

How to help your mates

Young people and domestic violence



What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are in, or have been in a relationship.

This leaflet is for people who are worried that their friends may be in an unsafe relationship.

Types of abuse

Domestic violence can be:

- **Physical** – hitting, punching, kicking, using weapons etc.
- **Sexual** – forcing someone to have sex, touching someone when they do not want them to.
- **Financial** – taking money, controlling, not letting someone work.
- **Emotional** – making someone feel bad or scared, blackmailing, checking up on someone, threats.
- **Social** – isolation, controlling who someone can and can't see.

Why is it important to me?

Some people think it only happens in adult relationships but it can happen at any age.

One study found that 40% of teenagers know girls whose boyfriends pressured them to have sex, 42% know girls whose boyfriends have hit them and 59% said they didn't know how to help their friends.

Every minute in the UK, the police receive a call for help for domestic violence. 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence in their life.

Usually women and girls are the victims and men and boys are the abusers but it can happen to boys as well. It is just as common in same-sex relationships.

I'm worried about my friend...

If you are unsure whether your friend is in an unsafe relationship, you could look out for these signs. Remember: finding some might not necessarily mean that they are experiencing domestic violence.

- Depression and anxiety
- Cancelling plans last minute
- Argumentative or upset
- Fearful or withdrawn
- Unexplained injuries
- Use of drugs and alcohol
- Early sexual activity/risk taking
- Receiving constant texts and calls
- Afraid of making partner angry
- Makes excuses for partner's behaviour

What should I do?

It can be very hard to talk about abuse and it can also be hard to support someone. Make sure you look after yourself as well as them. Here are some tips for ways to talk about this:

- If you want to approach them, do it in a sensitive way, such as 'I am worried about you because...'
- Don't judge them, believe them.
- Let them know they are not alone, that it is not their fault and that you know how hard it can be to talk about it.
- Help them to recognise what is happening is unacceptable and that they don't have to put up with it.
- Decide together what to do to make things safer – this can involve making a safety plan.
- Think up a code word that your friend can use on the phone to let you know they need help.
- Make a list of all the good things about your friend to help improve their confidence.

It can be very hard to leave an abusive relationship,

have patience and understand how hard it can be.

Making a safety plan

- Know how to ring the police or a trusted adult
- Think of safe places to go
- Always have phones charged
- Make up a code word that they can use to ask for help if they are scared
- Try not to let them go home on their own, make sure someone always knows where they are
- Think about when things are likely to be most scary, and plan when and how to leave
- If they want to end their relationship, suggest they do it with other people around
- Keep important items in a bag that is kept safe somewhere (keys, money, passport, id, medication etc)

Who can I talk to?

Find an adult you trust, it can be anyone; a teacher, parent, relative, youth worker, doctor etc. See the next page for some telephone numbers and websites. Explain to your friend what you are doing and who you are going to tell.

Even if they ask you not to tell anyone, it is OK to tell an adult if you are worried about their safety.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone. Remember – it is never

their fault and they never have to deal with it on their own.

Where can I get help?

*In an emergency, call police on 999
for immediate help.*

- Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247
- Childline – 0800 1111
- www.thehideout.org.uk
- www.respect4us.org.uk
- www.there4me.com
- www.worriedneed2talk.org.uk
- www.rapecrisis.org.uk

**Greater London
Domestic Violence Project**
www.gldvp.org.uk / info@gldvp.org.uk

Developed by Barking & Dagenham PCT.
Resource originally developed with support from
City of London and City Bridge Trust.