

# Domestic abuse: how to spot it and how to help.



## Domestic abuse can happen to anyone.

However, statistics show most domestic abuse is carried out by men and experienced by women. Across England and Wales, 1 in 4 women will experience abuse in their lifetime.

## Spotting signs of abuse:

**Coercive control:** When an abuser uses a pattern of behaviour over time to exert power and control. It is a criminal offence, and could include any of the other types of abuse listed below.

**Psychological/emotional abuse:** Includes name-calling, threats and manipulation, blaming her for the abuse or 'gaslighting' her.

**Physical abuse:** This isn't only hitting. They might restrain her or throw objects. They might pinch or shove her and claim it's a 'joke'.

**Tech abuse:** They might send abusive texts, demand access to her devices, track her with spyware, or share images of her online.

**Economic abuse:** Controlling access to money or resources. They might take her wages, stop her working, or put her in debt without her knowledge or consent

**Sexual abuse:** This doesn't have to be physical. They might manipulate, deceive or coerce her into doing things she don't want to do.

**All these forms of abuse are often interlinked.**

**Worried about a friend? ask her the following questions to help her identify abuse...**



# Refuge



For women and children.  
Against domestic violence.

***Is your partner jealous or possessive?***

***Are they charming one minute and abusive the next?***

***Do they tell you what to wear, where to go, who to see?***

***Do they constantly put you down?***

***Do they play mind games and make you doubt your judgement?***

***Do they control your money, or make sure you are dependent on him for everyday things?***

***Do they pressure you to have sex when you don't want to?***

***Are you starting to walk on eggshells to avoid making them angry?***

***Do they control your access to medicine, devices or care that you need?***

***Do they monitor or track your movements or messages?***

***Do they use anger and intimidation to frighten and control you?***

**If you or a friend answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you may be experiencing abuse.**

# What to say to someone who is experiencing abuse:

## **“I believe you.”**

Women are often dismissed. Told he seems like a nice guy, or a great dad. Listen and trust what she says.

## **“This is a safe space.”**

Ask if everything's OK at home. Talk to her in private, and reassure her that you won't judge her, no matter what she says.

## **“Whenever you're ready to talk, I'm here.”**

It can take a long time until she confides in you. Be patient, and keep being there for her.

## **“You're not alone.”**

She may have been isolated, or made to feel there's no way out. Tell her you're here for her, and that solutions and support exist.

## **“Support is available.”**

Encourage her to contact us – there are more details in the next page about how to do so.

# How you can support her:

## Help her secure her tech and social media accounts.

It's common for abusers to keep track of women's online activity, and use tech to harass them. Help your friend secure her devices using this guide:

<https://refugetechsafety.org/secure-your-tech/>

## Help her take control over her finances.

If someone you know is experiencing financial abuse, help her secure her bank accounts and gain financial dependence using this guide: <https://refuge.org.uk/i-need-help-now/how-we-can-help-you/economic-abuse/>



“One of Refuge's outreach workers, Anna\*, began supporting me. We talked about everything I had been through and she helped me to understand that [his] behaviour was a deliberate pattern of control. It was not my fault.”

*Isobel, survivor*

## Do...

### Try to be direct.

Start by saying “I'm worried about you because X”, or “I'm concerned for your safety”.

### Reassure her.

Tell her the abuse is not her fault.

### Focus on building her confidence and support group.

Abusers often isolate women from friends and family.

## Don't...

### Ask her why she hasn't left.

She may not feel safe to do so yet. Hearing this might make her feel like it's her fault.

### Judge her.

Build her confidence instead.

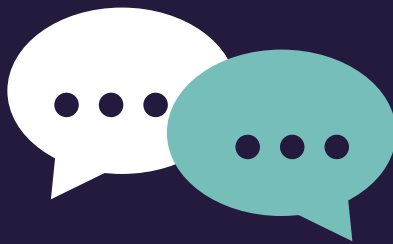
### Judge her partner or relationship.

This might make her feel ashamed, and stop her from confiding in you again.

# How you can help keep her and her children safe:

## Make a code word

Agree on a code word so she can signal when she is in danger and needs you to get help.

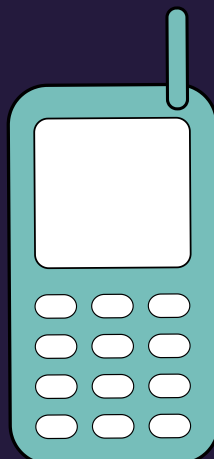


## Store her things

Offer to keep a spare set of keys for her or important documents, such as passports, bank account details and benefit information so that she can access them quickly in an emergency.

## Use a burner phone

Get her a pre-paid burner phone so she can make safe contact with agencies. Advise her to keep this device somewhere secure and on silent.



Encourage her to call Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline to discuss safety planning.

Helpline - open 24/7. Language interpreters can be used to offer support. Call free on

**0808 2000 247**

BSL interpreter service is available Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm, at:

**[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/bsl/](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/bsl/)**

Chat to our all-female, expert team online:

**[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/chat-to-us-online/](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/chat-to-us-online/)**

**IN AN  
EMERGENCY  
ALWAYS CALL  
999.**