

# Domestic Abuse

Information for parents and carers

In this document we use “child/children” to refer to anyone under the age of 18

## How is domestic abuse defined in law?

To be a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse the people involved must be over the age of 16 and personally connected to each other but don't necessarily have to live together. 'Personally connected' means:

- They are or have been in an intimate relationship with each other
- They are or have had a parental relationship with the same child
- They are related to each other (parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, first cousin) either directly or via their current or ex- spouse or civil partner.

## Domestic abuse can take many forms:

### **Coercive/ controlling behaviour**

Victims often don't realise they are being controlled as it can develop gradually. [This video](#) gives an illustration. Other forms of abuse usually accompany this behaviour.

### **Physical**

Includes threats of violence as well as physical assault such as punching and kicking.

### **Sexual**

Being pressured into or forced to have sex; being forced into making or watching pornography.

### **Emotional/ psychological**

Name-calling, belittling, threats to harm loved ones, [gaslighting](#), and the use of insults are all examples of this kind of behaviour.

### **Verbal**

The use of repeated shouting, threats, humiliation and degradation can be used to target a victim, making them feel worthless and fearful.

### **Harassment/ stalking behaviour**

Harassment is repeated, unwanted behaviour of any kind (e.g. physical, emotional, threats) that causes distress. Stalking involves following someone, interfering with someone's property, monitoring the victim's communications e.g. text messages.

### **Economic**

A victim's access to money or the ability to earn a living is controlled or restricted in some way so that they or their dependants suffer and/or the victim remains dependent on the perpetrator.

### **Technology- facilitated**

This is when abuse takes place online via e.g. social media, text message and email, or involves the hacking of the victim's accounts and use of spyware to track a victim's location.

### **Faith- related**

This could involve preventing the victim from practicing their chosen religion or using religious beliefs to control a victim in some way.

### **“Honour” based**

The abuser tries to stop an individual from behaving in ways that they think bring shame or dishonour on their family and/or community by abusing them in various ways. This can include [forced marriage](#) and [Female Genital Mutilation](#) (FGM).

## Domestic abuse and its impact on children

When a domestic abuse incident happens, children related to the people involved are seen as domestic abuse victims in their own right (Domestic Abuse Act 2021), even if they are not directly involved. Through the [Operation Encompass scheme](#), the child's school is notified when there has been a domestic abuse incident involving the child's relative, even if the child wasn't present at the time. This allows the school to support a child who may be distressed in the aftermath. The impact of living with domestic abuse cannot be underestimated; [this short film](#) gives an insight.

## Sources of support

### [Domestic abuse - Childline](#)

For children who'd like someone to talk to.

### [Protecting Children From Domestic Abuse](#)

- NSPCC General advice and support.

### [Parents Helpline - YoungMinds](#)

If you're concerned about your child's mental health.

### [Findaway - How can I help?](#)

Advice on what you can do to help someone who is living with domestic abuse.

### [Men's Advice Line - Respect](#)

Supporting male victims of domestic abuse. Staffed by male and female advisers, with the option to speak to a male adviser.

### [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#)

- For women living with domestic abuse, staffed by female advisers.