

# Queen's Park Trust

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## Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of age, background, gender identity, sex, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity. However, statistics show most domestic abuse is carried out by men and experienced by women.

**Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence and can include a range of abusive behaviours.** It can also be experienced as repeated patterns of abusive behaviour to maintain power and control in a relationship. It is an incident, or pattern of incidents, between people aged over 16 who are a partner, ex-partner, a relative or someone you have, or have had a parental relationship with.

Children under the age of 18 years who see, or hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, as a victim of domestic abuse if they are related or have a parental relationship to the adult victim or perpetrator of the abuse.

## Types of domestic abuse

- **Psychological/emotional abuse:** Includes name-calling, threats and manipulation, blaming you for the abuse or 'gaslighting' you.
- **Coercive control:** When an abuser uses a pattern of behaviour over time to exert power and control. It is a criminal offence.
- **Physical abuse:** This isn't only hitting. He might restrain you or throw objects. He might pinch or shove you and claim it's a 'joke'.
- **Tech abuse:** He might send abusive texts, demand access to your devices, track you with spyware, or share images of you online.
- **Economic abuse:** Controlling your access to money or resources. He might take your wages, stop you working, or put you in debt without your knowledge or consent
- **Sexual abuse:** This doesn't have to be physical. He might manipulate, deceive or coerce you into doing things you don't want to do.

Find out more about how to identify abuse and where to get support. Domestic abuse is part of violence against women and girls, which also includes different forms of family

violence such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and so-called ‘honour-based crimes’ that are committed by family members, and often with multiple perpetrators. Click on the links below to learn more about these.

[Forced marriage / Honour-based crimes / FGM](#)

## Supporting a survivor

It can be hard to know how to support a friend or loved one who is experiencing domestic abuse. Your first instinct may be to protect her, but intervening directly can be dangerous for you and her. There are ways you can help though.

**Create a safe space.** Make sure you speak in private. Make it clear you won’t judge. Only then might she feel safe enough to open up.

**Tell her you’re worried.** Try “You haven’t seemed yourself lately. Is there anything you want to talk about? Is everything OK at home?”

**Take her seriously.** Listen. Believe her. Women are often dismissed. They’re told he seems like a nice guy, or a great dad. Trust what she says.

**Tell her it’s not her fault.** Your friend might blame herself. Tell her she is not to blame. He alone is responsible.

**Don’t judge her.** Don’t ask why she hasn’t left or judge her choices. Instead, build her confidence and focus on her strengths.

**Remind her she’s not alone.** She may have been deliberately isolated. Say you are there for her, and that there are solutions and that support is available.

**Encourage her to contact us.** Reassure her that she can contact us 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Help her find out about her rights and options.

**Give her time.** It might take a long time before she confides in you. Be patient. Recognising the problem is the first step.

If you’re worried about someone you care about, learn more about how you can support them.

## What to say?

Approach the conversation with kindness and concern. Many people struggle to identify with the labels of 'domestic abuse' or 'domestic violence' so avoid these.

To start off, try asking the person how things are in their relationship, or mention things you have noticed in their behaviour or the behaviour of the abuser. For example:

"We haven't seen much of you recently, is everything ok?"

"I've noticed you seem a bit down, has anyone upset you?"

"Wow, they text you a lot – do they do that all the time?"

If the person starts to talk about the abuse, DON'T:

- offer opinions about the relationship or the abuser
- criticise or blame the victim
- pass judgement on the situation
- offer advice – leave that to the experts. NEVER tell them to leave the relationship immediately, as this can be highly risky and there may be many reasons why they can't.

Instead, DO:

- let them know that you believe them and want to help
- reassure them that the abuse is not their fault
- thank them for their bravery in opening up to you, and
- let them know that help is available - make sure they know where to find the contact details of relevant support services and helplines.

Just by listening you will be helping the person to admit what is happening, and this will break the silence around the situation. Ask them what they want to do, or have happen next, so that they feel in control of the situation.

If the person chooses not to say anything about the abuse, you must respect this too. Just let them know you're there if they do.

Ending an abusive relationship is a very difficult decision to make and the victim may take some time to decide to do this - and to work out how to do it safely. But they are the expert in their own experience, and they will know when the best time is to leave.

NEVER confront the abuser. Do not do anything that may endanger you, the victim or their children.

## Domestic abuse in young relationships

Domestic abuse isn't just abuse that occurs between married people in a home, it can happen to anyone, including young people in their intimate relationships. Young people are especially vulnerable particularly when they are entering into their first relationships.

What they experience can really define and shape what they come to think of as healthy behaviour between people in a relationship.

Several independent studies have shown that 40% of teenagers are in abusive dating relationship. Research from the University of Bristol and the NSPCC shows that...

- 25% of girls aged 13-17, and 17% of boys, have experienced the use of physical force (pushing, slapping, hitting or being held down) in a relationship
- 72% of girls and 51% of boys had experienced emotional violence (most commonly “being made fun of” and “constantly being checked up on”)
- More than 25% of domestic violence cases involve technology-facilitated abuse of children

Overwhelmingly, young people keep these incidents within their peer group, talking to friends rather than to parents or carers or to other adults.

Visit Reducing the Risk's website for more information on spotting the signs of domestic abuse in young relationships, and how to support survivors.

## **FORCED MARRIAGE**

Forced marriage is where someone is forced to marry against their will, often by parents, family or religious leaders. Victims may be subjected to threats, violence, or emotional pressure, including being made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family if they resist.

Most forced marriages involving British girls and women take place overseas.

The government's Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) gave advice or support relating to a possible or actual forced marriage in 1,764 cases in 2018. There were 6,099 visits to ChildLine's forced marriage webpage.

Most forced marriages involve people aged under 25 and a third are under 18. Four in five are female. Forced marriage is not a problem specific to one country or culture.

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) has handled cases relating to over 110 countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

## **HONOUR-BASED CRIMES**

Honour-based crimes are violent crimes or other forms of abuse that are carried out in order to protect the so-called 'honour' of a family or community.

The code of 'honour' to which it refers is set by the male relatives of a family, and women who break the rules are punished for shaming the family.

Women can be subjected to honour-based punishments for trying to:

- Separate or divorce
- Start a new relationship
- Talk to or interact freely with men
- Have relationships or marry outside a particular religion
- Have sex before marriage
- Attend college or university

Honour-based crimes can include:

- Murder
- Forced marriage
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual violence
- Threats to kill
- Pressure to go or move abroad
- House arrest
- Isolation from friends and family

Honour crimes are most prevalent within diaspora communities from South Asia, the Middle East, and North and East Africa. Reports come from Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Orthodox Jewish and occasionally Traveller communities. <https://karmanirvana.org.uk/about/honour-based-abuse/>

Honour abuse is not determined by gender; both perpetrators and victims can be male or female.

### **FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)**

FGM is where the female genitals are deliberately cut for non-medical reasons. Some of the reasons cited for carrying out FGM include religious requirements, cleanliness, ensuring chastity, protecting family honour, and better marriage prospects.

When carried out on girls, it is a form of child abuse.

FGM is mainly practised in 29 countries in the western, eastern, and northeastern regions of Africa, in some countries in the Middle East and Asia, as well as among migrants from these areas' decades in Europe, including in the UK.

<https://www.forwarduk.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/Forward-FAQAugust-2019-New-Branding-WEB.pdf>

FGM is a human rights issue that affects girls and women worldwide.

It is estimated that 60,000 girls under 15 are at risk of FGM in the UK, and 137,000 women and girls in the UK have already been subjected to it. Over 130 million women and girls worldwide have undergone FGM.

The National FGM Centre says there are 11 new cases of FGM in England every day. The vast majority involve girls being taken overseas to be cut.

More than three-quarters of the cases recorded by the Centre involved girls aged 10 or under.

What are the signs that someone is at risk of these types of domestic abuse?

- The young person suddenly withdraws from their friends
- The young person suddenly goes away on holiday
- The young person has siblings who were forced to marry or married very young
- The young person has older siblings who refused to marry. This can increase the pressure on younger siblings (especially girls) in order to uphold the family honour
- The young person may show signs of injury, ie bruising on their arms.

## **What to do if you suspect someone is a victim.**

If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call the police on **999**. If you suspect that someone you know is being abused in their relationship, there are a number of options, find out more here.

If you are at all concerned about the safety or welfare of a child as a result of the domestic abuse, get in touch with their school who can investigate safeguarding concerns. You could also report concerns to the NSPCC helpline on **0808 800 5000**.

## *Websites*

- **Women's Aid** and **Avon** launched a campaign called #LoveRespect. The website, [www.loverespect.co.uk](http://www.loverespect.co.uk), hosts a range of tools and materials. These include advice, a quiz, survivors' stories and some questions and answers about healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- **Avon & Somerset Police** have launched a campaign website called [www.thisisnotanexcuse.org](http://www.thisisnotanexcuse.org).
- The government's Disrespect NoBody campaign is aimed at preventing teenagers from becoming victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse, and the website offers advice on abuse, rape, consent and pornography.
- **Women's Aid** has created 'The Survivor's Handbook', a comprehensive resource for women experiencing domestic violence. It has also launched The Hideout, an online space to help children and young people understand domestic abuse, and how to take positive action if they are a victim of it.
- The **Women's Aid** website has helpful instructions to help you cover your tracks online, in case you are worried that their abuser might check their browsing history and see that they've visited the Women's Aid website. These instructions can be found [here](#).

You can get help and advice on FGM in the UK from:

- Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD)
- In England you can find NHS specialist clinics for FGM and **FORWARD** has a list of specialist FGM clinics [here](#).
- **FORWARD** also publishes a number of resources, including this campaigner's guide for young people.
- In Scotland you can contact FGM Aware or AMINA – The Muslim Women's Resource Centre.
- Or you can contact your local council and ask for the Safeguarding Children Board.
- **ChildLine** has a forced marriage webpage [here](#) and has also produced a short animation, encouraging children and young people to call the charity's helpline for help and advice. You can view 'Layla's forced marriage story: Your tomorrow'.

## *Films*

- The Government's **Forced Marriage Unit** has published a film aimed at raising public awareness of the impact of forced marriage, and warning of the criminal consequences of involvement. The film is told from the perspective of a victim's

older brother, who is complicit in arranging her forced marriage but unaware of its true impact until it is too late.

- The **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** has produced a short film called Right to choose: Spotting the signs of forced marriage: Azim
- The **Home Office** has also worked with Jasvinder Sanghera, founder of Karma Nirvana and a survivor of honour crimes and forced marriage, who shared her experiences to produce a film.
- **Women's Aid** has produced a video called Everything you need to know about coercive control.

### *Quiz*

- **Avon & Somerset Police** have launched a quiz called How healthy is your relationship?

### HELP AND SUPPORT SERVICES

There are several organisations that victims can contact if they want to get help:

Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run by Women's Aid and Refuge  
0808 2000 247 [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

There are also specialist helplines in Wales 0808 80 10 800, Scotland 0800 027 1234 and Northern Ireland 0808 802 1414

Men's Advice Line (for men experiencing domestic abuse) 0808 801 0327  
[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

Victim Support 0808 16 89 111 [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

DO NOT confront the abuser. Do not do anything that may endanger you, the victim or their children.