

# NO MORE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Domestic Violence

Information, support and services  
in Islington



Working together for a safer London



Islington **NHS**  
Primary Care Trust



ISLINGTON



# If you are experiencing don't suffer in silence.

For information, advice, support or emergency  
refuge accommodation call:

**24 hour National Domestic  
Violence Helpline: Freephone**

**0808 2000 247**

Use the guide safely – think about where you will keep this booklet, whether someone else will keep it for you, and how to keep yourself safe while reading.

**In an emergency always dial 999.**

## **Are you afraid of someone you know or live with?**

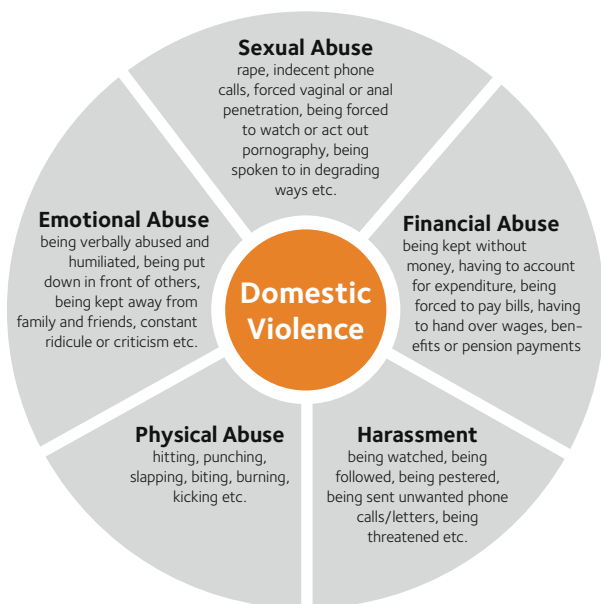
Maybe you have been abused by a partner just once, or maybe you have lived with abuse for years. Perhaps someone you live near, work with or know is experiencing domestic violence.

This guide provides some information on the issues that may be of concern to you. Most survivors are women, but this guide will be useful whether you are a woman or a man who has experienced domestic violence. Everyone has the same rights under the law.

Many of the behaviours associated with domestic violence are crimes and the perpetrator could face criminal charges and a prison sentence.

# domestic violence,

But domestic violence is not just about physical violence. It comes in many forms and guises but always leaves you living in fear.



**Remember: You are not alone.  
Help is available.**

You can get further information and help from any of the organisations listed in this guide and on the back page. Or you can find more detailed information on the Islington Council website –

[www.islington.gov.uk/domesticviolence](http://www.islington.gov.uk/domesticviolence)

# 1 Break the silence

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You have the right to live a life free from violence and fear. Remember...

- ➔ **You are not alone:** Research shows that as many as one in ten women are in an abusive relationship. It happens to women of all ages, classes, races, and religions.
- ➔ **You are not to blame:** Your partner/the perpetrator has choices about the ways they behave.
- ➔ **You can't change your partner's behaviour:** The only way for the perpetrator to change is for them to realise that they have a problem and to seek help.
- ➔ **You are in danger if you ignore the violence:** The violence tends to get worse the longer it goes on.
- ➔ **Break the silence – do not remain isolated:** Get help from someone you trust, or you can contact one of the organisations that offer specialist information and support.
- ➔ **There is life after an abusive relationship:** Many people discover they enjoy living without a partner and others form new and loving relationships that they never believed were possible when they were with their violent partner.

## 2 Safety planning

Making a safety plan will help you to feel more in control of the situation and give you the confidence to take action to protect yourself and your children.

### **Here are some tips to help you draw up a plan of action for your safety:**

- ➔ Find out about local support services (drop-ins, outreach, counselling, advice sessions)
- ➔ Keep a diary of domestic violence incidents
- ➔ Know where you can quickly and easily access a phone (mobile, neighbour, relative or friend)
- ➔ Keep a list of emergency contact numbers with you, including relatives, friends, local police
- ➔ Keep some money aside for emergency bus, train, cab fares or food and accommodation costs
- ➔ Have an extra set of keys for the house, flat, car
- ➔ Keep keys, money and a set of clothes for you and your children packed ready in a bag and leave it with a friend or relative you can trust.

### **If you are planning to leave, try to:**

- ➔ Leave when you are sure that the perpetrator is not around
- ➔ Take all of your children with you
- ➔ Take legal and financial papers, marriage and birth certificates, court orders, NHS cards, passports, driving licence, child credit books, address book, bank books, cheque books, credit cards etc
- ➔ Take a few personal possessions which have sentimental value
- ➔ Take favourite toys for the children
- ➔ Take clothing for several days
- ➔ Take any medicine you or your children might need.

## 3 Reporting to the police

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The police take domestic violence very seriously and will prioritise your safety.

There are a number of offences a perpetrator of domestic violence can be charged with.

**In an emergency always dial 999 to ask for help.**

At other times you can talk to specially trained officers at the:

**Community Safety Unit on 020 7421 0385**

It is your right to report the violence to the police and doing so may help to protect you and your children.

If the perpetrator is charged with an offence you may have to appear in court. There are organisations in Islington which can support you if you are worried about appearing in court. Contact one of the organisations on the back of this booklet for more information.

## 4 Housing options

Housing law recognises that domestic violence can happen in relationships between partners and between parents and adult children, as well as in other circumstances.

Some of the options available to you are:

### **Remaining at home or returning home with protection**

**Legal protection** – You can apply to the courts to remove the perpetrator from the home, or to forbid them from interfering with you. For more information about the law, *see section 5 – Legal remedies*.

**Help from your landlord** – If you live in a council or housing association property, your landlord may be able to help you stay safely in your home. Contact your Area Housing Office or your Housing Officer for details.

**Home Shelter** – This scheme offers you the option of remaining in your home but with extra security measures such as locks and fireproof letterboxes. To be eligible you must have recently experienced domestic violence and Islington Council must believe that you would become homeless if you had to leave your home because it is not secure enough. You need to be a tenant, a leaseholder or the home owner. Contact Islington Housing Aid Centre on 020 7527 2000 for further information.

### **Going to a Women's Refuge**

Refuges are safe houses providing temporary accommodation to women and children escaping domestic violence. Most refuges accept boys up to the age of 12 or 14. The addresses of refuges are kept secret in order to protect the women staying there.

**Contact the 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline – 0808 2000 247**

## Claiming homelessness

The council has a legal duty to offer you temporary accommodation while it carries out an assessment. Housing law states that: 'It is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to domestic violence or other violence'. Violence means violence or threats of violence from another person, which are likely to be carried out.

### **Contact:**

**Islington Housing Aid Centre,  
38 Devonian Road, London N1 8UY  
Tel: 020 7527 2000.**

## Staying temporarily with a friend or relative

Whether this is a suitable option partly depends on:

- ➔ The level of emotional and practical support the friend or relative can provide
- ➔ Whether the family may put additional pressure on you to stay in the relationship and 'make it work'
- ➔ Whether or not your partner/the perpetrator knows these addresses and is likely to follow you, intimidate or attack you or the people you are staying with.

## Privately renting or buying accommodation

If you decide to rent privately, you may be entitled to housing benefit. Islington Housing Aid Centre can provide advice on tenancy agreements and information about places to try.

However, the process of finding a new home can take a while, so temporary living arrangements may need to be made in the meantime.

## 5 Legal remedies

Going to court may seem intimidating but you should remember that you have a right to live without fear of violence. The court can protect your rights.

### **Injunctions**

Injunctions are available under Part IV of the Family Law Act and are intended to keep you safe. You will need to find a solicitor to help you prepare for court (contact one of the support agencies listed at the back for information about local solicitors) or you will need to prepare your own application (see DIY injunctions on the next page). There are two main injunctions that can protect you. These are:

#### **A Non-molestation Order:**

This order is aimed at preventing the perpetrator from using or threatening violence against you or your child, or intimidating, harassing or pestering you. It can also prevent them from coming within a certain distance of your home. The purpose of this order is to protect the health, safety and well being of the victim and any children.

#### **An Occupation Order:**

This order can exclude the perpetrator from the home, even if there is a joint tenancy in place. It can also prevent the perpetrator from coming within a certain area such as 200 yards of your home or a child's school.

These orders can have 'a power of arrest' attached. This means that if the perpetrator breaches the order in any way, they may be arrested and even put into prison.

*Continued overleaf..*

It is possible to obtain 'without notice' injunctions. This means that the perpetrator does not have to be notified of the court proceedings in advance. These are commonly used in an emergency.

In some cases a perpetrator may agree to give the court an 'undertaking' that he will not assault you. An undertaking offers less protection than an injunction and you are not obliged to accept it.

### **DIY Injunctions:**

If you can't afford a solicitor because you are not entitled to legal funding, you can apply for an injunction yourself. To help you do this, Rights of Women have produced a 'Do It Yourself Handbook' that explains how to complete the application form and apply directly to the court.

**Contact Rights of Women on: 020 7251 6577**

### **Protection from Harassment Act 1997**

This law is particularly useful if you are being 'stalked' or 'harassed' by a current or former partner. You will need to tell your solicitor or legal adviser about the problems you are experiencing and they will help you decide on the best course of action.

## 6 Money

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Many survivors worry about the financial implications associated with ending a relationship, especially if they have been financially dependent on their partner. Don't let this stop you seeking help. If you are not working or are on a low income, there are benefits that you may be entitled to claim, including:

- Income Support
- Child Benefit
- Housing Benefit
- Crisis Loan
- Community Care Grants
- Childrens Tax Credit
- Jobseekers
- Council Tax Benefit
- Budgeting Loans

For further information on benefits contact the:

**Citizens' Advice Bureau on 0870 751 0925**

or visit the Department for Work and Pensions website at:

**[www.dfwp.gov.uk](http://www.dfwp.gov.uk)**

## 7 Children

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It is important to remember that children are affected by witnessing domestic violence and will need support to cope with what is happening at home. Sometimes the children themselves are also hurt or abused. There are organisations in Islington that can help you to protect your children from the effects of domestic violence.

For information on children's services in Islington contact one of the organisations listed on the back of this leaflet or go to:

**[www.islington.gov.uk/childrensdirectory](http://www.islington.gov.uk/childrensdirectory)**

Abusers commonly threaten that your children will be taken away if you tell anyone about the violence at home. This is very unlikely to happen. Children's Services recognise that the best way of protecting children from harm is to support the parent or carer who is not abusive to do the best for the children.

If you are concerned about the well-being of your children you can contact:

**Islington Children's Services Assessment Team  
on 020 7527 7400**

or call in at the offices -

**292 Essex Road, London, N1 3AZ.**

If you are thinking of leaving the abusive relationship try to take your children with you (*see section 2 – Safety planning*).

If you have already left and are concerned that your partner will abduct the children, there are steps that you can take. Always keep your child's documents (e.g. birth certificate, passport etc.) and any court orders in a safe place. If your child does not have a passport, contact the passport office and lodge an objection to the child being taken abroad without your consent. Further advice about this can be obtained from your solicitor, legal adviser or Women's Aid.

You may be worried about child contact once you have separated from your violent partner. If your partner wishes to have contact with the child, you should seek legal advice as soon as possible.

The courts must take into account the effects of domestic violence when considering cases involving contact with children. This should help prevent survivors and children involved in contact disputes from suffering further violence.

There are a number of issues and court orders that are covered by legislation:

- ➔ **Parental Responsibility** - all mothers automatically have this. All birth fathers married to the mother have this and a father named on the birth certificate for a child born after 2003 also has equal parental responsibility along with the mother.
- ➔ **Residence Orders** - these state who a child will live with.
- ➔ **Contact orders** - these relate to contact between the non-resident parent and other significant persons (e.g. grandparents and siblings), and the child. The mother can ask the court to make sure that any contact ordered is supervised
- ➔ **Supervised contact orders** - as above, these stipulate that any contact must be supervised.
- ➔ **Prohibited Steps orders** - which prohibit those named in the order from taking certain actions with the child, such as taking them abroad or having unsupervised contact with the child.

## 8 Diversity Issues

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Domestic violence happens to people from all backgrounds.

The agencies listed at the back of this leaflet can provide support to all people regardless of ethnicity, sexuality, age or disability. But there are also many organisations in London and across Britain that can provide support to specific groups.

A directory of these services is available on:

[www.islington.gov.uk/domesticviolence](http://www.islington.gov.uk/domesticviolence)

or you can ring one of the numbers overleaf for more information.

If you are woman from a **Black or minority ethnic community** you may prefer to contact an organisation that works with specific cultural issues or that can offer a service in your first language. Additionally you may have concerns about your immigration status and how it could be affected by leaving an abusive relationship. You should always seek legal advice about your immigration status and rights before you make any decisions. If you fear that you may be **forced into a marriage** there are both government and voluntary sector organisations that can help you.

Your age may make a difference to which organisation you feel most confident about contacting. Again there are services available specifically for **older or younger women**.

There are some specific services available for people with **physical disabilities** or **learning difficulties** who are experiencing violence at home.

Lesbians, bisexual and transgender women can access the same services that are offered to heterosexual women through Women's Aid and other voluntary organisations. If you would prefer to contact an organisation that caters specifically for **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people** contact Broken Rainbow.

**Men** who are survivors of domestic violence can contact Islington Victim Support for help and information. You could also call the MALE helpline, while Broken Rainbow offers support to gay and bisexual men.

'At the end of the day my husband made the choice to hurt me, I did not hold his hand up to my face, he did that. Perpetrators make the choice.'

*From Women's Aid: 'Womenspeak'*

For advice and information call:

24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline:

...▶ **0808 2000 247**

Women's Aid Islington:

...▶ **020 8269 2121**

Islington Victim Support:

...▶ **020 7272 0784**

IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group:

...▶ **020 7354 1359**

Latin American Women's Aid:

...▶ **020 7275 0321**

Islington Police Community Safety Unit:

...▶ **020 7421 0385**

Men's Advice Line and Enquiries (MALE)

...▶ **0845 064 6800**

Broken Rainbow (for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survivors):

...▶ **0845 260 4460**

In an emergency call:

...▶ **999**

For more detailed guidance and to view the directory of local and national services go to:

[www.islington.gov.uk/domesticviolence](http://www.islington.gov.uk/domesticviolence)