



# Domestic Violence and Abuse (COVID-19)

The predicted rise in domestic violence and abuse cases during the COVID-19 pandemic is now happening. In Northern Ireland, police revealed that domestic abuse is at its highest level as people have to stay at home. If you believe you are being abused, or worried you may commit domestic abuse, it is important that you talk to someone. **Remember that the household isolation instruction as a result of coronavirus does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse.**

If you suspect that someone is experiencing domestic abuse, help them to report this to the police and provide them with information about organisations which will be able to offer support. If you are a member of staff/volunteer you should follow your reporting procedures. If you are a friend, relative or neighbour you can make the report to the police yourself. This information sheet includes key contact numbers.

## What is domestic violence and abuse?

Domestic violence and abuse is threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.

Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship with the victim. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography.



### **It includes:**

- shouting, mocking and name calling
- accusing or making threats
- punching, slapping, hitting, kicking, shoving or restraining
- preventing someone from leaving the house or seeing their family or friends
- controlling finances
- monitoring technology use e.g. monitoring phone calls and social media accounts
- accompanying someone everywhere they go
- checking up on someone repeatedly
- sexual violence e.g. using force, threats or intimidation to make someone perform sexual acts, constant pressure and harassment into having sex or forcing someone to have sex with other people.

### **Indicators:**

- being withdrawn
- isolation
- physical signs such as bruises, broken bones, cuts or burns
- damage to home or property
- symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorders
- low self-esteem
- verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others
- fear of outside intervention
- limited access to money.



## Useful contacts

**Nexus NI** <https://nexusni.org/> provides the **Domestic and Sexual Violence helpline 0808 802 1414**, offering support, advice and referral for all victims of domestic and sexual abuse in Northern Ireland. This free telephone service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**Women's Aid** <https://www.womensaidni.org/get-help/local-groups/> offers a range of specialist services to women, children and young people who have experienced domestic violence. Women's Aid outline the steps to increase safety when viewing their website if you are worried about someone knowing you have visited it <https://www.womensaidni.org/get-help/safety-planning/stay-safe-online/>

The **Men's Advice Line** <https://mensadviceline.org.uk/> **0808 801 0327** is a confidential helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and those supporting them.

The **Respect Phonenumber** <https://respectphonenumber.org.uk/> **0808 802 4040** provides support and help for anyone worried about hurting their loved ones. This is an anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are harming their partners and families. It takes calls from partners or ex-partners, friends, and relatives who are concerned about perpetrators.

**PSNI** - Dial **999** for emergency or **101** for non-emergency or visit <https://www.psni.police.uk/crime/domestic-abuse/>

Access Volunteer Now's standards and guidance at [Keeping Children Safe: Our Duty to Care](#) and [Keeping Adults Safe: A Shared Responsibility](#).

Visit our [safeguarding page](#) and find out about training available.

Further guidance around volunteering during the COVID-19 crisis can be found [here](#).