

Useful local contact numbers

Police

Domestic Violence Unit 0161 856 5171

General Enquiries 0161 872 5050

The Domestic Violence Officers are plain clothes officers who can give advice, you do not have to want the police involved, the officers are there to talk in confidence.

Solicitors:

The telephone directory can give you names of solicitors. Choose a firm that specialises in Family Law.

Housing

Housing Advice & Support Service 0161 793 2020

(Mon-Fri 8.30am-4.30pm except Wed 10am—4.30pm)

Social Services

Mon-Fri 8.30am—4.30pm

Locality Teams 0161 909 6530

Emergency Duty Team 0161 603 4500

(Out of hours—offers emergency advice & support and can assist in finding somewhere to stay).

NATIONAL 24 hr FREEPHONE HELPLINE 0808 2000 247

Health

Contact your GP, Health Visitor or Midwife who can provide supportive advice and refer victims on to relevant agencies.

NHS Direct (24 hrs) 0845 46 47

Hope Hospital A&E 0161 206 4841

Support Services

Salford Women's Aid Outreach 0161 736 0737 / 0800 587 4761

Manchester Women's DV Helpline 0161 636 7525 (Mon-Fri 10am—4pm)

Victim Support Line 0845 30 30 900 (Mon-Fri 9am-9pm / Sat & Sun 9am—5pm)

Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327

Salford Drug Service 0161 787 7343

Salford Alcohol Service 0161 745 7227

Childline 0800 1111

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

St Mary's Sexual Assault Centre 0161 274 6515 (24 hr confidential)

Citizens Advice Bureau 0870 120 2424

Lesbian and Gay Foundation 08453 30 30 30

Samaritans 08457 90 9090 or 0161 236 8000

Salford Link Project 0161 787 8219

(For Advice and support for minority ethnic groups)

Visit

www.salford.gov.uk/enough

For more contact numbers and useful information

IN Salford

If someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse.....

If you think a friend or family member is experiencing domestic violence, there are things you can do to help.

Inside this booklet are some suggestions about how to do this effectively, based on what formerly abused women* have said they found helpful.

(*This booklet focuses on women victims by male perpetrators, although we are aware that men can be victims of abuse from a female perpetrator and also abuse can occur in same sex relationships).

People often feel awkward about 'taking sides' and try to keep out of a situation, believing it's not really any of their business. Friends and family may think that they are being 'neutral', but the abuser usually takes this as evidence that his behaviour is acceptable. In addition, an abused woman can easily interpret the 'neutrality' of those closest to her as blame for the situation.

IN Salford

Adapted from the Greater London Authority booklet, November 2006, "If someone you know is experiencing domestic violence....." with kind permission.

MAYOR OF LONDON
GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Raise the issue

Don't wait for your abused friend to tell you about her situation. Bring the subject up yourself when you know her abusive partner isn't around. Let her know you are concerned about her and want to help. **Try not to criticise her partner or the relationship. Instead, focus on the abuse and her safety.** You don't have to know all the answers. The importance of helping your friend break the silence and end the isolation should never be underestimated. Listen to what she says and let her show you how you can be supportive.

Giving Support

You need to support your abused friend in whatever decision she is currently making about her relationship, while being clear that abuse is wrong. It's OK to be truthful or give your opinion, but bear in mind that your friend needs to be supported rather than judged. Maintain contact with her, helping her explore all the options on offer.

Supporting a friend in this way is a huge challenge. You don't want to see her get hurt, but may have to watch her carry on with her partner when you think she should leave him or have him arrested. As her friend, make sure you offer something the abuser doesn't. For example, if he tells her what to do all the time, it's no use you doing the same.

Supporting your friend may prove frustrating: she may not take the course of action that you favour. You may find yourself wondering why she stays or how she puts up with it. It is important, however, to remember three critical things.

- ◆ You are not the person who has to live with the consequences of any decision. She is. Therefore, it isn't surprising that she makes decisions in her best interests (as she sees them), rather than doing what you may want her to do.
- ◆ Leaving is an extremely difficult decision to make, involving both emotional and practical considerations. Moreover, most women are in the position of attempting to make this decision within the context of an abuser who begs them to stay and promises to change.
- ◆ Often, leaving a violent partner only signifies the end of the relationship—not the end of the violence. Two women are killed every week by a current or former male partner. Of these, most were in the process of attempting to leave a violent relationship, or had recently left one.

Suggestions of questions to ask

- ◆ What can I do to help?
- ◆ How has his behaviour made you feel?
- ◆ How is it affecting you?
- ◆ How have you been coping with the abuse?
- ◆ What can you do to make yourself safer?
- ◆ What are you afraid of if you leave?
- ◆ What are you afraid of if you stay?
- ◆ Do you know when an incident is going to happen? Is there a pattern?
- ◆ What is the worst case scenario for yourself / your children?
- ◆ What do you already do to protect yourself / your children? (This is a good chance to help her see how much she may already be doing to stay safe).
- ◆ Which of the things you do to protect yourself / your children work in practice, and which don't?
- ◆ What personal strengths do you have to help you deal with this situation? (Explore how this can be increased, for example, by raising her self-esteem, self-belief and ability to trust her gut instincts).
- ◆ What external resources are there to help you cope (support of friends and family, access to money, access to alternative accommodation and so on)? How can these be increased?
- ◆ Can I help you find out about what other choices might be available?
- ◆ Which options would be most realistic for you? What do you see yourself as actually being able to do? (Focus on those).

Men against domestic violence

Men can play a particularly crucial role in helping to stop domestic abuse. As well as being part of the community that supports and interacts with families dealing with abuse, men are the majority of the judges, police officers and doctors who work with families in crisis. Some are the neighbours, friends, and family members who support victims by reaching out and lending a hand.

Domestic abuse is everyone's concern, and there are many opportunities for men to be involved in making communities safer. Men are crucial to abuse prevention efforts because they are more likely to listen to other men when it comes to the perpetration of domestic abuse. In addition, fathers have enormous influence over the development of their children.

Encourage her to break the isolation. One of the most effective ‘tools’ for abusers is the victim’s isolation from family, friends, co-workers or any type of support system. Help your friend find an agency offering counselling and support groups. Help her see how isolated she is.

Encourage her to take threats seriously. Express your concerns for her safety and never minimise threats made by the abuser. Remember, however, that an abused woman is in the most danger when she has decided to leave. Respect her judgement on the right time to leave. Leaving such a situation is a process, and the time must be right and safe.

Evaluate how she copes. Faced with violence and abuse, many women develop ways of coping that are themselves destructive. Your friend will need support in re-evaluating these negative coping mechanisms, and considering how to adopt more constructive ways of coping. The last thing she will need is another reason to be hard on herself, so real encouragement is required.

Remember: if you feel overwhelmed or frightened yourself, get help.

DON’T.....

Blame her or ask judgemental questions such as “What did you do to make him treat you like that?” or “Why don’t you just break up with him?”

Focus on trying to work out the abuser’s reasons for the abuse. Concentrate on supporting her and discussing what she can do to protect herself.

Be impatient or critical of her if she is confused about what to do, or if she says that she still loves him. It’s difficult for anyone to break up a relationship, and especially hard if they are being abused.

Don’t maintain a friendship with both the victim and the abuser. This part is hard for a lot of people, but the truth is that if you try to support both parties, you’re not going to be much help to either. She needs to be able to talk to someone who believes her, who will not pressure her to ‘see it from the other person’s point of view’, who would never encourage her to get back with the abuser. Placing yourself in the position of the investigator or mediator is not going to help the situation.

If you try to offer help to a friend, remember that you are putting yourself in a dangerous situation. Whatever else you do, be sure to keep yourself safe.

What to say

The following messages will all help your friend if you can get them across when talking about her situation.

Domestic abuse is totally unacceptable. Every woman has the right to live her life free of violence, abuse, intimidation and fear.

Domestic abuse is very common. One woman in four experiences domestic violence at some point in her life.

Domestic abuse is very dangerous. Each week in the UK, two women are killed by a partner or ex-partner.

Domestic abuse is not just about individual men abusing individual women. It is also about the systematic abuse and oppression of women in the society in which we live.

Domestic abuse is about power and control. Abusive, violent and sexually abusive behaviour is wide-ranging and subtle in what it tries to achieve.

Domestic abuse is intentional and instrumental behaviour. It is about scaring a woman into doing something that she doesn’t want to do, or scaring her out of doing something that she does want to do.

The abuser is 100% responsible for his abuse. Alcohol, culture or unemployment are not excuses. His abuse is his problem and his responsibility.

It is not your fault. No woman deserves to be abused, regardless of what she says or does.

A man can change if he wants to. His behaviour is within his control and he can choose to stop.

You cannot change him. He himself is the only person who can stop his violence.

You don’t have to put up with it. A woman has the right to safety and respect, to put herself and her children first and to focus on her needs.

You can increase her safety. If the man is intent on being violent, she will not be able to stop him.

Above all, be patient. Your friend may need to talk about her situation numerous times. She may try to improve things or give her partner several 'last' chances. Remember that women often leave and return several times. If this happens, remember that each time she will gain a little more clarity, and may—given enough ongoing support—eventually make the break final.

Helping to build your friend's self-esteem can have great benefits. Remind her of her good points, challenge her if she puts herself down or blames herself, praise her for every step she takes, and let her know she has your support.

Practical help

On a practical level you could....

- ◆ agree a code word or action that your friend can use to signal that she is in danger and cannot access help herself
- ◆ offer to keep copies of important documents and any other items for her. That way, if she has to leave in a hurry, she doesn't have to waste time collecting important belongings.
- ◆ together or on your own, find out information about local services or help. Offer any practical help you are able (and feel comfortable) to give, such as the use of your telephone or address for information or messages, keeping spare sets of keys / overnight bags / important documents for emergencies.

Finally, get some support for yourself. You have to be strong if you're going to be able to help her. Most domestic abuse services are happy to help with any worries you may have or provide suggestions as to other actions you might take. Most importantly, don't give up on her. You might be her only lifeline.

The following pages show examples of “Do’s and Don’ts”, when supporting your abused friend.

DO....

Approach her about the case in a sensitive way, for example, by saying “I'm worried about you because....”

Believe what she tells you: it will have taken a long time for her to talk to you and trust you

Take the abuse seriously. Abuse can be damaging both physically and emotionally, and is very destructive to someone's self-confidence. Her boyfriend or partner could be placing her in real danger.

Focus on her safety: talk to her about it and how she could protect herself.

Help her recognise the abuse and understand how it may be affecting her. Recognise and support her strength and courage.

Help her understand that the abuse is not her fault and that no-one deserves to be abused, no matter what they do.

Listen to her and help her to think about her relationship, whether she wants to break up or stay, and how she can protect herself from any more abuse.

Offer help to protect her *but only if you are not putting yourself at risk*. For example, you could offer to be around when the abusive partner is there, give her lifts home or take phone messages from the abuser.

Encourage her to talk to a counsellor, or talk to a counsellor yourself about what you could do to support her.

Encourage and help her to develop a safety plan. Agree with her concerns for her safety as well as that of her children. Offer assistance in developing a safety plan that may even include you. Advise her to have the following items ready in case she has to leave urgently, you could store some of them for her in preparation.

- ◆ Money for taxis or buses
- ◆ Essential clothes for herself and her children
- ◆ Important papers, such as benefit book, passports, birth certificates, bank books, injunction/legal documentation
- ◆ A photograph of the perpetrator (to show the police if necessary)
- ◆ Phone numbers of friends, family, emergency social services, support helplines and groups etc
- ◆ Any medicines
- ◆ Sentimental items
- ◆ Drinks/ food for the children

If your friend has been in contact with support agencies, don't forget to let them know her whereabouts and a correct contact number for them to reach her on.