



**Content trigger warning: this post contains details of abuse**

## Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse refers to a range of harmful acts. It can happen between partners, family members and cohabitants regardless of gender or sexuality.

A person can suffer from one or different types of abuse. Abuse can happen once, **regularly** or can be **part of a cycle** triggered at certain times or during certain events.

Some examples include:

<b>PHYSICAL ABUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes all physical violence such as:</li> <li>• hitting, kicking, punching, shoving, biting, throwing things</li> <li>• Injuries from physical struggles or arguments</li> </ul>
<b>EMOTIONAL ABUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belittling, name-calling, being blamed for when things go wrong or other different things (gaslighting)</li> <li>• Being controlled by being told what to wear, who to see, where to go, what to think, how to carry yourself</li> <li>• Isolated from family and friends</li> <li>• Interfering with your ability to study or work</li> </ul>
<b>SEXUAL ABUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressure to have sexual intercourse or other sexual activities, including unsafe sex</li> <li>• Being hurt during sexual intercourse or other activities</li> <li>• Unwanted touching and/or sexual demands</li> </ul>
<b>FINANCIAL ABUSE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlling money available</li> <li>• Not giving financial support for necessities</li> <li>• Demanding money from you</li> <li>• Pressuring you to work or do other activities to earn money</li> </ul>
<b>THREATS AND INTIMIDATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats to kill themselves, you or other family and friends</li> <li>• Harassment and controlling behaviour such as following you and checking your things</li> <li>• Standing over you and invading your personal space</li> </ul>

The effects of domestic abuse can be very damaging to your physical and mental health. Domestic abuse can affect the development of any children involved too. It is important to put your (and any child's) health and safety first.



## What can I do?

It can be difficult to understand how to get help. You may lack the confidence to even ask for help due to the abuse you have suffered. You might be worried about being left without any protection if your abuser finds out you have spoken to someone.

### 1. Report to police

If you feel in danger, please contact the police **as soon as you can**. This can seem like a drastic step, but it is for your safety (and the safety of any children involved).

If a **criminal offence** has been or is about to be committed, the abuser could be arrested and charged.

If the police think you are at **risk of future abuse**, they can issue a **Domestic Violence Protection Notice / Order (DVPN / DVPO)**. These will give you:

- protection for up to 14 to 28 days
- the chance to apply for more protective steps (see number 4 below)



## 2. Ask for “ANI” and Safe Space

You can enter participating pharmacies and shops under these schemes and ask for “ANI” - it will sound like you are asking for “Annie” this is a code word for “Action Needed Immediately” or you can ask for a “Safe Space”. You will be taken to a private consultation room to find more support services or make a call.

This can help if you feel like there is no other way to contact anyone at home without your abuser finding out.



You will know a pharmacy is under the ANI and Safe Space scheme if they have the above signs on their door or by the cashiers. You can find participating shops of Safe Space [here](#).

## 3. Contact domestic abuse charities

You can call them directly, chat online or download an app to learn more. These websites have many resources that can help you understand your situation and plan what you can do. A list of charities is available [here](#).

It is recommended you check out the following resources:

- Hestia’s [Bright Sky](#) – a free app available on Apple and Google Play, in 5 languages: English, Urdu, Punjabi, Polish and Welsh.
- Women’s Aid [live chat](#) and [Survivor’s Handbook](#) – speak confidentially to a support worker and find more sources
- Right’s of Women’s [legal guides and handbooks](#) – understand your legal rights and think of your next steps



Please be aware that your abuser could be checking your phone or computers to see who you call and what websites you search. Only reach out to charities if you think you are safe to do so.

If you cannot safely ask for help, you can ask someone to ask for help on your behalf. For example you can ask a support worker, a schoolteacher or your GP for help. They can contact suitable organisations and agencies by making referrals for you.

#### 4. Apply to Family Court for injunctions

These are court orders to protect you from your abuser. The aim is to stop ongoing and future abuse against you and any children you have.

Please note that to apply for these orders, you must meet the requirements:

1. You must be **over the age of 16**
  - You will need High Court permission to apply if under 16 years
2. Your abuser must be an **associated person**

This means that your abuser is your:

  - husband, wife or civil partner
  - former husband, former wife or former civil partner
  - fiancé, fiancée or proposed civil partner
  - former fiancé, former fiancée or former proposed civil partner – if your engagement or agreement to form a civil partnership ended less than 3 years ago
  - boyfriend, girlfriend, partner or a person you're in or have been in a relationship with (for a significant period, e.g. 6 months)
  - The abuser can also be a close family member, for example a parent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle.
  - If you have children, the abuser can be the child's parent or person you share parental responsibility with. For adopted children, you can also apply for an injunction against their adoptive parent anyone who has applied to adopt them or anyone the child has been placed with for adoption.

#### What court orders you can apply for



Non-molestation order	Occupation order
This will stop your abuser from contacting you (in person or through phone calls etc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form FL401 is used for this</li> </ul>	This will stop your abuser from entering and staying in your property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually applied together with the non-molestation order (Form FL401)</li> </ul>

Please note that if you are not eligible to apply for the above orders, or if you are being harassed, threatened, stalked or pestered after a relationship has ended, you can apply for civil injunctions under the protection from harassment laws. You can also apply for restraining orders. Please seek legal advice if you would like to explore these options further.



## Financial support

**Legal Aid** can help you pay for these applications.

Please seek legal advice from a family law solicitor to check whether this is possible in your situation. Domestic abuse charities can also direct you to local solicitors. You can search for solicitors near you on the Law Society website [here](#)

If you are not eligible for Legal Aid, you can represent yourself at court. This means that you will have to complete the application form yourself and attend court. You may also seek advice and assistance from free legal advice services.

## More help

Find your local free legal advice centre [here](#).

**Toynbee Hall's Free Legal Advice Centre offers a women-only service on the first and third Saturday of every month. The dedicated team of female advisors are specifically trained to deal with women that are facing difficult situations. Interpreters can be arranged if requested.**

**If you need free one-off legal advice, you can fill in this form by the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) of Toynbee Hall:**  
<https://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/free-advice/legal-advice/#online-flac-ia-form>  
or you can email FLAC here: [flac@toynbeehall.org.uk](mailto:flac@toynbeehall.org.uk)

**Please state if you have safe words so you are not put at risk when speaking to the advisors.**