

What is domestic abuse and violence?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

The behaviour of a person towards another person is “domestic abuse” if they are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse (unable to acquire, use or maintain money or property or obtain goods or services);
- psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct. Abusive behaviour may be “towards” one person despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, the person’s child).

Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies—

- they are, or have been, married to each other;
- they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child;
- they are relatives.

Domestic abuse and violence can include the following types of behaviours:
(this is not an exhaustive list)

Destructive criticism and verbal abuse:	shouting; mocking; accusing; name calling; verbally threatening; making the person feel guilty; ridiculing every aspect of a person’s appearance or skills
Pressure / emotional tactics:	sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnecting the telephone, taking the car away, taking the children away; threatening to report to welfare agencies unless the person complies with their demands; threatening or attempting suicide; withholding or pressuring the person to use drugs or other substances; lying to friends and family about the person; telling the person that they have no choice in any decisions; making the person do illegal things; making the person drop any charges that have been brought; playing mind games; keeping the person deliberately short of sleep; being obsessively and irrationally jealous
Disrespect:	persistently putting the person down in front of other people; not listening or responding when the person talks; interrupting the person’s telephone calls; taking money from the person’s purse without asking; refusing to help with childcare or housework.
Breaking trust:	Including -lying to the person; withholding information from the person; being jealous; having other relationships; breaking promises and shared agreements.
Isolation:	monitoring or blocking the person’s telephone calls; telling the person where they can and cannot go; preventing the person from seeing friends and relatives; shutting the person in the house; controlling what the person can read or their social media or internet access.
Harassment:	following the person; checking up on the person; not allowing the person any privacy (for example, opening their mail), repeatedly checking to see who has telephoned the person; embarrassing the person in public; accompanying the person everywhere they go; using contact with children to harass or pass messages
Threats:	making angry looks, actions or gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting the person down; destroying possessions; breaking things; punching walls; wielding a knife or a gun; threatening to kill or harm the person and the children; threatening to kill or harm family pets; threats of suicide; threatening to leave

<p>Sexual violence:</p>	<p>using force, threats or intimidation to make the person perform sexual acts; having sex with the person when they don't want it; forcing the person to look at pornographic material; forcing the person to have sex with other people; any degrading treatment related to the person's sexuality or to whether are gay lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual; knowingly passing on Sexually Transmitted Infections; controlling access to contraception</p>
<p>Physical violence:</p>	<p>punching; slapping; hitting; biting; pinching; kicking; pulling hair out; pushing; shoving; burning; strangling; giving too much, too little or the wrong medication</p>
<p>Economic:</p>	<p>preventing the person from getting a job; making the person ask for money; giving the person an 'allowance'; taking the person's money; not letting the person know about or have access to family income; forcing the person to take out loans; unauthorised use of the person's money, valuables, property, pension etc; demanding to know every penny the person spends.</p>
<p>Denial:</p>	<p>saying the abuse doesn't happen; saying the person caused the abusive behaviour; being publicly gentle and patient; crying and begging for forgiveness; saying it will never happen again; shifting responsibility for the abusive behaviour.</p>
<p>Spiritual Abuse:</p>	<p>telling the person God hates them; refusing to let the person go to church or worship; using faith as a weapon to control and terrorise the person for the perpetrator's personal pleasure or gain; using religious teaching to justify the abuse or to compel forgiveness</p>