



## Advice about gender violence and domestic abuse in BSL

- Hello and welcome to this Citizens Advice BSL film about gender violence and domestic abuse.
- Domestic abuse and other types of abuse like stalking and forced marriage are known as gender violence. All forms of gender violence are wrong and can be challenged. Many are criminal offences.
- The Home Office says, 'We are determined to support victims in reporting these crimes, and to make sure perpetrators are brought to justice. We all need to do more to prevent violence against women and girls happening at all.'
- You have lots of different rights that can help you if gender violence or domestic abuse is happening to you. This film tells you about:
  - what domestic abuse and other types of gender violence and abuse are
  - what you can do and who can help you
- You can find lots more information about gender violence and domestic abuse on our Citizens Advice website, or you can go to your local Citizens Advice Bureau. You can find your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau by searching online at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)
- To find out more about making an appointment at your local Citizens Advice Bureau, see our BSL film that gives an introduction to Citizens Advice.
- In an emergency, always contact the police – you can use the emergency 999 SMS service. You need to register your mobile to use this service. [www.emergencysms.org.uk](http://www.emergencysms.org.uk)
- Remember to always get an incident or crime number.

## What is domestic abuse?

- Domestic abuse is where one person harms another with whom they have (or have had) some sort of relationship. It is often a partner, ex-partner, other family members or carers who carry out the abuse. They do not need to live in the same property.
- It mostly happens to women but it does happen to men too. It happens to people from all communities, including those who are straight, lesbian, gay,

bisexual and transgender, from white and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, and all social classes.

- Domestic violence can be physical attacks, emotional, sexual or financial abuse.
- Examples include:
  - stopping you seeing friends and family
  - insulting and undermining you
  - stopping you from working
  - not letting you see doctors or other professionals on your own
  - controlling the household finances including wages, benefits and bank accounts
  - forcing you to hand over wages and money
  - persuading or forcing you to take out loans and credit in her/his name
  - making you have sex, rape and sexual attacks
  - hitting, punching and other physical attacks.

### **Options available to people affected by domestic abuse**

- If you or your children are in immediate danger, or in an emergency, always contact the police. You can use the emergency 999 SMS service. To use this service you need to register your mobile at [www.emergencysms.org.uk](http://www.emergencysms.org.uk) Remember to always get an incident or crime number.
- If you are the victim of an abusive relationship, get practical advice as soon as possible on the options available, which may include one or more of the following:

### **Safety plan**

A personal safety plan is a way of helping you to protect yourself and your children. It helps you plan in advance for the possibility of future violence and abuse. It also helps you to think about how you can increase your safety either within the relationship, or if you decide to leave. Making a safety plan can include:

- plan in advance how you might respond in different situations, including crisis situations
- teach your children to contact 999 in an emergency and what they would need to say (for example, their full name, address and telephone number).

For more help making a safety plan see [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)  
Look for the Women's Aid Survivors Handbook

## **Finding somewhere safe to stay**

You may need to leave home and find somewhere safe to stay, either alone or with your children. The options are:

- stay with relatives or friends
- stay in a women's refuge. This is only an option for women (with or without children)
- get emergency accommodation from the local authority under homeless persons law - this will usually mean a bed and breakfast hostel
- get privately rented accommodation.

## **Longer-term solutions**

In the longer term you may need to consider:

- if you wish to permanently separate from your partner.
- if you want to take action to keep the violent partner away from you. This could include getting an injunction or non-molestation order, or a court order to stop your violent partner from returning home (known as an occupation order).
- **Housing:** your legal rights to the family home will depend upon the type of housing you are leaving, the legal status of your relationship and whether or not you have children. You should seek legal advice about the family home even if you are leaving permanently because, if your partner sells the home, you may lose money and possessions
- **Children:** If you have children you will need to decide if you are taking the children with you. It may be unsafe to leave them behind. You may need to use the courts to resolve who the children should live with and with whom they should have contact.
- **Money:** You will need to sort out your benefit entitlement and tax arrangements and whether or not to apply to court for maintenance for yourself. You may also want to apply to the Child Support Agency or Child Maintenance Service for them to arrange maintenance for your children.

## **Legal Aid if you've suffered domestic violence or abuse**

- If you take legal action to protect yourself or your family from domestic violence or abuse, you may qualify for legal aid. The income of an abusive partner will not be taken into account when deciding whether you qualify for legal aid. Legal aid helps you with your legal costs including advice and help if you have to go to court.

## **Other types of gender violence**

- Domestic abuse is the commonest type of gender violence, but there are also other types including:
  - harassment such as malicious phone calls or texts

- stalking which can include contacting or trying to contact you, monitoring your emails and internet use.
- rape and sexual assault
- forced marriage
- female genital mutilation
- So-called honour-based abuse
- human trafficking.

Further information is on our Citizens Advice website or you can consult an experienced adviser, for example, a solicitor who is experienced in family law, law centre, local domestic violence service or Citizens Advice Bureau.

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