

## Domestic Abuse Fact Sheet

This factsheet 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 (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse>) is: 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 online 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.

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.

Please refer to Appendix 2 'The Legal Context' for more details in relation to this offence.

- **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.
- **Online**  
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 abuse (See section 9 below)

## 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 pre-eclampsia (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 order<sup>19</sup>. 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.

<sup>16</sup> See section 31 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002

Domestic abuse can also be a sign that children are suffering another type of abuse or neglect<sup>20</sup>. 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.

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 behavior 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

### 9.1. Introduction

Domestic abuse can take several forms and awareness of the wide variety of types of abuse will help us all in identifying abuse and responding appropriately.

Culturally specific forms of abuse such as so-called 'honour' crimes, 'honour' killings, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, the abuse of children and/or women related to 'possession by evil spirits' or 'dowry problems' must be addressed within the framework of domestic abuse. Indeed, the need to protect remains the main imperative, irrespective of the cultural context in which domestic abuse occurs. Such forms of abuse are common across the various religious communities and are often justified by religious and cultural beliefs as a way of maintaining patriarchal power and control. Often the violence or abuse is perpetrated by members of the extended family, with the collusion of others in the community.

### 9.2. 'Honour Based' Violence

There is no specific 'honour based offence'. The terms 'honour crime', 'honour based violence' or 'izzat' embrace a variety of crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women), including assault, imprisonment and murder, where the person is being punished by their family or their community. They are being punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour.

In transgressing this correct code of behaviour, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform by their family and this is to the 'shame' or 'dishonour' of the family. It can be distinguished from other forms of abuse, as it is often committed with some

degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/community members. Victims may have multiple perpetrators not only in the UK; HBV can be a trigger for a forced marriage.

Transgressions may include an intimate relationship outside of marriage; rejecting a forced marriage; pregnancy outside of marriage; interfaith relationships; seeking divorce and inappropriate dress or make-up<sup>21</sup>.

Women and girls are the most common victims of honour based violence however males can also be victims, sometimes as a consequence of a relationship which is deemed to be inappropriate, if they are gay, have a disability or if they have assisted a victim.

This is not a form of abuse which is perpetrated by men only, sometimes female relatives will support, incite or assist. It is also not unusual for younger relatives to be selected to undertake the abuse as a way to protect senior members of the family or as a way of showing them the potential consequences of dis-honouring the family.

There can be specific risks from family and the wider community in cases of Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage. It is important that risks to victims are not underestimated or assumed and that those at risk are asked what risks they face and from whom. Guidance for statutory agencies makes reference to the 'one chance rule'. That is, that all professionals working with suspected or actual victims of forced marriage or honour-based violence may only have one opportunity to speak to a victim or potential victim and may possibly only have one chance to save a life. If the victim is allowed to walk out of the door without support being offered, that one chance might be wasted.

### **How to respond to a disclosure of actual or potential Honour Based Violence**

HBV cases can involve a variety of complex and sensitive issues that should be handled by a child protection or adult protection specialist. Please contact your DSA and follow the [disclosure flowchart](#) but in addition:

#### **Do**

Advise the victim of Karma Nirvana, a UK registered charity that supports victims of Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage. They can be contacted via their helpline 0800 5999247 (9am – 9pm Weekdays & 10am – 4pm Weekends) Karma Nirvana not only provides support to victims but also to those dealing with a case. If possible offer the victim a secure place to make the telephone call and be there to support them if this is what they would like.

#### **Do Not**

- Send them away;
- Approach members of their family or the community;
- Share information with anyone without the victim's express consent;
- Breach confidentiality – unless there is an imminent risk of serious harm or threat to life of the victim;
- Attempt to be a mediator or encourage mediation, reconciliation, arbitration or family counselling.

---

<sup>21</sup> HM Government Multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage, June 2014

### 9.3. Forced Marriage

A Forced Marriage (FM) is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where some form of duress is involved (e.g. threats, violence or any other form of coercion). Since 2014, the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes FM a criminal offence and can result in a sentence of up to 7 years in prison. If you know or have a reasonable suspicion that a FM has taken place then you should report to the police.

There is a clear distinction between a FM and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement still remains with the prospective spouses. However, in a FM one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it. The pressure put on people to marry against their will can be physical (including threats, actual physical violence and sexual violence) or emotional and psychological (for example, when someone is made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family). Financial abuse (taking away wages or not giving someone any money) can also be a factor. In the cases of vulnerable adults who lack the capacity to consent to marriage, coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced and any action carried out which causes the victim to enter into a marriage would be considered to be an offence.

Disclosures of FM should not be dismissed as merely a domestic issue – for many people, seeking help from an agency is a last resort and therefore all disclosures of FM should be taken seriously.

#### **How to respond to a disclosure of actual or potential Forced Marriage**

Forced Marriage cases can involve a variety of complex and sensitive issues that should be handled by a child protection or adult protection specialist. Please contact your DSA and follow the [disclosure flowchart](#), but in addition:

#### **Do**

Advise the victim of The Forced Marriage Unit and support them to make contact (via their helpline, 0207 008 0151 (9am – 5pm) or 0207 008 1500 (if outside the office hours (ask for the Global Response Centre))). This unit not only provides support to victims but also to those dealing with a case. If possible offer the victim a secure place to make the telephone call and be there to support them if this is what they would like.

#### **Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO)**

A FMPO is a civil remedy issued under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007.

A person can apply for a FMPO if one of the following applies:

- He/she or someone else is being threatened with a forced marriage;
- He/she is in a forced marriage.

The FMPO is designed to protect a person according to his/her individual circumstances, e.g. to stop someone removing him/her from the UK. A FMPO contains such prohibitions, restrictions or requirements and any other terms that the court thinks appropriate. An application for a FMPO can be made by the victim, a person obtaining the court's permission to apply for an order on behalf of the victim, a relevant third party (as specified by the order of the Lord Chancellor) or by the court itself.

An emergency order (an 'ex-parte' or 'without notice' order) can be obtained to protect a person immediately without the individual, against whom the order is being made, being involved in the process.

**Remember: call 999 if a person is in immediate danger.**

Breach of a FMPO is criminal offence under section 120 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

#### 9.4. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse. For information with regards to FGM and how the Church should respond to and support victims or potential victims please refer to 'Promoting a Safer Church: The Church of England's Policy for children, young people and adults'.

#### 9.5. Women and girls in black and minority ethnic (BME) communities

Whilst many of the common myths and assumptions about domestic violence and women in the wider society are also applicable to BME women and girls, such women and girls have extra constraining factors to overcome due to their race or ethnicity. These act as barriers within and outside the community. Churches need to be aware of these issues when supporting women from BME communities.

Within some communities, the following can act as additional obstacles:

- tight-knit families and communities where the religious and community leadership is conservative, women have limited public visibility and the incidence of sexual discrimination may be high;
- notions of honour and shame which are strongly held features of family and community existence;
- lack of alternative safe havens, where women are not judged or condemned for leaving violent relationships;
- forced engagement in community mediation and reconciliation processes which have added to the pressures that women are already facing to 'save' their marriage/relationship.

Outside these communities, the following can act as additional obstacles:

- racial discrimination;
- racial violence;
- inability to access services and support due to language difficulties and isolation;
- lack of specialist facilities for minority women;
- the dominance of the 'multicultural approach' which can amount to non-intervention on grounds of respect for 'cultural sensitivity';
- insecure immigration and asylum status.
- For further information please see Our Theological Approach sections on 'Honor based violence', forced marriage and female genital mutilation in Res[ponding Well to Domestic Abuse 2017.

In addition the Home office in partnership with Southwell Black Sisters has produced a helpful leaflet, in several languages, called 'THREE STEPS TO ESCAPING

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: A guide for black and minority ethnic (BME) women and children.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/three-steps-to-escaping-domestic-violence>

## 9.6. Domestic abuse and young people

People in the age group 16-24 are those most at risk of domestic abuse.

The changes to the definition of domestic abuse, to include 16 and 17 year olds, raise awareness that evidence increasingly shows that young people in the 16 to 17 age group can also be victims of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is still a 'hidden' issue in our society; and it is even more so for teenagers. This is exacerbated by the fact that adolescents can be more accepting of, and dismissive about, this form of behaviour than adults.

It is important to be aware that cases involving under 18 year olds may include features of domestic abuse, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and street gang-related sexual and other violence.

Although some features of teenage relationship abuse are similar to adult domestic abuse, the forms and experience of this issue, as well as the challenges in seeking and providing services, make many of the issues faced by teenagers unique. There are also certain barriers relating to young people's ability to access services. Simply because of their age many young people are unable to access the same levels of support as those over 18.

Many young people will be experiencing multiple risk factors. However, as with abuse in adult relationships, teenage relationship abuse occurs across diverse groups and cultures. Teenage relationship abuse can occur in various forms, including verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, and financial, and the experience may have both immediate and long-term effects on young people. It is sometimes the case that there are unclear parameters between victim and perpetrator which adds to the complexity of cases.

## 9.7. Same Sex Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse occurs in the lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender community. It is estimated that about 25% of LGBT people suffer through violent or threatening relationships with partners or ex-partners which is about the same rates as in domestic abuse against heterosexual women. As in opposite-gendered couples, the problem is underreported. Those involved in same-gender abuse are often afraid of revealing their sexual orientation or the nature of their relationship.

There are many parallels between LGBT people's experience of domestic abuse and that of heterosexual women. However, there are a number of aspects that are unique to LGBT domestic abuse:

'Outing' as a method of control – The perpetrator may threaten to 'out' the victim to friends, family, religious communities, co-workers, and others as a method of control. The perpetrator may use the close-knit dynamic of the gay and lesbian community and the lack of support for LGBT people outside the community to further pressure the victim into compliance.

Abuse associated with sexual orientation or gender identity – For many people, their sexual orientation or gender identity becomes associated with the abuse so that they blame the abuse on being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. So they may feel that they are experiencing this abuse because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or that if they weren't lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender that they wouldn't be experiencing it. This can therefore fuel feelings of internalised homo/bi/transphobia.

Domestic abuse isn't well recognised in the LGBT community – There hasn't been much information or discussion in the LGBT communities about domestic abuse. Most information on domestic abuse relates to experiences of heterosexual women. This lack of understanding means that some people may not:

- Believe it happens in LGBT relationships;
- Recognise their experience as domestic abuse if it does happen to them;
- Know how to respond if they see domestic abuse being experienced by their friends.

Confidentiality and isolation within the LGBT communities – LGBT communities are often hidden and can rely on friends and relationships as support within the local community; this is often compounded when living in smaller towns and rural areas and can make it difficult for the abused partner to seek help. They may feel ashamed about the abuse, or their partner may have tried to turn others in the community against them. An abusive partner may isolate their partner from contact with the LGBT community by preventing them from reading any LGBT papers/magazines etc. or attending LGBT venues or events and preventing them seeing friends from within the community. This can be especially true for people in their first same-sex relationship who may not have had much contact with the LGBT community before the relationship began.

For additional information on abuse in same sex relationships see the websites of LGBT anti-violence charity Galop (<http://www.galop.org.uk>) which runs the national LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline or Stonewall (<http://www.stonewall.org.uk>) which provides services for those affected.

## 9.8. Child and adolescent to parent abuse

Child or adolescent to parent abuse may be referred to as 'adolescent to parent violence (APV)' 'adolescent violence in the home (AVITH)', 'parent abuse', 'child to parent abuse', 'child to parent violence (CPV)', or 'battered parent syndrome'.

It is important to recognise that child or adolescent to parent abuse is likely to involve a *pattern of behaviour*. This can include physical violence from a child or adolescent towards a parent and a number of different types of abusive behaviours, including damage to property, emotional abuse, and economic/financial abuse. Abuse can occur together or separately.

Abusive behaviours can encompass, but are not limited to, humiliating language and threats, belittling a parent, damage to property and stealing from a parent and heightened sexualised behaviours. Patterns of coercive control are often seen, but some families might experience episodes of explosive physical violence from their adolescent with fewer controlling, abusive behaviours.

It is also important to understand the pattern of behaviour in the family as a whole; siblings may also be abused or be abusive. There may be a history of domestic abuse, or current domestic abuse occurring between the parents of the young person.

Domestic abuse is notoriously difficult to identify when it occurs within the family home. This can become even harder if the abuse is child or adolescent to parent abuse. Like other forms of domestic abuse, child to parent abuse is very likely to be under-reported. Many of these families may be facing multiple issues such as substance use, mental health issues and domestic violence. The lack of recognition of this issue means that many families may not recognise that they need support and may feel unable to ask for help due to feeling stigma and shame. There are also often issues of lack of awareness of existing support (notably family support groups); parents not seeing themselves as legitimate recipients of support; lack of knowledge on drugs, alcohol and their effects; an 'it'll never happen to us' mind-set; and a lack of consensus on the best course of action within couples.

It is important to recognise the effects that child or adolescent to parent abuse may have on both the parent and the young person and to establish trust and support for both. It is also important that a young person using abusive behaviour against a parent receives a safeguarding response.

Responding to disclosure of child to adult abuse:

### **Do**

- Remember this is domestic abuse (and general domestic abuse considerations apply);
- Show understanding; consult with a DSA, who will consider whether other referrals need to be made, for example to:
- Public protection specialists or local policing staff: they may have existing knowledge;
- Are other children at risk in the house? If so, you will need to make a referral to children's services;

### **Do Not**

- Assume that this is a parenting issue – the parent is the victim in this situation;
- Joke or make light of the situation;
- Underestimate how difficult it is for the parent to report the incident and for the young person to accept responsibility;
- Wait until something more serious happens before taking action.

## **9.9. Elder Abuse**

Abuse of older people is a hidden, and often ignored, problem in society. While the profile of child abuse has been raised in recent years a number of organisations and bodies have been responsible for reminding us of the particular needs and problems that can be associated with older people.

No standard definition of elder abuse applies within the UK public sector. The term itself has been imported from the USA. It has no legal status and would not be recognized by many older people.

In 1993 Action on Elder Abuse<sup>22</sup> established the following definition of elder abuse. This has been subsequently adopted by the World Health Organisation, is promoted by the

---

<sup>22</sup> Action on Elder Abuse is a UK charity established in 1993 ([www.elderabuse.org.uk/](http://www.elderabuse.org.uk/)) by a group of practitioners from health and social care, and by academics and representatives of the voluntary sector who were concerned about the lack of information and assistance for those vulnerable older people who were abused or were at risk of being abused. Today the charity addresses abuse within an older person's own home (whether by family, friends or paid staff), within sheltered housing, and within care homes and hospitals.

International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, and has been variously adopted by countries throughout the World:

**‘A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person’.**

It has at its heart the ‘expectation of trust’ that an older person may rightly establish with another person, but which is subsequently violated.

Both older men and women can be at risk of being abused. People can be abused in different ways. These include: physical abuse; psychological abuse; financial abuse; sexual abuse; spiritual abuse; neglect; inappropriate use of medication.

Abuse can occur anywhere: for instance, in someone’s own home; a carer’s home; day care; residential care; a nursing home; hospital.

The perpetrator is usually well-known to the person being abused. They may be: a partner, child or relative; a friend or neighbour; a paid or volunteer care worker; a health or social worker, or other professional. Older people may also be abused by a person they care for.

There are many reasons why abuse occurs and these may vary with each incident. Abuse may range from a spontaneous act of frustration to systematic premeditated assaults on an older person. At home some of the causes would appear to include: poor-quality long-term relationships; a carer’s inability to provide the level of care required; a carer with mental or physical health problems. In other settings, abuse may be a symptom of a poorly run establishment. It is likely to occur when staff are: inadequately trained; poorly supervised; have little support from management; or work in isolation.

If you become aware or concerned about someone you know, it is important that you refer the case to your local authority adult social care department. You should be aware that, despite your concern, any older person has the right to decline assistance.

**Further specialist resources can be found in [Domestic Abuse : Useful Resources](#)**

GKJ/DSA

Taken from the Church of England Guidance: [Responding Well to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Practice Guidance March 2017](#)