

Do you know someone who is **experiencing violence and abuse?**

If someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence or other forms of violence against women, find out what you can do to help.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can take many forms including rape and sexual assault, coercive controlling behaviour in intimate or family relationships, female genital mutilation, child sexual abuse, forced marriage, 'honour' based violence, stalking, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation including through the sex industry and modern day slavery/trafficking.

The person you are concerned about may have experienced different forms of violence and abuse in the past, or could be experiencing it right now. They may have experienced one incident of abuse or many.

Your first instinct may be to want to protect them, but intervening can be dangerous for both of you. Of course this does not mean you should ignore it.

Whilst you may be worried about doing the 'right' thing in the situation and not making matters worse, whatever their circumstances, there are things you can do to help make them and any children safer.

How to help

Listen and believe them:

Let them know that you are concerned, and that you are there to help. Listen to what they say and let them see you are supportive and that you believe them.

All too often people are not believed when they first disclose their abuse.

Recognise that even if the abuse may have happened a long time ago you may be the first person

Be supportive:

Show that you support them, and don't judge them. Help to explore all their options, such as finding appropriate specialist support.

This can be really difficult, as if the abuse is from someone they know, they may choose to remain in the relationship while you think they should leave or go to the police.

Be patient:

It can take time for someone to recognise they are being abused and even longer to be able to take safe and permanent decisions about what to do.

Recognising the problem is an important first step.

they have felt able to talk to about it.

For example, it can take survivors a long time to recognise and/or feel safe to talk about sexual violence, they will do it at a time that is right for them.

Be understanding, try not to criticise them, the abuser or the relationship. Focus on the abuse and their safety.

It's important that you support them to make their own informed choices by finding out what the options are and what support is available.

Focus on supporting them and building their self-confidence. Acknowledge their strengths and frequently remind them that they are coping well with a challenging and stressful situation.

It's important that they don't feel like you are telling them what to do.

And if you don't agree with their choices, be patient and don't give up on them.

If you think you or someone you know is in immediate danger call 999.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence can happen to anyone. Remember it is never their fault and they should not have to deal with it on their own.

Things you can say:

- The violence is totally unacceptable
- It's common - one in three UK women and girls will experience some form of violence or abuse
- Violence and abuse also happens to men and boys, who have just as much right to protection and support.
- Sexual or domestic violence is about power and control, not sex
- The abuser is 100 per cent responsible for the abuse
- It's never your fault, regardless of what you say or do
- Help is available – you're not on your own
- There is no justification for any harmful practices like female genital mutilation, forced marriage or so-called 'honour based violence
- There are specialist and culturally sensitive services that will understand your needs and provide confidential support.
- It's okay to seek support - it can help keep you safe.

*Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, FRA.

Practical things you can do to help:

You could:

- Signpost to the Live Fear Free Helpline for anyone in Wales affected by abuse.
- Agree a code word or action to signal that they are in danger and need help
- Offer to keep copies of important documents, such as passports and benefits books, so if they have to leave in a hurry, they can do so quickly
- Together, or on your own, find out information about local services and support that they can access
- Offer help, such as use of your phone or address for information/messages, keeping a spare set of keys, money and important documents
- Get support for yourself - and don't give up on them - you may be their only lifeline.

Remember:

- Things can rapidly escalate to serious violence and end in murder if nothing changes
- The risk is immediate, the danger serious and action must be taken quickly
- Immediate protection may be needed away from the family or current setting
- Other family members, and partners or friends may also be at risk
- Do not mediate between the victim and any of their family members as this could put both the victim and you at risk.

Where to get help:

“ I was offered options and given information by the Helpline worker that I can use to help my friend and her children. The call helped me understand the situation and what I can do to help. ”

Women, children, men, friends and family who need help or support can contact:

Live Fear Free Helpline - 24 hour support

Confidential support and information for anyone experiencing sexual violence, domestic abuse or violence against women in Wales, and for family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

Phone support available in Welsh, English and any other languages.

Freephone T: 0808 8010800 Type Talk: 1800108088010800

E: info@livefearfreehelpline.wales Text support 24/7: 078600 77 333

Live chat 24hrs: www.livefearfree.gov.wales

Bawso 24hr Helpline

Providing specialist services for BME communities

T: 0800 731 8147 W: bawso.org.uk

NSPCC FGM Helpline

Call the FGM helpline if you're worried a child is at risk of, or has had, FGM

T: 0800 028 3550 E: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

Forced Marriage Unit Helpline

Advice and support to victims of forced marriage

T: 020 7008 0151

Modern Slavery Helpline

To report a suspicion, get help or seek advice or information

T: 0800 0121 700 W: modernslaveryhelpline.org

Respect Phonenumber

For anyone concerned about their violence and/or abuse towards a partner or ex-partner

T: 0808 802 4040 E: info@respectphonenumber.org.uk

: respectphonenumber.org.uk