

# Domestic Abuse

**How to spot the signs of domestic abuse and get help for someone who may be suffering**

**Call the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Helpline**

**0808 808 2241**

Free to landlines and most mobiles

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

**SHEFFIELD DOMESTIC ABUSE  
CO-ORDINATION TEAM**



# **Domestic abuse happens every day in Sheffield. People may be aware of it but don't know what to do about it.**

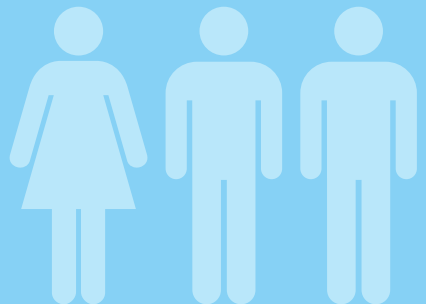
**Someone you work with or know may be suffering – watch out for the signs.**

**Ask them if they are okay. Don't ignore it. Do something.**

Domestic abuse is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

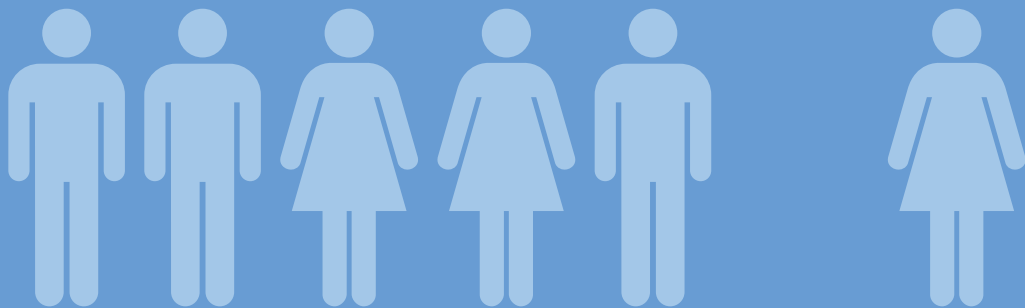


Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support; exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain; depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape; and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

This is the Government definition. It includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Family members are: mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents; directly-related, in-laws or step-family.



# How will I recognise it?

Domestic abuse can involve:

- **Physical abuse** – violence such as punching, kicking, biting, burning, choking, spitting, slapping and throwing objects. You may notice or be shown marks or bruises. Or a person may change their clothing or use make-up to disguise an injury
- **Emotional abuse** – constant criticism, threats to an individual or their family, putting them down publicly, accusing them of lying, sulking, cheating, verbal abuse and name calling. This may lead to changes in behaviour, someone being withdrawn or tearful, they may suffer from lack of sleep or become angry or irritable. They may start to drink heavily, use drugs or develop eating disorders.
- **Sexual abuse** – sex against their will or in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or humiliated. Sexual abuse is likely to affect someone's behaviour in a similar way to emotional abuse; they may also contract a sexually transmitted disease or have an unwanted pregnancy.
- **Financial abuse** – not allowing them to have money, spending food money, running up debts in their name. You may notice that someone is unable to pay bills or pay for treats and activities. They may ask to borrow money. There may be little food in the house or they or their children may be hungry.

- **Coercive and controlling behaviour** – making them do things they don't want to do or stopping them from doing things. Isolating them from friends and family, monitoring or blocking phone calls or use of social media. Preventing them from attending appointments. You may notice they are not attending something they usually do or are making excuses not to come.
- **Forced marriage** – and so called 'honour' based violence – making them marry someone against their will, bullying them and controlling their behaviour to protect the family's reputation. Family objections to the person's choice of partner or sexuality. They may not be allowed out, leading to isolation from friends, work or education.
- **Stalking and harassment** – obsessive jealousy, following and checking up on them, embarrassing them in public or on social media. They may be worried about being followed, anxious about going to certain places or being seen somewhere.
- **Denial** – abusers will sometimes deny their actions or suggest it was the other person's fault. They may beg for forgiveness and say it will never happen again. The person may think they have exaggerated the abuse and that it wasn't serious. They may play down the abuser's behaviour or accept their excuses.

# What are the signs of high risk domestic abuse?

**High Risk Domestic Abuse means we think that someone is at high risk of serious harm or homicide. Serious harm is: A risk that is life threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.**

Warning signs include:

- Threats to kill
- Use of weapons (including household objects)
- Strangulation or smothering
- Sexual assault, rape or threat of sexual exploitation
- High level of stalking and harassment
- High level of controlling behaviour
- The abuser having suicidal intent or serious mental health issues
- Threat of forced marriage or so called 'honour' based violence, because the person is accused of bringing shame on the family
- A criminal history or history of domestic abuse in this relationship or previous ones
- And pregnancy or having a very young child – can increase vulnerability

However, this list is not exhaustive and you should listen to what the individual at risk tells you, how frightened they are and what they think the alleged abuser is likely to do.

Also be aware that domestic abuse victims can underplay the risk to themselves and others.

Refer to the DASH assessment for a full list of questions about risk – go to

**[www.sheffielddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/resources/marac-information-and-forms](http://www.sheffielddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/resources/marac-information-and-forms)**



You see, hear or are told something which makes you think someone aged 16 years or older may be at risk due to domestic violence

Are they in immediate danger?

No

Contact emergency services

Yes

Complete a DASH assessment if possible and/or consider if high risk factors are evident

Is the person at High Risk of serious harm or homicide?

No

Yes

Not Sure

Signpost to the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Helpline, or offer to refer them to the Sheffield Medium and Standard Risk Domestic Abuse Service (which provides the Helpline): **0808 808 2241** or **help@sheffielddact.org.uk**



### Can't complete a DASH?

- As a minimum give the Domestic Abuse Helpline number **0808 808 2241** and advise them to report incidents to the Police or call 999 if they are in danger
- And/or think about who else could be alerted eg: consider informing the agency that referred them to your service

Refer to the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service on **0114 249 3920**  
**idvas.groupmailbox@sheffdap.cjsm.net**  
and MARAC – Multi Agency Risk  
Assessment Conference  
**marac@sheffield.gcsx.gov.uk**

For advice as to what to do if you are unsure contact:  
Domestic Abuse Helpline on **0808 808 2241**  
or Children's Social Care on  
**West (0114) 273 4491 North (0114) 203 9591**  
**East (0114) 203 7463**

if there are children who may be at risk.  
Safeguarding Adults Office **(0114) 273 6870** if there  
are adults with care and support needs at risk.  
More information about Sheffield Domestic Abuse  
services and pathways can be found at  
**[www.sheffielddact.org.uk](http://www.sheffielddact.org.uk)**

**Remember to record what you have seen  
or been told and inform your manager**

# Safeguarding

Are there any **children** in the household? Remember that if the victim is under 18 they are still a child. Or are there any adults at risk of harm who may be unable to protect themselves?

If so follow the same procedure if they are in immediate danger eg. contact emergency services.

Then refer to Children's Social Care on

- West – 0114 273 4491
- North – 0114 203 9591
- East – 0114 203 7463

or raise a safeguarding concern with Adult Access on 0114 273 4908 as appropriate.

## What about consent?

If you think someone is at high risk of serious harm or homicide, then **you do not need their consent to make a referral to IDVAS and MARAC.**

If you are concerned about the safety of a child or the welfare of an adult who needs care and support, then **you can also make a safeguarding referral without consent.**

For domestic abuse that is not High Risk, you can offer to refer to services with consent or you can signpost the person so they can make contact themselves.

Someone you are working with may see you as a person they trust and tell you about the abuse they are suffering or you may notice signs of abuse.

Always listen carefully. Always take their allegations seriously and act on them.

It's not your responsibility to decide if the abuse has happened or not, only to make sure that support is offered and/or ensure the appropriate referrals are made if you think the abuse is high risk or there are children or vulnerable adults at risk.



The information in this document can be  
supplied in large print, please contact  
0808 808 2241

Sheffield City Council  
[www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk)



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