

Domestic Abuse & Older Adults

This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this DA Act

Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;(c)
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse (see subsection (4));
- psychological, emotional or other abuse and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

This can include but is not limited to:

- Physical abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Sexual
- Honour-based violence
- Forced Marriage
- Coercive control
- FGM (female genital mutilation)

Older people can often be overlooked when it comes to experiencing domestic abuse, and struggle to get access to specialist support. They can be hidden victims, sometimes invisible, making it difficult for themselves and professionals to identify. Older victims can suffer abuse from adult family members such as siblings, children and grandchildren.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when one person is forced to have sexual contact with another. It can range from making them watch pornography or take off their clothing, to inappropriate touching and rape. There may be physical signs as well as those you cannot see such as: torn or bloody clothing (especially underwear), sexually transmitted diseases, bruises (especially on both sides of the body or around the breasts or genitals) and bleeding from the vagina or bottom.

What does power and control look like?

- Using coercion and threats
- Using emotional abuse
- Using intimidation
- Using isolation
- Using children
- Using economic abuse

What are the characteristics of coercive control?

Types of coercive control differ from victim to victim. Perpetrators will use a combination of tactics to take advantage of perceived weaknesses or insecurities.

Some examples might include: controlling a victim’s daily activities, isolating them from friends and family, criticism of their role as partner or parent, threats of suicide/homicide/familicide, prevention of medication or care, using children as a form of control, extreme dominance, extreme jealousy, threats to damage property and injure pets, exposing sensitive information and ‘honour’ crimes.

Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Cuts, lacerations, puncture wounds, open wounds, bruises, welts, discolouration, burns, bone fractures and skull controlled over what the victim
- fractures
- Untreated injuries
- Skin conditions and poor skin hygiene
- Dehydration and/or malnourished not caused by illness
- Loss of weight
- Soiled clothing or bedding
- Broken glasses/frames
- Physical signs of being subjected to punishment or restraint
- Burns
- Inappropriate use of medication, over dosing or under dosing.

Signs of Psychological Abuse:

Psychological abuse is any action that hurts a person emotionally.

Below are some of the signs victims may face:

- Shouting
- Name calling
- Insulting
- Threatening
- Imitating and mocking
- Swearing
- Ignoring
- Exclusion
- Isolation

Signs of Economic Abuse:

Economic abuse can include exerting control over income, spending, bank accounts, bills and borrowing. It can also include controlling access to and use of things like transport and technology, which allow us to work and stay connected, as well as property and daily essentials like food and clothing. It can include destroying items and refusing to contribute to household costs.

Isolation:

Usually, the isolation in domestic abuse begins with the controller inserting emotional wedges between the victim and his or her family and friends.

What should you do when you’ve identified signs of domestic abuse?

- Talk to the person in private and make them feel comfortable, listened to and cared for.
- Do not rush them. It can be incredibly difficult to open up when suffering abuse.
- You may mention some of your concerns.
- Do not promise you won’t share information with anyone else as you may have to inform authorities.
- Ensure you stay calm yourself to avoid distressing the person.
- Unless there is an immediate threat to their safety, do not feel like you have to act immediately.
- Make a plan in conjunction with the person.

Where to report domestic abuse:

Police

Hull Domestic Abuse Partnership (01482 318 759)

Hull Safeguarding Hub (01482 616 092)

Hull City Council (01482 300 300)

Person’s GP

Person’s Social Worker

National Domestic Abuse Helpline (0800 5999 247)

Forced Marriage Unit (020 7008 0151)

Karma Nirvana (0800 5999 247)