

Domestic Abuse: How to Get Help

In addition to the dedicated webpage on [NI Direct](#) where people can access cost of living help and advice, this guidance provides information about domestic abuse support services that continue to be available. It may also be helpful to those who are concerned about someone else such as a friend, family member or a neighbour.

Domestic abuse is not acceptable in any situation. It is important that those suffering from abuse, violence or a threat of violence in their home, reach out and seek help.

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Introduction

We continue to ensure that support, advice and accommodation remain available as needed and we are actively seeking to raise awareness of the help available to victims. Anyone can become a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation or ethnicity and the safety and well-being of everyone who is at risk of experiencing domestic abuse is a priority for us.

There is never an excuse for domestic abuse, no matter what the circumstances are. The police would encourage anyone experiencing any form of domestic abuse to get in touch with them or one of the specialist organisations, many of which are listed below.

The support of family, friends, neighbours and community groups can be a vital lifeline to those living with domestic abuse. Those who are worried that someone they know may be a victim or at risk of domestic abuse should reassure them that the police and support services are still there to help and direct them to sources of support.

We have plans to raise awareness of this support and help for victims through media campaigns by the Department of Justice and PSNI and the 24-hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline. This will raise awareness of the issue of domestic abuse and reassure those suffering from this that they can get help.

The government supports and funds several charities and organisations who can provide advice and guidance and we remain in regular contact with them.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is defined as any violent behaviour within a family or relationship, as well as emotional abuse. This would apply to relationships between a couple or one family member abusing another.

It is important to remember that someone does not have to be physically harmed (pushed, hit, punched, kicked, choked etc.) to be abused. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- coercive control and 'gaslighting' – (gaslighting occurs when an abuser manipulates information in such a way as to make their victim question their sanity)
- financial/economic abuse
- online/digital abuse
- verbal abuse
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- honour based violence and forced marriage

Legislation has been taken forward in Northern Ireland to ensure that these types of domestic abuse are illegal, with a pattern of non-physical abusive behaviour now a crime.

What are the signs to look for?

There are often signs that someone is a victim of domestic abuse. These include the individual:

- being withdrawn
- having bruises or unexplained/frequent injuries
- having heightened anxiety or fearfulness
- having their finances controlled
- not being allowed to leave the house
- having their technology use, such as social media platforms, monitored.

Friends and family should be aware that physical injuries may not always be visible.

Where to get help

It is important that those who are being abused, or are worried that they may commit domestic abuse, tell someone. The police will take this seriously and should be the first port of call for those who feel confident enough to speak to them. They can be contacted as set out below.

Those who suspect that a friend, neighbour or someone in their community is a victim of domestic abuse should report suspicions to the police. This may save someone's life or prevent serious harm occurring.

The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI)

The PSNI are there to help anyone suffering domestic abuse and they are committed to bringing offenders to justice. They work closely with partner organisations to provide help, support and guidance to those in need.

In an emergency

If someone is in **immediate danger** or feels threatened or knows somebody else who is in immediate danger or feels threatened, they should **call 999** (18000 for text phone users) and ask for the police.

If a victim is in in danger but unable to talk on the phone, they should dial 999 and listen to the instructions. PSNI have a **Silent Solutions** system which enables a 999 mobile caller who is too scared to make a noise, or speak, to press 55 when prompted – to inform police they are in an emergency situation.

Non-emergency

Anyone needing assistance or advice concerning domestic abuse in a non-emergency situation can call the PSNI on **101** or call into their local police station. They can also contact the police online.

For further information:



www.psnipolice.uk/crime/domestic-abuse/what-can-i-do/

The Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline

The Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline is a Freephone confidential service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week across Northern Ireland. It will provide support in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

The Helpline is funded by three government departments – Health, Justice and Communities and offers support, help, information and referral to victims, as well as to concerned friends, family and professionals. It is specifically for domestic and sexual abuse and will refer those presenting with other issues to appropriate services. Those callers from outside Northern Ireland will be directed to other regional support services.

Contact the 24 hour Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline for support on:



0808 802 1414 (Freephone)



help@dsahelpline.org



www.dsahelpline.org (web chat)

If necessary, assistance can be provided in alternative languages.

It is safe to make a call to the Helpline from a landline as the number is not traceable by dialling 1471 and the number will not show up on a phone bill. No one will therefore know the call was made.

The **Ask for ANI Code Word scheme** is also available in Boots pharmacies as well as a number of independent pharmacies. Participating pharmacies will have promotional material on display in store to signal that they are taking part. The scheme allows those at risk or suffering from abuse to discreetly signal that they need help and access to support. By asking for 'ANI', a trained pharmacy worker will offer a private safe space if someone needs to speak to the police or would like help to access the 24 hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline.

Victim Support NI

Victim Support NI is an independent charity which helps people affected by crime. They offer a free and confidential service, whether or not a crime has been reported and regardless of how long ago the event took place.

Victim Support NI believes that with support and help, survivors of domestic abuse can be empowered to move on from the impact of abuse. They don't just help men and women who've recently experienced domestic abuse, they will provide support and advice months or even years afterwards. This includes support during any criminal proceedings, through Victim Support NI's Witness Service, which supports victims through the court process; or if someone has been injured as a result of a crime, offers support to submit a criminal injury compensation claim to the Compensation Services.

They also offer specialist advocacy support in relation to sexual violence for children and young people. Their Child Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ChISVAs) can support someone to report a crime to the police and through the criminal justice process.

Their services are all confidential, free and available to anyone who has experienced domestic abuse. They can help, regardless of whether the police or anyone else has been told about the abuse and the support they offer will be tailored to an individual's specific needs.

Victim Support NI can be contacted on:



02890 243133 or 02871 370086. Or via Live Chat (9am – 5pm) on www.victimsupportni.com/about-us/contact-us/ and clicking on the 'chat' icon.



belfast@victimsupportni.org.uk or foyle@victimsupportni.org.uk



www.victimsupportni.com/help-for-victims/domestic-violence/

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a voluntary organisation addressing domestic and sexual violence and providing services for women and children. It is made up of eight local Women's Aid groups and Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. Each Women's Aid group offers a range of specialist services to women, children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse.

Women's Aid have services across Northern Ireland. Their eight local groups provide emergency accommodation and outreach support services to women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse throughout Northern Ireland.

If someone is looking for help and support from Women's Aid they can find details of their local organisation, including how to contact them at www.womensaidni.org/get-help/local-groups/

Women's Aid Federation can be contacted on:



02890 249041

 info@womensaidni.org (E-mails sent to this address are **not** confidential)

 www.womensaidni.org

Nexus NI

Nexus NI offer services and support to people who have been affected by sexual abuse in any form, and their services are delivered across Northern Ireland. They provide counselling in 38 locations locally, deliver and support education and training programmes and manage the 24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline.

The Nexus Admin team (queries) can be contacted on:

 02890 326803 or e-mail info@nexusni.org

Adult Gateway Service within HSC Trusts

If you suspect abuse, exploitation or neglect is happening to someone, report your concerns to the Health and Social Care Trust **Adult Protection Gateway Service** in your area. You can also tell the police.

During office hours:

 Belfast Trust – 028 9504 1744

South Eastern Trust – 028 9250 1227

Northern Trust – 028 9441 3659

Southern Trust 028 3756 4423

Western Trust 028 7161 1366

Evenings / weekends:

 028 95049999 (Emergency out of hours)

The Men's Advisory Project NI (MAP NI)

MAP NI is a specialist domestic abuse charity offering information, counselling, help and support to men who have faced violent, abusive or controlling relationships and are still experiencing their effects. MAP's services are offered across Northern Ireland with offices in both Belfast and Foyle.

MAP can be contacted on:



Belfast 02890 241929, Foyle 028 71160001



info@mapni.co.uk



www.mapni.co.uk

[Twitter MensAdvisoryP](#) and [Facebook @mensadvisoryproject](#)

Men's Action Network (MAN)

Men's Action Network supports and promotes the health and well-being of men offering services within the greater Western Trust Area and now securely online throughout NI. MAN offer counselling, support, benefits advice, advocacy and additionally a range of services addressing men's health and wellbeing education and promotion.

As an integral part of their service delivery (MAN) provides a specialist counselling helpline and specialist counselling for male victims of domestic, sexual and coercive behaviour.

Available weekdays, 9am to 4pm. **02871 226530**

MAN also offer an early intervention behavioural change program which includes anger awareness and individual counselling sessions for men who recognise and are willing to take responsibly for behaviour which is in the very early stages of becoming abusive. *(Not open to any man who has a current or pending conviction for any form of abusive behaviour against a partner or child)*

MAN can be contacted on:



02871 377777



admin@man-ni.org



www.man-ni.org/

Twitter @man_in_derry

FB: Men's Action Network

text: 07544802916

The Rainbow Project NI

The Rainbow Project works to improve the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender people in Northern Ireland. They have two centres, in Belfast and Foyle.

Domestic abuse in any relationship is wrong. Someone who is gay, lesbian or transgender may feel more vulnerable or be afraid about disclosing abusive behaviour in their relationship because they are worried they will not be taken seriously. Intimate family members are capable of this abuse as well as intimate partners. The abuse may be physical or be emotional and controlling. It may involve using someone's sexual orientation, gender identity and relationship as a weapon.

Rainbow Project NI has put in place an advocacy service which offers support in total confidence and which can provide information about other support services available.

Rainbow Project NI can be contacted on:



Belfast: 02890 319030, Foyle: 02871 283030



info@rainbow-project.org



www.rainbow-project.org/abuse

Cara-Friend

Cara-Friend has been serving the LGBTQ+ community in Northern Ireland for over 40 years, providing regional LGBTQ+ youth groups, one-to-one support, awareness training for professionals and volunteers, community development, the LGBT Switchboard and the LGBTQ+ inclusive schools programme. All services are confidential.

Cara-Friend can be contacted on:



admin@cara-friend.org.uk



www.cara-friend.org.uk/



If someone is in distress or needs help or support out of hours, call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.

HERe NI

HERE NI is a community organisation and registered charity based in Belfast. They support lesbian and bisexual women and their families in many ways such as providing information, peer support, training facilitation and offering a community space for meeting. HERE NI can be contacted on:

 02890 249452

 tracey.mcdowell@hereni.org

 www.here875008472.wordpress.com/

Relate NI

Relate NI provides a service to individuals, couples or families experiencing violence or abuse in their relationships. They offer services or interventions as part of an ongoing assessment, as a series of counselling sessions or programmes delivered to individuals.

Relate NI can be contacted on:

 028 90323454

 office@relateni.org

 www.relateni.org/domestic_violence_and_abuse_services

Sexual Assault Referral Centre – The Rowan

The Rowan is the regional Sexual Assault Referral Centre for Northern Ireland. It is joint funded by the Department of Health and the PSNI. It delivers a range of support and services, 24-hours each day to children, young people, men and women who have been sexually abused, assaulted or raped – whether this happened in the past or more recently.

There are a number of ways someone can access help and support from The Rowan:

 The Rowan can be accessed through the police. If someone has been sexually assaulted, they can report this to the police directly by telephoning 999 or 101. They will arrange for them to visit The Rowan to discuss and receive the support and services they need.

 Contact The Rowan directly, without any police involvement, by telephoning 0800 389 4424 (freephone from landlines). A friend or family member or any professional or support worker can be asked to make that first call on their behalf.



www.therowan.net

The Victims of Crimes Commissioner Designate

The Commissioner Designate uses victims’ experiences of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland to improve services for victims.

The Commissioner Designate will work closely with victims, their families and support agencies to record their experiences. This will be used as evidence to provide advice to government on changes that are needed for a better victim centred criminal justice system.

The office of the Commissioner Designate will use first hand experiences to improve the services and support offered to victims of crime. It will also listen to victims’ experiences, work with other criminal justice organisations, review victims’ services, raise awareness of the issues affecting victims of crime and advise on good practice.

To contact the Victim of Crimes Commissioner Designate:

 [028 9052 6607](tel:02890526607)

 For general enquiries, contact office@cvocni.org

 If you are a victim of crime who would like to share your experience of the criminal justice system, contact haveyoursay@cvocni.org

Children and Young People

Witnessing and experiencing domestic abuse can have a serious impact on a child. If someone is concerned that a child is at risk of harm they should inform Children’s Social Care or contact the police, if they believe the child is in immediate danger, by ringing 999.

To contact Children’s Social Care for Northern Ireland, ring the Gateway Service teams, *for the area where the child lives*, their contact details are available using the following link: [Gateway Service Teams contact details.](#)

 028 9504 9999 Emergency Out of Hours

 028 9050 7000 Belfast Health & Social Care Trust Gateway

 028 9442 4459/0300 1234 333 Northern Health & Social Care Trust

 028 3756 7100/0800 7837 745 Southern Health & Social Care Trust

 0300 1000 300 South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust



028 7131 4090

Western Health & Social Care Trust

NSPCC

The National Society for the Protection of Children (NSPCC) offers a free and confidential, 24-Hour, Helpline [NSPCC - Child protection helpline](#) for adults who are concerned about a child or young person.

It is available for anyone with concerns about a child and provides professional advice and support.

The NSPCC offer a Therapeutic Recovery Service to children and young people aged 4 - 17 years, who have experienced sexual abuse. Referral can be made through Social Services, The Rowan Centre, GPs, CAMHs or young people can self-refer. NSPCC can be contacted on:



0808 800 5000



help@nspcc.org.uk



www.nspcc.org.uk/

Childline

[Childline](#) is available for children and young people to reach out for help and support by phone or using their online chat service. They also provide specific guidance for young people on how to get help and what to do if they are worried about a friend.

Childline can be contacted on:



0800 1111

Barnardo's

[Barnardo's](#) provides support and protection to children, young people and families facing a wide range of issues, including sexual abuse and domestic abuse. Contact details for Barnardo's can be found at:



www.barnardos.org.uk

Support for older people

Domestic abuse can happen at any age, including old age. Some older people may not recognise their experiences as domestic abuse or may find it difficult to ask for help, especially if they are isolated and/or dependent on their abuser.

Age NI is the leading charity for older people in Northern Ireland. They provide a range of support, guidance and advice for people over 50. If someone is living with domestic abuse or is concerned for an older person who may be suffering domestic abuse, they can contact Age NI for advice and guidance. Age NI can be contacted on:

 0808 808 7575 (8am to 7pm, 365 days a year)

 advice@ageni.org

 www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/

Hourglass Northern Ireland is part of the UK-wide organisation Hourglass, previously Action on Elder Abuse. It is the only charity in the UK working exclusively on challenging the abuse of older people in all its forms.

It supports those experiencing or at risk of harm, as well as raising awareness and advocating effective prevention of harm. They recognise and are deeply concerned about the increased risk of abuse and neglect of older people

If someone has concerns about themselves or an older person, they can call their helpline, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Outside these hours, an email can be sent or a message left.

Hourglass can be contacted on:

 0808 808 8141

 enquiries@wearehourglass.org

 www.wearehourglass.org

Support for people with disabilities

1 in 5 people living in Northern Ireland has a disability (disabilities are not always visible).

Disability Action is a Northern Ireland charity working with people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, sensory disabilities, hidden disabilities and mental health disabilities.

Their head office is in Belfast, with three regional offices in Londonderry/Derry, Dungannon and Carrickfergus. Support for people with disabilities can be contacted on:



02890 297880



hq@disabilityaction.org



www.disabilityaction.org

Hearing loss

For those with hearing loss an emergency SMS service has been developed. Further information relation to this can be found through the below police link.



www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/contact/emergency_sms.pdf

Housing Advice

Accommodation issues become even more urgent where there is a risk of domestic abuse within the home. You can get help if someone you live with is making you feel unsafe. Visit: [Domestic abuse | Housing Advice NI](#)

The Housing Executive is legally responsible for helping people who are homeless and preventing homelessness in Northern Ireland and you may be defined as homeless and entitled to help if you are at risk of violence if you stay in your home. If you are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, contact the Housing Executive as soon as possible on [03448 920 900](tel:03448920900) or go to your local Housing Executive office.

Advice is also available online at: [The Housing Executive - Housing Help \(nihe.gov.uk\)](#) and [NIHE Housing Help - Avoiding Homelessness](#)

Other online sites of housing support and advice are available via: [NI Simon Community](#); [Housing Rights Service](#) and [Home - Homeless Connect](#).

Employers

It is important that employers signal to their workforces that if they are facing domestic abuse, help will be provided. Employers should keep in regular contact with employees they know, or fear, may be facing abuse. If an employer believes there is an immediate risk of harm to someone, or it is an emergency, they should always call 999.

Employers should encourage employees to look out for others who may be facing domestic abuse and signpost them to support. Employees may also be worried about their own abusive behaviour at this time. There is no excuse for domestic abuse, no matter what stresses someone may be under and support should be provided.

The NIC-ICTU and the Labour Relations Agency have published [Safe at home, Safe at work](#)

guidance for employers on how to support employees affected by domestic abuse.

The [Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse](#) website has a range of resources to support employers. Business in the Community also have a [toolkit with information for employers](#).

The Department of Health and Department of Justice have published guidance on how employers can increase their awareness and respond more effectively to domestic and sexual violence and abuse. This guidance can be accessed by using the following link:

www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/sites/default/files/Developing-a-Workplace-Policy-on-Domestic-and-Sexual-Violence.pdf

Support if you are worried about hurting someone

If someone is worried about hurting the ones they love while staying at home, they should speak to someone urgently. They can speak to a GP or they may wish to contact one of the organisations listed above.

They can also call the [Respect Phonenumber](#) **0808 802 4040** for support and help to manage their behaviour. This is an anonymous and confidential helpline for men and women who are harming their partners and families. It takes calls from partners or ex-partners, friends, and relatives who are concerned about perpetrators.