

Domestic Abuse Awareness

Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to the Thirtyone:eight Domestic Abuse Awareness course. This handbook accompanies the course and contains the case scenarios and discussion questions we will be using in the webinar as well as some additional information and signposting.

This course is designed for all four UK nations, and the handbook has nation-specific sections, as well as content that applies across the UK. Transcripts of learning are available to evidence how this course meets the requirements of the Child Protection Learning and Development Framework for Scotland and some elements of Group C of the National Safeguarding Training, Learning and Development Standards for Wales.

Domestic abuse is sadly common but often hidden. It can affect individuals and families from all backgrounds, faiths and cultures. If we are equipped to recognise domestic abuse, then we can respond well and refer people to sources of support. We can also create cultures that have a greater understanding and where victim-survivors feel welcome and heard.

We look forward to supporting you as you increase your awareness of domestic abuse and create places that can respond well.

The Thirtyone:eight team

Glossary

Clare's Law and Equivalents is a rule that lets someone ask the police if their partner has a history of hurting others or might be dangerous. It's named after Clare Wood, who was killed in 2009 by a man with a known history of violence against women.

Coercive Control When someone uses ongoing, controlling behaviour to make another person feel scared, isolated, or powerless. It often happens in close relationships and doesn't always involve physical violence. Instead, it can include things like controlling money, who someone sees, or what they do each day.

Gaslighting When someone tries to make another person doubt their own thoughts, memories, or feelings. It's a form of emotional abuse that can make the victim feel confused, anxious, or like they're 'going crazy'.

'Honour-Based' Abuse When someone is hurt, threatened, or controlled by their family or community because they are believed to have brought shame or dishonour. This abuse is often used to force someone to follow strict rules about behaviour, relationships, or lifestyle. Examples include forced marriage or being punished for having a relationship your family doesn't agree with.

Love Bombing when someone gives a lot of attention, affection, and gifts very quickly at the start of a relationship to gain control or make the other person feel dependent on them. It can feel flattering at first, but it's often used as a way to manipulate. The sudden shift from intense love to criticism or control can be very confusing and hurtful.

Perpetrator someone who causes harm or abuse to another person. In domestic abuse, this means a person who hurts, controls, or mistreats someone they are close to. Perpetrators can be anyone—no matter their gender, age, or background. The abuse is always their responsibility, never the victim's fault.

Stalking when someone keeps following, contacting, or watching another person in a way that makes them feel scared or upset. It usually happens more than once and can include things like showing up uninvited or sending unwanted messages. Stalking is a crime - people who are being stalked can ask the police for help and may be able to get a protective order.

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Trigger Warning: Domestic Abuse

This course covers sensitive topics related to domestic abuse, which may be distressing or triggering for some participants. Please be aware that the content might include discussions that could evoke strong emotional responses in yourself or other participants, or lead to the realisation that you may be a victim of abuse.

Signposting:

The end of this handbook includes information on support services and resources. Please refer to these if it is safe for you to do so.

Your safety and emotional wellbeing take priority. Please take care of yourself and use the resources available to you.

Questions and Exercises in the webinar

Throughout the webinar there will be opportunities to have discussions, share knowledge and participate in activities to apply our learning in context. These are included here for reference only. There is no need to work through anything in advance.

Module 1: Recognise

Pause and Consider: What is domestic abuse?

True or False: Are the following statements true or false?

- Domestic abuse always involves physical violence
- Men never experience domestic abuse
- Domestic abuse also happens in religious families
- Drug or alcohol misuse can cause domestic abuse
- Domestic abuse doesn't happen to people who are wealthy and independent
- Domestic abuse impacts children

Case Scenarios: What are your concerns?

Aaliyah:

Aaliyah, 16, attends your youth group every Thursday evening. She's a mixed-race girl (mum from Northern Ireland, Dad from Trinidad) and is smart, creative, and friendly. She's popular at school and on social media, often sharing dance videos and poetry. She's been dating Liam, 17, for 8 months. He's a white boy, quiet and socially awkward in person, but active online. Lately she's withdrawn, anxious and jumpy when she gets message alerts. Her mum is worried about her and said that Liam comments endlessly on Aaliyah's posts, often being sexist, and Aaliyah worries about upsetting him.

John:

John, 68, is a recently retired factory worker. Married to Sally for 45 years, he lives in a small town in Wales. He's well known in your community for his gardening and local volunteer work. John is one of the trustees of your charity.

John (continued)

At the latest board meeting, it was suggested that everyone contributes £10 for teas and coffee for the coming year. You notice him fidgeting, looking at his hands. He mumbles "She's going to love that." You noticed he's reluctant to come as much as he used to - insisting he needs time to check their schedule, and asking that any meetings dates be sent by email to Sally. Over time, John has become quiet, withdrawn, and increasingly reliant on Sally.

Amandeep:

Amandeep is a Panjabi Sikh woman, mother of two (Simran, 8, and Arjun, 3). She works part-time at Little Leaves Nursery, which runs sessions in the church's community space. She's well-liked, calm, and gentle – but lately seems withdrawn. Her husband, Jaspreet, works in construction. He drives Amandeep to work and it's rumoured that he hands her the mobile phone as she gets out of the car, and takes it back when she finishes her shift.

You and other volunteers at the church begin to notice that Amandeep, who was known as being cheerful and engaged, now rushes out quickly at the end of each shift. She doesn't stay for tea or speak freely anymore. One morning, you overhear Jaspreet raising his voice outside the nursery, scolding Amandeep harshly and calling her "shameful" for speaking to other men - meaning the dads who drop their kids off.

Key Message: Recognise

Not all domestic abuse involves physical violence; recognise the signs and indicators.

Module 2: Respond

Discussion:

- Why might somebody leave a domestic abuse situation?
- Why might somebody stay?

Case Scenario: How can you respond well in the following scenario?

- a) If you are Chris?
- b) If you are the Safeguarding Lead

John – Part 2

At the community centre, a volunteer named Chris notices John flinching when his wife interrupts him sharply. Chris also sees that Sally answers questions on John's behalf and closely monitors his interactions. One day, while Sally steps away, John quietly says, "Things aren't great at home. I'm tired of being made to feel useless." He looks anxious and quickly changes the subject when Sally returns.

Key Message: Respond

How we respond has a powerful impact; listen and have appropriate conversations

Module 3: Record

Case Scenarios: What would you record in the following situation?

- a) If you are Robin?
- b) If you are the Safeguarding Lead?

Aaliyah – Part 2:

Lately, Aaliyah's avoiding her friends at group and is less chatty. Robin, her youth worker, noticed her coming out of the bathroom crying and, when they asked if she was ok, Aaliyah shared that Liam's angry with her for posting 'slutty' things and has threatened to share her messages and photos with others. He says he's 'red-pilled' now and deserves better. Aaliyah said that when she saw him last week, he was being super intense and affectionate, then got angry when she asked him to slow down. She feels stuck - he hasn't "really done anything wrong."

A sample cause for concern form for Aaliyah is available starting on page 41 of this handbook.

Key Message: Record

Records are essential; record all concerns quickly and accurately.

Module 4: Refer

Scenario: Who would you refer to in the following situation?

- a) If you are Mary?
- b) If you are the Safeguarding Lead?

Amandeep – Part 2

Inside, Mary gently asks Amandeep how things are at home. Amandeep forces a smile and says, “It’s just stress — you know how life gets.” But her eyes show fear and Mary notices a bruise on her wrist. A few days later, Arjun arrives especially distressed, and when Mary crouches to comfort him, he whispers, “Daddy shouted at Mum again last night.” Mary suspects emotional and possibly physical abuse and feels worried not just for Amandeep but also for the children.

Key Message: Refer

Internal referral is essential; external referral needs to be navigated with caution.

Module 5: Reflect

Reflective exercise:

Think about your organisation, and all the people that make up your community:

- a) What would enable someone experiencing Domestic Abuse to seek support in your context?
- b) What barriers might make this more difficult? Which of these barriers are in your power to remove?
- c) What action will you take following this course to start to dismantle these barriers?

Key Message: Reflect

One thing we can all do to build safer communities is raise awareness.
What will **you** do next?

UK Domestic Abuse Laws and Guidance

Each of the four UK nations has its own laws and guidance on domestic abuse. The table below highlights some key laws for each nation. You don't need to know all the details for your role, but it's useful to understand that there is a legal framework supporting the work of faith groups, churches, and charities in safeguarding. These laws also provide protection for people affected by domestic abuse. If you want to learn more, you can find the full documents online by searching their names and dates.

England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Laws and Guidance			
Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (updated 2024)	Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021	Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018	Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (updated 2024)
Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance 2022	Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022	Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016	Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
	Protection from Harassment (Northern Ireland) Order 1997	Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews (Scotland) Bill (2024)	Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance 2022
	Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2024 - 2031	Equally Safe Strategy 2023	Coercive and Controlling Behaviour Guidance 2023 (Under Section 77 Serious Crimes Act 2015)
Domestic abuse is also mentioned in the following laws, policy and guidance:			
Working together to safeguard children 2023	Recognising Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People 2024	Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) SHANARRI wellbeing indicators	Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) 2014



Domestic Abuse in England

The following pages contain useful information for those working alongside safeguarding professionals in England.

Legal Definition:

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

Abuse between people aged 16 or over who are ‘personally connected’.

- ‘Personally connected’ means that they are:
- Current or former intimate partners
- Family members
- Individuals who share parental responsibility for a child
- People who live or have lived together

The Act defines abusive behaviour as:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse (e.g. controlling finances, preventing access to money or employment)
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

Children as Victims

The Act also recognises that a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to or under the parental responsibility of either the abuser or the abused, is a victim of domestic abuse in their own right.



Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders:

Police and courts can issue legal restrictions on perpetrators of domestic abuse in order to protect victim-survivors:

Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) – issued by police immediately after an incident to provide protection for a victim. For example, a perpetrator could be required to leave a victim's home for up to 48 hours.

Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) – issued by courts to provide long-term protection for the victim. Breach of a DAPO is a criminal offence that could incur a fine, prison sentence, or both.

Clare's Law, Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) how the police share information about a person's previous violent or abusive offending. It can protect a partner or ex-partner from being a victim of abuse.

"Right to ask" is when you ask the police or agencies for information on another person. If you're worried that another person could hurt or abuse you, you can ask if they have a police record. Family, friends or those who may be responsible for your safeguarding such as a social worker, can also ask for you. Under "right to know" the police can check if the person there are concerns about has a police record. If so, the police will share that information. You can ask the police for information by going into a police station or by asking online.

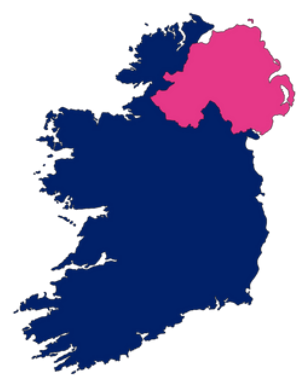
Relevant Safeguarding Professionals:

Police – Domestic abuse is a crime. Victim-survivors can report domestic abuse to the police to seek protection and legal justice. You would always report to the police if there is risk to life and limb, and your organisation's safeguarding lead may refer cases of domestic abuse to the police in other circumstances too.

Children's Social Care Services – Your organisation's safeguarding lead may refer domestic abuse concerns to Children's Social Care Services when there are children involved, so they can act to protect the child and support families and carers.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) - these are teams made up of professionals from different agencies including social work, police, health, and education. The team usually provide an early triage and multi-agency assessment of safeguarding concerns in respect of both children and adults. Many Local Authorities in England have a MASH team, but not all.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – person in Social Services responsible for managing and overseeing concerns, allegations and offences relating to those in a Position of Trust across a local authority area. May also be known as **Designated Officer for Allegations (DOFA)**. Your safeguarding lead may refer to them if an alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse has a Position of Trust.



Domestic Abuse in Northern Ireland

The following pages contain useful information for those working alongside safeguarding professionals in Northern Ireland.

Legal Definition

The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceeding Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

Abusive behaviour between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected and where the course of behaviour* is likely to cause the victim to suffer physical or psychological harm.

‘Personally connected’ means that they are:

- Current or former intimate partners
- Members of the same family
- People who are or who have lived together

Abusive behaviour is defined as:

- Violent (sexual or physical) or threatening behaviour
- Isolating from family, friends or social support
- Controlling, regulating or monitoring day to day activities
- Restricting someone’s freedom
- Making someone feel frightened, humiliated or degraded
- Preventing access to money or employment

*A course of behaviour is behaviour that happens on two or more occasions.

Non-Molestation and Occupation Orders

The [Family Homes and Domestic Violence \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1998](#) has provisions to give protection to victims of domestic abuse and their children.

Non-Molestation Orders are designed to protect victims of domestic abuse and their children from harassment, pestering, intimidation, threats and actual violence. They are issued by the courts.

Occupation Orders can restrict who lives in or has access to a home and can exclude a perpetrator from a home or place conditions on their access.

Clare's Law, Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) how the police share information about a person's previous violent or abusive offending. It can protect a partner or ex-partner from being a victim of abuse.

"Right to ask" is when you ask the police or agencies for information on another person. If you're worried that another person could hurt or abuse you, you can ask if they have a police record. Family, friends or those who may be responsible for your safeguarding such as a social worker, can also ask for you. Under "right to know" the police can check if the person there are concerns about has a police record. If so, the police will share that information. You can ask the police for information by going into a police station or by asking online.



Relevant Safeguarding Professionals:

PSNI - Domestic abuse is a crime. Victim-survivors can report domestic abuse to the police to seek protection and legal justice. You would always report to the police if there is risk to life and limb, and your organisation's safeguarding lead may refer cases of domestic abuse to the police in other circumstances too.

Northern Ireland Gateway to Children's Social Work Services - your safeguarding lead will contact your local Gateway team when children and young people need social services support. Wherever you live in Northern Ireland, Out of Hours Social Workers can be contacted through one central telephone number: (028) 0800 197 9995. Your safeguarding lead will also report to Gateway Services if receive an allegation against an adult who works with children and young people.



Domestic Abuse in Scotland

The following pages contain useful information for those working alongside safeguarding professionals in Scotland.

Legal Definition:

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 defines domestic abuse as:

Abusive behaviour towards a partner or ex-partner when both are over the age of 16 and the behaviour is likely to cause the victim to suffer physical or psychological harm.

Abusive behaviour is defined as:

- Violent (sexual or physical), threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Isolating from family, friends or sources of support
- Controlling, regulating or monitoring day to day activities
- Restricting someone's freedom
- Making someone feel frightened, humiliated or degraded
- Preventing access to money or employment

Abusive behaviour may be directed towards the victim or the victim's children.



Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders:

Police and courts can issue legal restrictions on perpetrators of domestic abuse in order to protect victim-survivors:

Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) – issued by police to provide immediate, short-term protection for a victim to provide protection until a DAPO can be applied for.

Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) – issued by courts to provide long-term protection for the victim. It can exclude the perpetrator from a home and restrict contact with the victim and / or children. Breach of a DAPO is a criminal offence.

Clare's Law - Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) This gives people the right to ask about the background of their partner. It also allows concerned relatives and friends, the right to ask about someone's partner. They can ask if they have been abusive in the past. It also gives Police Scotland the power to tell people that they may be at risk. This information can be given if it is not asked for. Where Police Scotland have information that a person may be at harm of domestic abuse by their partner, they have the power to tell them.

Relevant Safeguarding Professionals:

Police Scotland - Domestic abuse is a crime. Victim-survivors can report domestic abuse to the police to seek protection and legal justice. You would always report to the police if there is risk to life and limb, and your organisation's safeguarding lead may refer cases of domestic abuse to the police in other circumstances too.

Children's Social Work Services - every local authority in Scotland has a [Children and Family Services department](#). They have a duty to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children in need in their area. Your organisation's safeguarding lead or the child's Named Person (see below) may contact them when they are concerned that a child may be affected by Domestic Abuse.

Named Person – every child in Scotland is assigned a 'Named Person' to act as a single point of contact for their support and protection. A child's named person is initially the midwife, then the health visitor, and then the headteacher/guidance teacher at their school. When a situation of domestic abuse affects a child, your organisation's safeguarding lead may liaise with a child's Named Person in order to support or safeguard the child.



Domestic Abuse in Wales

The following pages contain useful information for those working alongside safeguarding professionals in Wales.

Legal Definition:

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

Abuse between people aged 16 or over who are ‘personally connected’.

‘Personally connected’ means that they are:

- Current or former intimate partners
- Family members
- Individuals who share parental responsibility for a child
- People who live or have lived together

The Act defines abusive behaviour as:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse (e.g. controlling finances, preventing access to money or employment)
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Children as Victims

The Act also recognises that a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to or under the parental responsibility of either the abuser or the abused, is a victim of domestic abuse in their own right.



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Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) – issued by courts to provide long-term protection for the victim. Breach of a DAPO is a criminal offence that could incur a fine, prison sentence, or both.

Clare’s Law, Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) how the police share information about a person’s previous violent or abusive offending. It can protect a partner or ex-partner from being a victim of abuse.

“Right to ask” is when you ask the police or agencies for information on another person. If you’re worried that another person could hurt or abuse you, you can ask if they have a police record. Family, friends or those who may be responsible for your safeguarding such as a social worker, can also ask for you. Under “right to know” the police can check if the person there are concerns about has a police record. If so, the police will share that information. You can ask the police for information by going into a police station or by asking online. Links for more information are in the Signposting section.

Relevant Safeguarding Professionals:

Police – Domestic abuse is a crime. Victim-survivors can report domestic abuse to the police to seek protection and legal justice. Always report to the police if there is risk to life and limb. Your organisation's safeguarding lead may refer cases of domestic abuse to the police in other circumstances too.

Children's Social Care Services – Your organisation's safeguarding lead may refer domestic abuse concerns to Children's Social Care Services when there are children involved, so they can act to protect the child and support families and carers.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) - these are teams made up of professionals from different agencies including social work, police, health, and education. The team usually provide an early triage and multi-agency assessment of safeguarding concerns in respect of both children and adults. Many Local Authorities in Wales have a MASH team, but not all.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – person in Social Services responsible for managing and overseeing concerns, allegations and offences relating to those in a Position of Trust across a local authority area. May also be known as Designated Officer for Allegations (DOFA). Your safeguarding lead may refer to them if an alleged perpetrator of domestic abuse has a Position of Trust.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

This law addresses violence towards women and girls more broadly, not only domestic violence. The key elements of this law are: To prevent gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence, to protect victims and support those affected.

It also lays out the 'Ask and Act' principle – asking potential victims about the possibility of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence where such abuse is suspected and to 'act' so suffering and harm as a result of the violence and abuse is prevented or reduced.

Mandatory Reporting

The duty to report a concern about adults or children at risk of abuse or neglect to the local authority includes suspected domestic abuse, especially where there is a risk of significant harm. They offer the following guidance for children [here](#), and for adults [here](#).

In this guidance, 'duty to report' means telling social services, who—along with the police—have the legal power to look into suspected abuse or neglect. The word 'practitioner' is used to refer to both paid staff and unpaid volunteers.

If any person has knowledge, concerns or suspicions that a child is suffering, has suffered or is likely to be at risk of harm, it is their responsibility to ensure that the concerns are referred to social services or the police who have statutory duties and powers to make enquiries and intervene when necessary.

THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF PERSONAL CHOICE.

'At risk'

The use of the term 'at risk' means that actual abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm do not necessarily need to occur, rather without interventions by services actual abuse and neglect are likely to occur.

Example: A practitioner notices that 8-year-old Lily has come to group with bruises on her arms and has mentioned in passing that "Mum and Dad shout a lot and things get broken." One day, she quietly tells the practitioner that she's scared to go home because: "Dad was really angry last night, and Mum cried all night."



Children and Domestic Abuse

Children are not just witnesses to domestic abuse—they are victims too. Seeing, hearing, or being affected by abuse at home can seriously impact their emotions, behaviour, relationships, and mental health, both now and in the future. Across the UK, the law now recognises children as victims when they are exposed to domestic abuse.

How domestic abuse affects children

Emotional Impact: Children may feel anxious, scared, confused, or blame themselves. They might struggle with low self-esteem or the ongoing effects of trauma.

Behavioural Changes: Some children misbehave, while others withdraw. School problems or unusual behaviour for their age are common.

Relationship Struggles: Abuse at home can affect how children understand and form relationships, sometimes making unhealthy patterns seem normal.

Direct Harm: Children in abusive homes are also at higher risk of being abused or neglected themselves.

How to support children

- **Acknowledge their experience:** Let children know their feelings matter and that the abuse is not their fault.
- **Encourage speaking up:** Reassure children that talking to a trusted adult or calling Childline is a brave and positive step.

Children and Domestic Abuse (continued)

- Encourage speaking up: Reassure children that talking to a trusted adult or calling Childline is a brave and positive step.
- Listen and respond with care: Children may not always speak directly about abuse. Pay attention, take them seriously, and respond gently.
- Work together: Schools, social workers, police, health professionals and those in faith and community groups should share information and support plans.
- Be trauma-aware: Focus on building trust, emotional safety, and giving children a sense of control.
- Respect diversity: Be mindful of each child's cultural and social background.
- Involve them in safety planning: When appropriate, include children in decisions about their safety to help them feel more secure. It's helpful to tell children to never get in the middle of adults who are arguing.



Honour-based Abuse

Honour-based abuse often overlaps with domestic abuse and mostly affects women and girls, though men/boys and LGBTQ+ individuals may also be victims. It's deeply rooted in cultural, social, or religious beliefs about family honour and shame. It can include a range of controlling behaviours, including forced marriage, isolation, and even homicide ('honour' killings). Like domestic abuse, this frequently occurs within the home, and coercive control and isolation are central. Honour-based abuse is a serious, often hidden form of domestic abuse and safeguarding must not be compromised by fear of causing offence.

Key characteristics of Honour-Based Abuse

- **Collective:** Unlike most domestic abuse situations, it may involve multiple perpetrators—extended family or community members.
- **Cultural control:** Victims are often targeted for resisting cultural norms (e.g., refusing arranged marriage, choosing a partner).
- **Overlaps with forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM):** These can be forms of honour-based abuse and are criminal offences in the UK.
- **Children may be raised in environments where abuse is normalised as discipline or protection of family values.**
- **Honour-based motives are considered in criminal cases but are not a specific legal offence.**

Honour-based Abuse (continued)

People affected by honour-based abuse may find it hard to ask for help because they're scared of being hurt, rejected, or judged. They might not trust the authorities, face language or cultural misunderstandings, or worry about what will happen to their children. For some, insecure immigration status makes seeking support feel impossible.

How to support victims:

Believe and prioritise Safety: Victims are often under extreme risk and may require immediate safeguarding.

Avoid family mediation: Family or community involvement may escalate danger—never attempt to mediate in honour-based abuse cases.

Record and document concerns: Keep detailed, factual records and refer appropriately which might include adult and child safeguarding pathways, and the specialist services (listed in Signposting section) when needed.



Domestic Abuse and the Christian Faith

This section offers guidance on the intersection between Christian belief and domestic abuse, highlighting pastoral considerations, the misuse of Scripture, and the critical importance of survivor safety.

Misuse of Scripture

Abusers may manipulate Scripture to control, shame, or silence their partner. No Scripture justifies abuse, and passages need to be read in context and balanced with theologies of safety and justice. Common examples include:

- Ephesians 5:22 – “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands...” often cited out of context to justify control or dominance.
- Matthew 5:39 – “Turn the other cheek” misused to encourage victims to endure abuse as an act of forgiveness or spiritual strength.
- Malachi 2:16 – “God hates divorce” used to pressure victims into staying in dangerous relationships.
- 1 Corinthians 7:4 – Misinterpreted to demand sexual availability, leading to coercion or marital rape.

Counselling Couples together

Churches sometimes offer or refer couples for joint pastoral counselling, but this can be dangerous in situations involving domestic abuse. It wrongly assumes both partners share responsibility, which can blame the victim. It may also increase the victim’s risk after sessions, as abusers can use counselling to manipulate, appear reformed, or discredit their partner. Victims may also feel pressured to forgive or stay in the relationship due to religious expectations.

Domestic Abuse and the Christian Faith (continued)

Advice for churches

- Believe survivors: Many victims approach church leaders first. Their disclosures should be taken seriously and without judgment.
- Never minimise abuse as ‘marital conflict’: Understand the power dynamics at play.
- Know when to refer: Abuse is not just a spiritual issue—it is a safeguarding and often criminal concern. Refer to appropriate services (e.g., police, domestic abuse specialists, safeguarding leads).
- Develop a theology of safety and equality: Promote teachings that reflect the heart of the Gospel—justice, healing, and freedom.

Barriers Christian victim-survivors may face

Victims of domestic abuse may fear being judged or blamed, especially within faith communities where there can be strong expectations around keeping a marriage together. Churches may unintentionally pressure victims to forgive or stay, putting their safety at risk. Abuse can also cause deep spiritual confusion, leaving survivors struggling with feelings of guilt, unworthiness, or conflict about their faith.

Christian communities can play a powerful role in supporting survivors, but only when they confront abuse clearly and biblically. Faith must never be used as a reason to remain in danger. Scripture, when rightly understood, calls for the protection of the vulnerable, the pursuit of justice, and the promotion of peace—not silence in the face of violence.



Perpetrator Support and Accountability

While accountability and legal consequences are essential in addressing domestic abuse, when individuals recognise their harmful behaviour, they can voluntarily seek help before or outside of the criminal justice system. Perpetrators may be partners, ex-partners, family members, or carers, and abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial, or coercive. Early intervention—particularly where someone expresses concern about their behaviour—offers a chance to interrupt the cycle of abuse.

Guiding Principles

- Safety comes first: Any support or intervention with a perpetrator must be underpinned by a strong focus on the safety of victims and children.
- Voluntary doesn't mean unaccountable: Choosing help is not the same as avoiding responsibility. Behaviour change requires acknowledgement of harm and a commitment to long-term change.
- General counselling isn't enough: Perpetrators need specialist domestic abuse programmes that address patterns of power and control—not just anger or conflict.

Perpetrator Support and Accountability (continued)

Some helpful resources include:

Respect Phonenumber (UK-wide)

A confidential helpline, email, and webchat service for men and women who are concerned about their use of abusive behaviour in relationships.

Advisors offer non-judgmental support and referrals to accredited behaviour change programmes. www.respectphonenumber.org.uk

Change Project (England)

Offers in-person and online domestic abuse behaviour change programmes, often open to self-referral. Some locations offer parallel support for victims/survivors. www.thechange-project.org

Promoting Positive Relationship Programme (Northern Ireland)

Voluntary support for men who recognise a need to address their harmful behaviours. [Promoting Positive Relationships Programme | Centre for Justice Innovation](#)

Caledonian System (Scotland)

Primarily court-mandated, but some regions may accept voluntary referrals through local authorities. Includes structured behavioural work and victim support.

Voluntary behaviour change programmes can offer a lifeline—both to perpetrators who want to stop harming and to the people at risk around them. Accessing support voluntarily should never replace criminal accountability when required, but it can be a vital step in breaking the cycle of abuse and building healthier, safer relationships.



Support in Your Community

Collaborating with domestic abuse services in your area can be one of the most effective ways of supporting the victim-survivors of domestic abuse, and but it can be helpful to build those links proactively. Spend some time now getting the following information:

Safeguarding professional / statutory agency:	Contact details:
Local authority's website	
Contact for adult safeguarding concern – normal contacts and out of hours	
Contact for child safeguarding concern – normal contacts and out of hours	
Domestic abuse services/resources	

Connecting with your local safeguarding professionals (continued)

Safeguarding professional / statutory agency:	Contact details:
Multi-agency area team? Including a link to multi-agency reporting form, where applicable.	
Specialist services particularly relevant to your area	
Local Community and Voluntary Services (i.e. foodbanks, advice services)	
Other	



Technology-facilitated Domestic Abuse

Technology has become a powerful tool in the hands of perpetrators of domestic abuse. Digital platforms can be abused to monitor, control, intimidate, and harass. Technology-facilitated abuse may occur during a relationship, after separation, or as part of ongoing coercive control. It can be especially difficult to detect and prove, and it affects both adults and children.

Forms of Technology-Facilitated Abuse

1. Surveillance and monitoring. Tracking devices or apps installed on phones, vehicles, or children's belongings. Spyware or stalkerware may be secretly installed on devices to monitor messages, calls, or location, and accounts can be hacked to read emails, monitor social media, or impersonate the victim.
2. Harassment and threats. Receiving abusive messages via SMS, email, WhatsApp, or social media. Persistent calling or messaging using multiple accounts or withheld numbers, and online shaming or doxxing^[1], including the sharing of personal or intimate images without consent (e.g. "revenge porn").
3. Coercion and Control. Controlling access to devices (e.g. taking away phones, demanding passwords). Using smart home technology to monitor, frighten, or manipulate (e.g. remotely locking doors, turning off lights, altering thermostats).

[1] Doxxing is the act of revealing identifying information about someone online, such as their real name, home address, workplace, phone, financial, and other personal information.

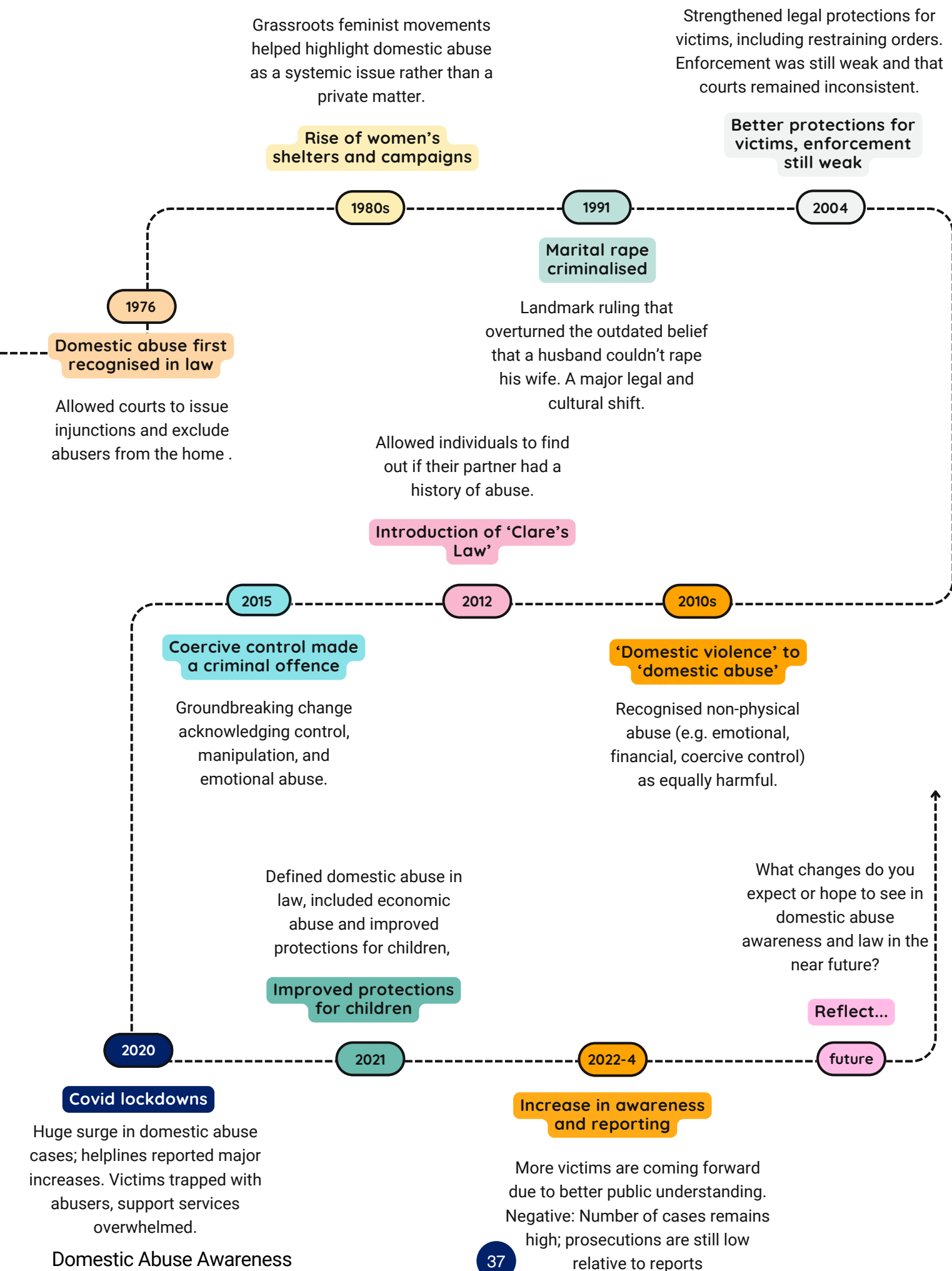
Technology-facilitated Domestic Abuse (continued)

Technology Abuse and the Law

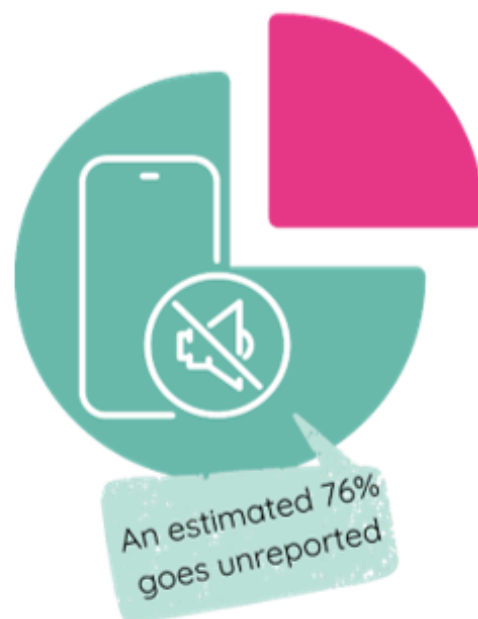
Technology is often used as a tool for abuse, including controlling behaviour, harassment, and invasion of privacy. This can involve things like tracking someone's location, sharing private images without consent, or using social media to stalk or intimidate. The law recognises these behaviours as serious offences, and there are legal protections in place to prevent and respond to digital abuse. Measures can also be taken to restrict contact and protect victims both online and offline.

Resources for supporting victim-survivors of technology-facilitated domestic abuse are in the signposting section.

Domestic Abuse in the UK: Timeline



Domestic Abuse in the UK: Timeline



Approximately 130 domestic abuse-related killings happen every year in the UK



Additional considerations for victim-survivors with specific characteristics

	Things to be aware of:	It can help to...
Elderly victims	Abuse may be perpetrated by adult children, caregivers, or spouses.	Ask about family dynamics and caregiving situations with sensitivity.
	Abuse can include neglect, financial exploitation, or overmedication.	Pay attention to financial and medical comments and indicators.
	May feel shame, dependency, or fear of institutionalisation if they report.	Reassure them about autonomy and confidentiality.
	Cognitive decline or health issues can complicate reporting or credibility.	Use trauma-aware and age-appropriate communication tools. Involve trusted third parties only with consent.
Men and boys	Social stigma may prevent men from identifying as victims or seeking help.	Normalise the conversation around male victimhood. Use inclusive language in materials and outreach.
	Fear of not being believed or being perceived as the aggressor.	Clearly explain that abuse is not gender-specific and everyone deserves safety.
	May underreport due to pride, cultural expectations, or isolation.	Offer anonymous or low-barrier ways to access support. Promote confidentiality.

Additional considerations for victim-survivors with specific characteristics (continued)

	Things to be aware of:	It can help to...
Men and boys	Services may be designed primarily for women.	Identify and connect to male-friendly or gender-neutral resources.
Teens and young adults	Abuse can take the form of digital abuse (e.g., monitoring, revenge porn).	Include discussion on healthy digital boundaries and consent.
	May not recognise the behaviours as abuse (e.g., jealousy, isolation tactics).	Be aware of red flags and relationship dynamics through media, training and peer stories.
	May fear judgment, loss of social status, or retaliation.	Create youth-friendly, confidential channels for disclosure and help-seeking.
	They may be dependent on abuser (e.g., emotionally, financially, socially).	Signpost to holistic support (housing, school help, emotional support). Engage trusted adults if safe.

Sample Record Form

Child/Adult's name (subject of concern): Aaliyah	Date of birth/age: 16 Child/Adult: Child	Address: 1 Street, Town, Postcode
Date & time of incident: 8 pm Thursday DD/MM/YY	Date & time: 9 pm Thursday DD/MM/YY (of writing):	
Your Name (print): Robin Surname Role/Job title: Youth group volunteer Signature: Your signature		
Other members of the household: Mum and Dad		
Record the following factually: Nature of concern, e.g. disclosure, change in behaviour, demeanour, appearance, injury, witnesses etc. <i>(please include as much detail in this section as possible. Remember – the quality of your information will inform the level of intervention initiated. Attach additional sheets if necessary.)</i>	<p>I noticed Aaliyah coming out of the bathroom crying this evening. When I asked if she was ok, she told me that her boyfriend Liam is angry with her for posting 'slutty' things and has threatened to share her messages and photos with others. He says he's 'red-pilled' now and deserves better (I'm not really sure what that means). Aaliyah said that when she saw him last week, he was being really intense and affectionate, then he got angry when she asked him to slow down.</p> <p>I have also noticed that she seems different lately. She's less chatty and isn't talking to her friends as much as normal.</p>	
How did the concern come to light?	I saw Aaliyah crying and asked her if she was ok.	
What is the child/adult saying about what has happened?	She says she feels stuck and that he "hasn't really done anything wrong." She also said that he's angry and threatening to share her messages.	

Sample Record Form (continued)

Any other relevant information. Previous concerns etc.	Her mum is worried about her and said that Liam's comments endlessly on Aaliyah's posts, often being sexist, and Aaliyah worries about upsetting him.
Date and time of discussion with Safeguarding Lead: DD/MM/YY	

The following portion is for Safeguarding Leads, or those with specific safeguarding responsibilities within your organisation:

Part 2: Record of concern about a child/adult's safety and welfare

Information received by Safeguarding Lead:	Date: DD/MM/YY	Time completed: 00:00	From whom: Robin Surname
Any advice sought, if applicable	Date: DD/MM/YY	Time completed: DD/MM/YY	Source of advice: name/organisation: Advisor's name, <u>Thirtyone:eight</u>
	Advice received: Need a bit more information to get a full picture and decide on next steps. Talk to Aaliyah and find out how she is feeling, what she would like to happen and who she would feel comfortable talking to. Clarify what happened when Liam was 'super intense and affectionate and got angry when she asked him to slow down.' If there <u>was</u> an assault, Children's Services and police need to be informed.		

Sample Record Form (continued)

	<p>Find out if Liam is from same school / college. Could contact school Safeguarding Lead, particularly around incel language.</p> <p>Advice received about informing parents or in the case of adults, seeking consent/capacity:</p> <p>Ideally talk to parents and encourage Aaliyah to do so. Call back to get further advice is Aaliyah doesn't want this to happen or if there is any reason why this might increase risk.</p>							
Initial Assessment of concern following advice	<p>Spoke to Aaliyah alongside Robin. No physical or sexual assault but she says she feels 'confused and stuck and doesn't know what to do'. She has a good relationship with her parents and is already talking to her mum about her feelings and what is happening. She is happy for us to speak to mum and the school support team.</p>							
Action taken with reasons recorded <i>(e.g. Referral completed, monitoring advice given to appropriate staff, CAF etc)</i>	Date: DD/MM/YY	Time completed: 00:00	By whom: Your Name – Safeguarding Lead					
	Referral		To whom					
	Signposting to other community resources Signposted to Childline and <u>told</u> about Report Remove re threat over images.							
	Pastoral Care and other support from church Support through Robin, offer pastoral support to family too.							
	Ongoing Monitoring Robin to check in weekly with Aaliyah and to continue to pass on any concerns. Refer to Children's Services if any escalation.							
Parent/carer informed?	Y	Who spoken to: Mum	Date: DD/MM/YY	Time: 00:00	By whom: Your Name – Safeguarding Lead			

Sample Record Form (continued)

	N-	Detail reason: Provide support at home and Aaliyah happy with the communication.			
Any other relevant information	We have an earlier concern on file about Aaliyah and Liam. See record dated DD/MM/YY				
Name of Safeguarding Lead:	Your Name		Signature:	Your Signature	

Overview of actions

S.No.	Date	Outcome (if known)	Service currently involved	Ongoing support offered by church (this can include monitoring)- include dates
1.				

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Signposting

Please note: These links are accurate at the time of course preparation.
Thirtyone:eight don't recommend organisations, but you may find these links useful when looking for support and guidance.

In times of crisis:

Call 999 in emergency situations. If you are unable to speak safely, you can press 55 to signal to the call operator that you are in danger.

Service to enable d/Deaf, hearing or speech impaired people to make emergency calls: [Contact 999 using Relay UK - How to use Relay UK | Relay UK](#)

National and UK-Wide Domestic Abuse Organisations

0808 2000 247 [Homepage - National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) Free, 24 hour helpline (BSL helpline available 10 am – 6 pm Monday to Friday)

[Refuge, the largest UK domestic abuse organisation for women](#)

England: [Home - Women's Aid](#)

Northern Ireland: [Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland](#) (Main page has contact details of local Women's Aid groups. Out of hours support through Freephone 24hr Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline, managed by Nexus NI on 0808 802 1414)

Scotland: 0800 027 1234 [Scottish Women's Aid](#) | 24 hour helpline and online chat

Wales: 0808 80 10 80 [Home : Welsh Women's Aid](#) 24 hour helpline in English and Welsh, also live chat, email, text and signing options available

Asylum Seekers and Refugee Support:

[Migrants affected by Domestic Abuse – Right to Remain](#)

[Asylum support domestic abuse.docx](#) (Home Office information and guidance)

[Immigration and asylum law information | Rights of Women](#)

BAME Support:

[Black and Minoritised Communities | RISE](#)

[Support for Black survivors of abuse and violence | HERSANA](#)

[BAME Women & Immigration Support | Scottish Women's Rights Centre](#)

[Bawso | Supporting ethnic minorities affected by violence and exploitation](#)

Signposting (continued)

Children and Domestic Abuse:

[Domestic abuse | Keeping children safe | Action For Children](#)
[How to Protect Children From Domestic Abuse | NSPCC](#)
[Effects of domestic abuse on children | Barnardo's](#)
[Abuse in Teenage Relationships - Reducing the Risk](#)
[Safe Young Lives | Young people & domestic abuse - SafeLives](#)

Clare's Law / Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme:

England and Wales:

Information: [Request information under Clare's Law: Make a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\) application | Police.uk](#)
Easy read version: [Domestic violence disclosure scheme 'Clare's Law'](#)
[Make a request: Request information under Clare's Law: Make a Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\) application | Police.uk](#)

Northern Ireland:

Information: [Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme | PSNI](#)
Make a request: [Domestic violence disclosure | PSNI](#)

Scotland:

Information and BSL version: [Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland - Police Scotland](#)
Make a request: [Request information in Scotland](#)

Disability Support and Information:

Support and information for d/Deaf people including BSL support [Domestic Abuse Information and Service Details - SignHealth](#)
[Support for disabled women - Refuge](#)
Information and advice including videos from the Us Too Project, for and by women with learning disabilities and autistic women. [Choice Support | Domestic abuse](#)
Spotlight report on disabled people and domestic abuse – information and research. [Disabled-Survivors-Too.pdf](#)

Signposting (continued)

'Honour' Based Abuse Support and Information:

[Karma Nirvana](#): UK-wide specialist support for victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage.

Forced Marriage Unit (FMU): 020 7008 0151 – Government support line for professionals and victims. Further information and advice [here](#).

[Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence Charity - Halo Project](#)

[IKWRO](#) – Women's Rights Organisation: Advocacy and support for Middle Eastern, North African and Afghan women and girls.

[Southall Black Sisters](#): Legal and emotional support for BAME women facing honour-based abuse and domestic abuse.

[Childline](#): Resources for children at risk of honour-based abuse or forced marriage.

[National FGM centre](#)

Faith-Based Organisations and Resources:

[MWN Helpline UK](#) Muslim Women's Network 0800 999 5786

[Restored](#) – A Christian charity working to equip churches to address violence against women and support survivors.

[Sikh Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Charity](#) 0333 090 1220 Specialist support for Sikh and Panjabi communities

LGBTQ+ Support:

[Galop - the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity](#)

[LGBTQ+ victims of domestic abuse - IDAS](#)

Male Victim-Survivor Support:

[ManKind Initiative - Supporting Male Victims of Domestic Abuse](#)

[Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK](#)

[Male Victim Domestic Abuse Support - Dads Unlimited](#)

Signposting (continued)

Older Adults Support:

[Domestic abuse – what is it? | Age UK](#)

[Domestic abuse | Hourglass](#)

Technology-facilitated domestic abuse - Support and Information:

[Refuge](#): Offers guidance on securing devices and staying safe online.

[Revenge Porn Helpline](#): Support for adults affected by intimate image abuse.

[Report Remove](#): Tool by Childline to enable under 18s in the UK to confidentially report and remove sexual images and videos of themselves from the internet.

[Tech-facilitated abuse: Guide for parents | Internet Matters](#)

Thirtyone:eight Resources:

[How to respond to domestic abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](#)

[Domestic abuse \(thirtyoneeight.org\)](#) (Members' resource)

Signposting: Resources Commonly Shared in the Webinar

Please note: These links are accurate at the time of course preparation. Thirtyone:eight don't recommend organisations, but you may find these links useful when looking for support and guidance.

These are shared in the order they're likely to be mentioned during our webinar. Some of these are also included in our signposting section.

Introduction

References for statistics and information in scene setting:

[Facts And Figures | Women's Aid ABCLN](#)

[Fraction of domestic violence cases result in conviction, ONS says - BBC News](#)

[Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Supporting documents - Domestic abuse: statistics recorded by the police in Scotland, 2022-23 - gov.scot](#)

[Data about domestic abuse - SafeLives](#)

Module 1 – Recognise

Source of definition: [Domestic abuse | Hourglass](#)

Source of Victim-Survivor quote – Rosie Duffield: [Domestic Abuse Quotes · National Centre for Domestic Violence](#)

Source of ethnicity statistics: [Victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures](#)

Source of information and statistics for older adults: [Domestic abuse | Hourglass](#) and [What we know now about older victims of domestic abuse | Discover | Age UK](#)

Signposting linked to Amandeep's scenario: [Sikh Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Charity](#) and [About us – Karma Nirvana](#)

Source of Coercive Control definition: [Coercive control - Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland](#)

One source of the Cycle of Abuse: [What is the Cycle of Abuse?](#)

Victim-Survivor Quote: [Jill's Story | RISE](#)

Module 2 – Respond

Victim-Survivor Quote: [Quotes - Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service](#)

Quote from 'The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So' by Helen Paynter [The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So Eden.co.uk](#)

Video – The Monster Who Came to Tea (Please be mindful of your wellbeing if you choose to watch this powerful video): [The Monster Who Came to Tea](#)

Signposting: Resources Commonly Shared in the Webinar (continued)

Module 3 – Record

Victim-Survivor Quote: [Survivors' Stories - Mankind](#)

Source for figures about pregnancy and children in proximity: [Facts And Figures | Women's Aid ABCLN](#)

Module 4 – Report

Victim-Survivor Quote: [Jill's Story | RISE](#)

Children's Quotes: [Experience and impact of domestic abuse](#)

Module 5 – Reflect

Video - Shona's Story: [What is Coercive Control? Shona's Story](#)

Victim-Survivor Quote: [Domestic Abuse Quotes · National Centre for Domestic Violence](#)