



Domestic Abuse

As our understanding of domestic abuse has changed over the years and so has legislation.

Domestic abuse is legally defined as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”
(CPS, 2020)

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

It can be difficult to really understand what kinds of behaviour these terms cover. You can find detailed examples of types of abuse within the [Domestic Abuse guide](#).

In 2015, coercive and controlling behaviour became a crime in recognition of the fact these key elements of domestic abuse (UK.GOV, 2015). Victims talk about this element as being one of the most difficult to report because of a fear it will not be understood. All agencies supporting domestic abuse victims understand and recognise these behaviours as real and harmful.

Controlling behaviour is defined as:

“a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.” (UK.GOV, 2015)

Coercive behaviour is defined as:

“an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.”
(UK.GOV, 2015)

The government definition of domestic abuse also includes ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Victims of domestic abuse are not confined to one gender, sexuality, culture or ethnic group. At this time these forms of abuse are covered under different criminal law but can be, and are, seen within the context of domestic abuse (UK.GOV, 2012).

Who is affected?

- Domestic abuse can affect any of us
- It does not always happen in people’s own homes, it can happen at work, university, in public, on social media and during social gatherings
- You do not always have to have been in a long term relationship to be a victim of abuse
- Domestic abuse can occur between family members as well as in intimate relationships.
- Legislation recognises perpetrators to be criminally liable of domestic abuse from the age of 16 (Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act, 2004).
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse can be both female and male. There is evidence to support the rate of female to male domestic abuse is increasing in recent years.
- Those who are vulnerable due to ill health or disability are at increased risk of domestic abuse. In some cases they are reliant upon their abusive for care needs increasing the risk and decreasing their access to support
- Children again are a high risk group. Children who witness abuse are likely to suffer emotional and psychological impact, even when not directly abused themselves.

References

CPS (2020) *Domestic Abuse*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/crime-info/domestic-abuse>. [Accessed 18 September 2020].

Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, c.28. [Online] Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/28/contents>. [Accessed 18 September 2020].

UK.GOV (2015) *Coercive or controlling behaviour now a crime*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coercive-or-controlling-behaviour-now-a-crime>. [Accessed 18 September 2020].

UK.GOV (2012) *New definition of domestic violence*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence>. [Accessed 18 September 2020].

Access LEAP Online at: www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline