

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is abuse used by someone who is “personally connected” to you. This includes abuse perpetrated by partners and ex-partners as well as abuse perpetrated by family members (including young or adult children).

Domestic abuse can include many different types of abuse and usually involves coercive control where the abuser uses a range of intimidation and abuse to control you. These can be incidents or patterns throughout your relationship that change and develop over time.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, your partner, ex-partner or family member may be restricting or controlling your life in a variety of different ways.

The abuse may have significantly changed your life and affected your relationships with other people. You may, for example, have become isolated if your abuser doesn't like you seeing other people without them. Your mental wellbeing may have declined causing anxiety and panic attacks.

Perpetrators of domestic abuse are psychologically and emotionally abusive and may also use or threaten physical violence and abuse.

Physical abuse may include constant daily abuse such as pushing, restraining and/or hitting you without causing injuries. This is still abuse and may make you feel constantly anxious and unsafe. Your abuser may also intermittently or occasionally use, or threaten to use, higher levels of violence that do injure you and this may leave you feeling afraid of further violence.

Some partners, ex-partners and family members are sexually abusive. You may have been forced or coerced into sexual acts you did not consent to.

Domestic abuse can also include harassment and stalking by ex-partners or family members as well as online abuse.

In addition, domestic abuse can include economic abuse where someone restricts or controls your access to money. This can include taking your wages or benefits or restricting your access to bank accounts. Perpetrators may also prevent you from working or claiming benefits you are entitled to.

Anyone (male or female) can become a victim of domestic abuse and all communities are affected.

Abuse by partners and ex-partners happens in both heterosexual and same sex relationships. Your partner, or ex-partner, may also get other people to participate in controlling and abusing you.

Abuse experienced in families may be perpetrated by one perpetrator or multiple perpetrators. You may also not be the only victim/survivor.

Perpetrators (male and female) come from a range of different backgrounds and can be very good at covering up their abusive behaviour in front of other people. This may mean that people around you don't know what is happening to you.

Your abuser/s may try to blame you for their behaviour. Victim/survivors sometimes believe what they are being told by an abuser as the abuser is a partner or family member who they should have been able to trust. Your abuser may simultaneously tell you that they love you **and** blame you for the abuse to try to persuade you that they are not responsible. Perpetrators of domestic abuse are the ones responsible for the abuse and abuse is never a victim/survivor's fault.

If you are, or think you may be, experiencing domestic abuse, you can talk with professionally trained advisors (e.g. on the [MAL helpline](#)) to better understand what is happening and to get support.

You do not have to suffer abuse in silence. There are a wide range of services to support all victim/survivors and everyone, including you, should have the right to live free from abuse.

Shelter Housing and Homelessness Advice pages

Use our online advice pages linked below if you want to find out your housing rights:

- [Housing advice from Shelter – Shelter England](#)
- [Get help from Shelter – Shelter England](#)

Respect
Men's advice line

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