Domestic abuse
What is domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. But it isn’t just physical violence – domestic abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse.
Abusive behaviour can occur in any relationship. It can continue even after the relationship has ended. Both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Domestic abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.

Worried about a child?

Contact our trained helpline counsellors for 24/7 help, advice and support.

help@nspcc.org.uk

0808 800 5000

Report a concern

Signs, indicators and effects

Find out more about the signs, indicators and effects of domestic abuse.

Identifying the signs of domestic abuse
Keeping children safe

Domestic abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Learn more about how you can help protect children from domestic abuse.

Keeping children safe from domestic abuse

Types of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can include:

- sexual abuse and rape (including within a relationship)
- punching, kicking, cutting, hitting with an object
- withholding money or preventing someone from earning money
- taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear
- not letting someone leave the house
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or pet.

Our web pages are liable to change. Please check back regularly to ensure the copy you are using is still current. For full terms of use see: http://www.nspcc.org.uk/terms-conditions

Children and young people witnessing domestic abuse

Witnessing domestic abuse is really distressing and scary for a child, and causes serious harm. Children living in a home where domestic abuse is happening are at risk of other types of abuse too. Children can experience domestic abuse or violence in lots of different ways. They might:

- see the abuse
- hear the abuse from another room
- see a parent's injuries or distress afterwards
- be hurt by being nearby or trying to stop the abuse

Teenagers experiencing domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship, and it affects young people too.

They may not realise that what's happening is abuse. Even if they do, they might not tell anyone about it because they're scared of what will happen, or ashamed about what people will think.

Around 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse.


Explanation: Figures based on findings from 11-17 year olds. 17.5% said they had been exposed to domestic abuse between adults in their home (see p. 47).
More about domestic abuse

Who is affected by domestic abuse

It doesn't matter what your age, race, gender or sexuality is - anyone can be affected by domestic abuse. 

Facts and statistics

Facts and statistics about domestic abuse.

See latest domestic abuse statistics

Legislation, policy and guidance

Legislation, policy and guidance about domestic abuse.

Read more
Family issues children experience

Parental mental health
Helping children living with parents with mental health problems.

Read more about parental mental health

Parental substance misuse
Supporting children living with parents who misuse alcohol and drugs.

Read more about parental substance misuse

Separation, divorce and contact
Even though the relationship has ended between the adults, their role as parents has not stopped. Know your rights and make sure children get the right support.

Get advice for parents
What you can do

Make a donation today
A child will contact Childline every 25 seconds. Donate now and help us be there for every child.

Donate now

Get expert training and consultancy
Grow your child protection knowledge and skills with CPD certified courses delivered by our experts nationwide and online.

Get expert training

Library catalogue
We hold the UK’s largest collection of child protection resources and the only UK database specialising in published material, child abuse and child neglect.

Search the library

Are you there for children's mental health?
We need to make sure every child always has a place to turn - night and day. Sign our petition calling on the government to help our Childline service be there for every child.

Sign the petition

Our web pages are liable to change. Please check back regularly to ensure the copy you are using is still current. For full terms of use see: http://www.nspcc.org.uk/terms-conditions
