 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.
Divorce “But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, causes her to become an adulteress ...” <i>Matthew 5.32</i>	Contract Marriage is a contract and the person who cancels the contract, i.e. files for divorce is the one who is responsible. Therefore, if a woman divorces a man for abusing her, she is at fault, not him.	Covenant Marriage is a covenant; divorce is the breaking of that covenant. When a man chooses to be abusive, he breaks the covenant. If his wife chooses to divorce him, she is making public his breaking of the covenant, not going against what the Bible says about divorce.
Suffering “In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” <i>1 Peter 1.6</i>	Accept Women should accept abuse and use the suffering as an opportunity to grow their faith.	Refute By staying in a relationship where she is subject to abuse a woman is risking being murdered. When Jesus was tempted to risk his life, he said “it is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Matthew 4.7). God wanted abused women to be safe and protected.

Appendix 4: Marriage Preparation: Recommend good practice

Marriage preparation offers an opportunity to challenge inappropriate behaviour and assumptions about domination, control or abuse, while making it clear that some degree of conflict within an intimate relationship is natural and healthy, if dealt with appropriately.

The principles of understanding humanity (female and male) as made in God's image and of equal worth; of equality amongst people and within relationships; not condoning any form of abuse, should underpin any marriage preparation offered by the Church. Some theological ideas such as headship and submission models of men and women have been expressed in the liturgy in the past in the different promises expressed by the man and the woman. However, a promise to obey was in the past part of different standards or expectations of women and men within marriage, e.g. the fact that women had no standing in law until 1926. A mutuality expressed through the marriage which encourages partners to be themselves rather than sticking to gendered roles offers a better opportunity for both partners to grow and flourish in the relationship than does a differentiated model, in which one partner takes responsibility for the other's growth, but not vice versa.

Given the high incidence of domestic abuse within marriage, we recommend that clergy and lay people who offer marriage and wedding preparation should have attended some training on issues of domestic abuse. It is important that there is a clear understanding amongst those who offer marriage preparation that domestic abuse is always unacceptable, and that domestic abuse breaks the sanctity of marriage.

The subjects regularly dealt with when preparing couples for marriage, e.g. communication, conflict and in particular 'How do you deal with your anger?' offer an opportunity for couples to discuss together how their parents dealt with anger, rows and conflict or how the couple might have dealt with these in previous relationships. Sometimes those who have experienced domestic abuse as children have a very idealised view of marriage.

It is possible that those working with couples hoping to marry may become aware or suspect that abuse is taking place or may take place between the partners. This is always a difficult area to deal with and illustrates the need for training for people involved in this work, but one or more of the following ideas might help in such a situation.

The facilitator might include a statement at the beginning of the 'course' or conversation and again before dealing with a subject such as 'marital conflict' or anger. The following, which may need amending depending on the circumstances, is an example of a form of words that might be appropriate:

"When we think about relationships in general and our own in particular, there is always a chance that issues may be raised that touch us in a way that leaves us feeling disturbed,

uncomfortable or anxious. If this happens you may wish to speak to one of us today more privately or to seek help from a counsellor or other helping organisation.”

If a domestic abuse issue is raised directly or indirectly by one of the couple, the facilitator should not pursue it in the presence of the other: this could be highly dangerous. They may need to find a way to give the person a chance to say more in private, with the object of encouraging them to get one-to-one help from a competent person or organisation.

Appendix 5: Parish Policy for Responding to Domestic Abuse

Parish of _____

agreed by the Parish Church Council on _____

**All forms of domestic abuse are wrong
and must stop.**

We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:

- Ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- Protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;
- Recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- Enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

We recognise that:

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;
- all survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:

In all our activities – valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

In our publicity – raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

When concerns are raised – ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help and working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care – ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse and identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

**If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone
please contact:**

Other Useful Contacts:

Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser	07342 993 844
National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247
Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid	0808 800 0028
West Mercia Women's Aid	0800 980 3331
Staffordshire Women's Aid	0870 2700 123
Black Country Women's Aid	0121 552 6448
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327
Galop (LGBT)	0800 999 5428
Action on Elder Abuse	0808 808 8141