



## A.D.V.I.C.E – Topic 6: Domestic Abuse

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Domestic abuse, or domestic violence, is defined across Government as any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of their gender or sexuality. The Government published the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020, on 03 March 2020. The bill creates a statutory definition of abuse, establishes a Domestic Abuse Commissioner and provides for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets>

### What are the types of abuse?

‘Domestic abuse’ covers a range of types of abuse, including, but not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. ‘Domestic abuse’ can be prosecuted under a range of offences and the term is used to describe a range of controlling and coercive behaviours, used by one person to maintain control over another. It is usually perpetrated by the person’s partner but can also be committed by a family member or carer. It can happen at any time during a relationship, even after a couple is split.

Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident and is the cumulative and interlinked types of abuse that have a particularly damaging effect on the victim. The ‘domestic’ nature of the offending behaviour is an aggravating factor because of the abuse of trust involved.

**Anyone forced to change their behaviour because they are frightened of their partner or ex-partner’s reaction is experiencing abuse.**

### Who faces abuse?

Men, women and children can all be victims of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse occurs amongst people of all ethnicities, sexualities, ages, disabilities, immigration status, religions or beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) recognises domestic abuse differs in severity between incidents, and more often than not, will increase in frequency and seriousness, having a cumulative impact on the victim/complainant.

The definition includes so-called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

### What is controlling or coercive behaviour?

‘Controlling or Coercive behaviour’ describes behaviour occurring within a current or former intimate or family relationship which causes someone to fear that violence will be used against them on more than one occasion, or causes them serious alarm or distress that substantially affects their day to day activities. It involves a pattern of behaviour or incidents that enable a person to exert power or control over another, such as isolating a partner from their friends and family, taking control of their finances, everyday activities like what they wear or who they see, or tracking their movements through the internet or mobile phone use.

The domestic abuse definition specifically states:

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependant by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.



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Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assaults, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

### So called Honour based violence and forced marriage?

So-called 'honour-based' violence is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the so-called honour of the family or community. The term can cover a collection of practices used to control behaviour within families or other social groups, in order to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs or honour. These crimes are included within the domestic abuse definition, but may also be carried out by people who are not partners or family members.

A number of offences can be committed in the context of honour-based violence and forced marriage, including common assault, GBH, harassment, kidnap, rape, threats to kill and murder. Examples of instances that might trigger a so-called 'honour' crime include someone becoming involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture or religion, wearing clothes or taking part in activities that might not be considered traditional within a particular culture, or seeking a divorce.

### Female Genital Mutilation (FMG)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a collective term for a range of procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is sometimes referred to as female circumcision, or female genital cutting. The practice is medically unnecessary, is extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out, and in later life.

FGM has been classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) into four major types, all of which may be relevant to the offences arising under the FGM Act 2003:

### Stalking and Harassment

Stalking and harassment occurs not only in a domestic abuse setting – people can be stalked by strangers or acquaintances too.

**Stalking** is a specific type of harassment, often described as a pattern of unwanted, fixated or obsessive behaviour which is intrusive, and causes fear of violence or serious alarm and distress. For example, a person following, watching or spying on someone else, or forcing contact with them through social media, might be considered as stalking.

**Harassment** offences involve a 'course of conduct,' or repeated actions, which could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person. This will often include repeated attempts to impose unwanted contact or communication on someone.

### Spotting the signs?

If you believe that you or someone else could be a victim of domestic abuse, there are signs that you can look out for including:



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- Is the partner jealous and possessive?
- Is the partner charming one minute and abusive the next?
- Do they tell the individual what to wear, where to go, who to see?
- Do they play mind games and make the person doubt their judgment?
- Do they control the money?
- Do they apply pressure to the person to have sex when they don't want to?
- Do they use anger and intimidation to frighten and control the person?
- Do they monitor technology use such as social media platforms?
- Does the individual appear withdrawn?
- Do they have bruises?

Are their movements or activities restricted, i.e. not being allowed to leave the house, meet with friends?

For anyone who feels they are at risk of abuse, it is important to remember that there is help and support available to you, including police response, online support, helplines, refuges and other services. **You or they are not alone.**

If you're worried a friend is being abused, let them know you've noticed something is wrong. They might not be ready to talk, but try to find quiet times when they can talk if they choose to.

### **Women's Group Creates Hand Signal for Domestic Abuse Victims to Secretly Ask for Help**

It has been a while since life as we know it changed, and many things have happened, but the world is still in the middle of a global pandemic. COVID-19 has run rampage all over the world, and people are losing their lives. In an attempt to slow the curve, everyone has been asked to stay at home as much as possible. Work places have either closed, or sent their employees to work from home and school have been shut down. This means that families are all in quarantine together.

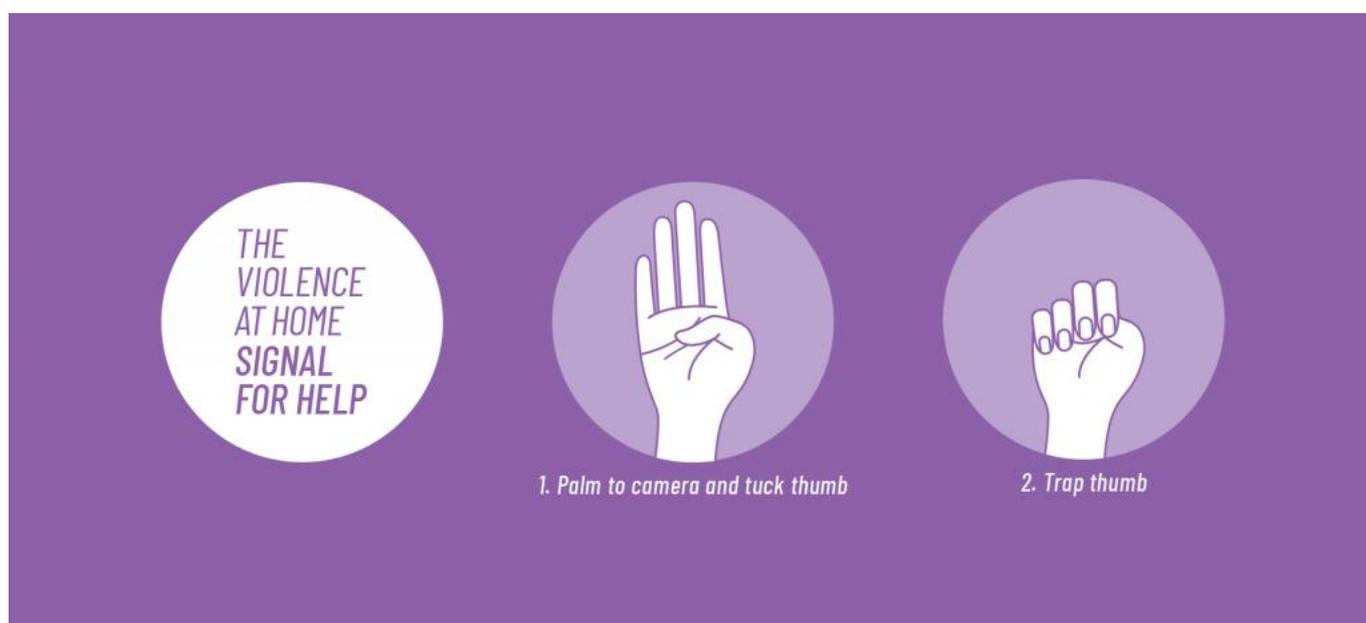
This seems all fine, until you remember that not all homes are happy and safe environments. The government-mandated quarantine has seemed to forget that there are now women everywhere who are trapped at home with their abusive partners. Even if there wasn't any sign of domestic disturbance before, the pandemic can do unimaginable things to people and they may now find themselves in trouble. How could they get help when they are always in the presence of their partner?

There is now a hand signal for women to use to alert people that they require assistance. It is being called the **"Signal for Help"** and it is a very simple one-handed sign that people can use during a video call. This will allow a person to silently show who they are talking to that they want someone to check in on them. The signal was created by the Canadian Women's Foundation to help women all over the country and world.

The hand signal involves a woman lifting her hand up to the camera, then she puts her thumb down and then closes the rest of her fingers covering her thumb.

Please see below

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[www.moms.com/domestic-abuse-victim-secret-hand-signal/](http://www.moms.com/domestic-abuse-victim-secret-hand-signal/)

[www.cps.gov.uk/domestic-abuse](http://www.cps.gov.uk/domestic-abuse)

[www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/)

Women's Aid also host a directory of local domestic abuse services: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory/>

[www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendseotlandandwales/yearendingmarch2019](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseprevalenceandtrendseotlandandwales/yearendingmarch2019)

[www.hse.gov.uk/search/search-results.htm?gsc.q=domestic%20abuse#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=domestic%20abuse](http://www.hse.gov.uk/search/search-results.htm?gsc.q=domestic%20abuse#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=domestic%20abuse)

[www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help?gclid=CLrInej02-oCFczOGwodvmEMkg&gclid=ds](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help?gclid=CLrInej02-oCFczOGwodvmEMkg&gclid=ds)

[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

[http://www.fgmnationalgroup.org/within\\_the\\_uk.htm](http://www.fgmnationalgroup.org/within_the_uk.htm)

Rape Crisis National Helpline (12-12.30pm and 7-9.30pm each day) – 08088 029 999 <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/> (England and Wales)

Rape Crisis Scotland - (6pm to midnight) – 08088 010302

<https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/>

Men's Advice Line – 0808801 0327

<https://mensadvice.org.uk/>

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### SCOTLAND

24hr domestic abuse and forced marriage helpline – 0800 027 1234

More advice on how to get help and how to spot the signs can be found on the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-help-for-domestic-violence/>

There is also a new scheme launched in conjunction with train operators, called Rail to refuge, which offers free travel to women escaping domestic abuse.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-help-for-domestic-violence/>

