

Useful Numbers

Women's Aid and Refuge Crisis

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| National Helpline (24 hour) | 0808 2000 247 |
| <u>Local Helplines</u> (may not be 24 hour) | |
| Aylesbury | 01296 436827 |
| Berkshire | 0118 950 4003 |
| Milton Keynes (emergency refuge line) | 0800 197 1014 |
| Milton Keynes | 01908 271900 |
| Oxfordshire Refuge | 0800 731 0055 |

Helplines

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| Samaritans National Helpline | 08457 90 90 90 |
| Mankind National Men's Helpline | 01823 334244 |
| Childline | 0800 1111 |
| Sahara (Asian Refuge) Berks | 0118 926 6333 |
| National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) | 0844 8044 999 |
| NCDV 24 hr emergency free phone <i>or text NCDV to 60777 and they will call you back</i> | 0800 9 70 20 70 |
| Victim Support (Oxon & Bucks) (Berks) | 0845 450 3883 01344 411411 |

Police Emergency 999

Police Domestic Violence Unit 0845 8505 505

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Church Action



Domestic Abuse

in the Diocese of Oxford

For information and action by clergy, PCC and all church members

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic abuse is a crime. It includes all violence and abuse of power within a household: men and women, married and unmarried, abuse by parent to children, children to parents including elderly parents and between non related parties. Our work has focused on women who experience violence of various kinds. Suffering through violence whether physical, spiritual, financial or emotional should not be an accepted part of Christian life.

Facts about domestic violence

- **1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience domestic violence at some stage in their lives.**
- **It is rarely a one-off event and almost always gets worse not better.**
- **It can begin at any time and often starts in pregnancy.**
- **Victims come from all walks of life, social backgrounds and cultures.**
- **Domestic assault is more frequent than violence in the street. It accounts for one quarter of all violent crime.**
- **In many violent incidents children witness or overhear the assaults and are badly affected. This is a form of child abuse by the violent partner.**
- **1 in 5 of all murder victims is a woman killed by a partner or ex-partner.**

The effect of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse devastates lives. People who suffer abuse are more likely to have health problems, abuse drugs or alcohol, or try to commit suicide because they cannot bear the pain and fear any longer.

Thousands of children live in fear in their own homes, and are often affected for the rest of their lives, when they witness, hear or experience violence. They may suffer anxiety and think that it is 'normal' to choose an abusive partner, or become bullies at school or use abusive behaviour at home.



**IF YOU SUFFER FROM ABUSE
DO TELL SOMEBODY YOU TRUST**

Blame and denial are used by abusers to make victims feel responsible for the violence. This allows abusers to continue the violence rather than seek help.

If you know or suspect that children are at risk from witnessing domestic violence, you are legally bound to report it to the police or Social Services.

Why don't they just leave?

Those experiencing abuse at home often find it very hard to seek help or to leave. This may be because of:

- fear of reprisals. The abuser may have threatened to harm them or the children, take the children away, or to kill themselves.
- financial dependence on their partners.
- promises of better behaviour by the abuser.
- worry about the effect on the children, whether they leave or stay.
- their feelings of guilt and low self-esteem.
- fear of losing a comfortable home, possessions, friends and stability.
- love for their partner in spite of everything.
- cultural factors which make it unacceptable for those from some ethnic minorities to allege abuse or seek help from outside the community.
- Fear of being condemned by the church for 'failing' as a Christian marriage partner, not realising the failure is that of the abusive partner and not them.

Because of these or other factors, the victim may be unsure about what, if anything, they wish to do about the violence.

First steps for your Church

- Display this leaflet with posters and information about available help (e.g. Women's Aid, Police, Rape Crisis Centre).
- Raise awareness of this issue, remembering that it may arouse deep emotions and stir memories of past events.
- Encourage clergy to speak out against domestic violence in teaching, sermons, prayers and in parish magazines.
- Include in marriage preparation themes of equality, conflict, violence and control.
- Ensure that programmes for children and young people include appropriate opportunities to look at dealing with anger and violence.
- Give financial support to Women's Aid and similar charities.
- Give priority to setting up women's support groups, with child care provision if possible.
- Join your local Domestic Violence Forum (contact police co-ordinators, numbers on the back).
- Organise courses in parenting and in confidence-building skills.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour by church members, if it is safe to do so.

How to Help Victims of Abuse

What to look for

If you are concerned that someone you know might be a victim, you may notice that she/he:

- has unexplained bruises or injuries
- becomes unusually quiet or withdrawn
- has frequent or puzzling absences from work or other commitments
- wears clothes that conceal, even on warm days
- stops talking about their partner

If you are able to broach the subject, your offer of help could be the first step in enabling them to seek help in an abusive situation. A question like 'is anyone hurting you?' can be a good way to begin.



This is a sensitive issue and is painful for those who suffer from domestic abuse and those who try to help.
WE DO NEED TO ENGAGE WITH IT

The DOs...

- DO** talk in a safe, private place.
- DO** take plenty of time to listen and do **believe** what you hear.
- DO** affirm the strength and courage it takes to talk about abuse.
- DO** express your concern for their safety.
- DO** reassure them that whatever the circumstances violence is not justified and is against the law.
- DO** check with specialist agencies as to what they can offer and pass on the information.
- DO** check if it is all right to make contact at home.
- DO** keep information confidential (unless it is a child protection matter) and never pass on an address without consent.

...and DON'Ts

- DON'T** fob them off if they ask for help. Instead help them contact the right agency to help them (see back page).
- DON'T** trivialise or dismiss what they tell you.
- DON'T** judge or criticise.
- DON'T** suggest that she/he 'tries again'.
- DON'T** ask them what they did to provoke the violence. If you do, you condone it.
- DON'T** initiate any physical contact.
- DON'T** make decisions for them. Discuss the options, find out what they want to do and help them to achieve it.
- DON'T** expect them to make decisions in a hurry. Leaving may be as frightening as staying.
- DON'T** offer pastoral care or counselling to both the abused and the abuser together. Seek advice from the national helpline.