

Recognising Domestic Abuse & Older Abuse

Advance - Who we are

- **Our Vision**

Is a world in which women and children lead safe, equal, violence-free lives so that they can flourish and actively contribute to society. We do this through our mission of saving and changing lives, by working with women who experience domestic abuse to be safe and take control of their lives, and women who have committed crime or are at risk of offending to break the cycle.

- **Our Approach**

Is holistic and centred on the survivor, working with them to develop a safety and support plan that responds to their needs and empowers them, on the often long journey to recovery from the trauma of their experiences.

DOMESTIC ABUSE



“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling coercive and threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Domestic abuse can encompass, but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

Psychological

Physical

Sexual

Financial

Emotional

“**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”

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



Domestic Abuse & Older People

Until 2017, survivors over the age of 59 were not included in the Crime Survey of England and Wales.

It was assumed that they be unwilling or unable to self-complete the survey. Additionally, it was assumed that survivors over the age of 59 were 'likely to be confused by violence that was perpetrated by someone in the family other than a partner or a spouse and this data might be better captured in a separate module on 'elder abuse.'

Myths

- They have been happily married for 40 years
- If the abuse was that bad, why would she stay for so long?
- Domestic and sexual abuse only happens to younger people
- Older, frail people with care needs can't be perpetrators
- Those diagnosed with dementia can't be trusted.
- Older people bruise easier therefore bruising is expected ,no need to ask more questions.

Data/ Statistics



Victims aged **61+**
are much more likely to
experience abuse from
an adult family member
or current partner

- On average, older victims experience abuse for **twice as long** before seeking help as those aged under 61 and nearly half have a disability. Yet older clients are hugely underrepresented among domestic abuse services.
- Victims aged 61+ are much more likely to experience abuse from an **adult family member** or **current intimate partner** than those 60 and under.
- Older victims **are less likely to attempt to leave** in the year before accessing help, and more likely to be **living with the perpetrator** after getting support.
- Older victims are significantly **more likely to have a disability** for a third this is physical (34%)

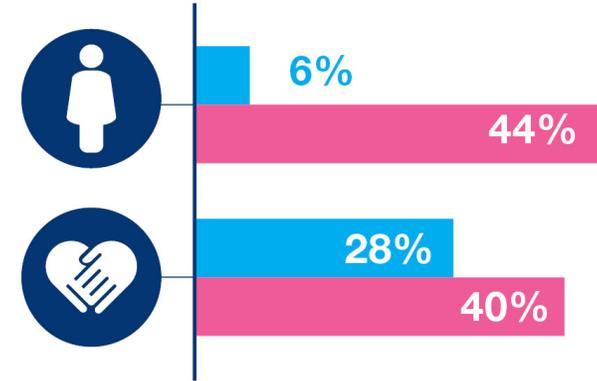
Spotlight #1 Older people and domestic abuse

Source: SafeLives Insights, 2015-16

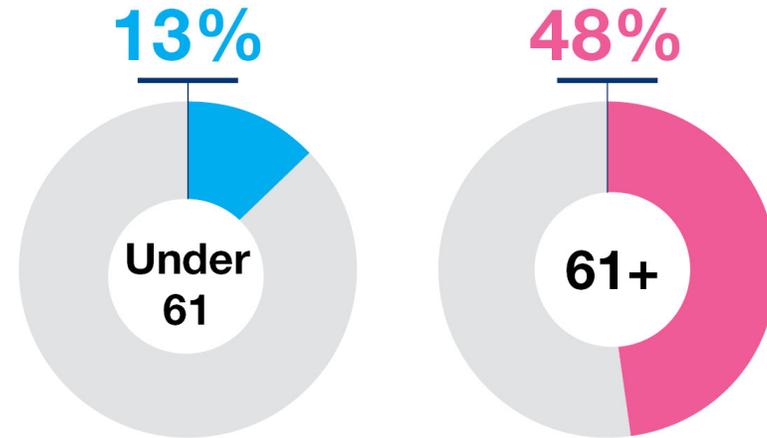
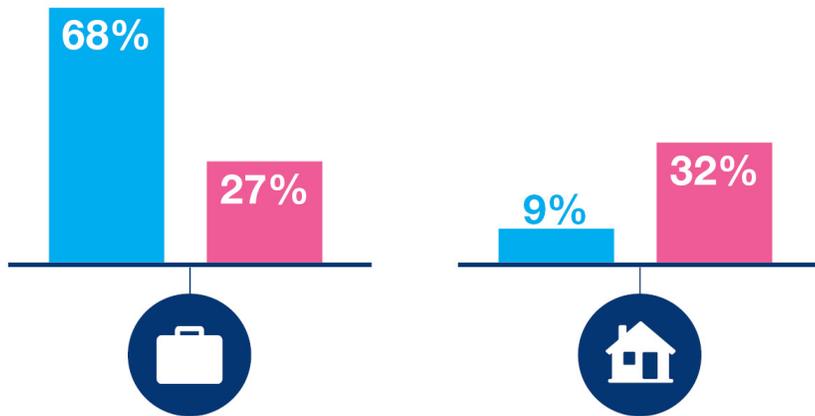


Victims aged 61+ are much more likely to experience abuse from an **adult family member** or **current intimate partner** than those 60 and under

- Victims aged 60 and under
- Victims aged 61+



Older victims are **less likely to attempt to leave** in the year before accessing help, and **more likely to be living with the perpetrator** after getting support



Older victims are significantly **more likely to have a disability** – for a third, this is physical (34%)

Coercive Control & Older People



Older people are at higher risk of coercive control

- Often growing as people grow older their circumstances can change making them dependent on a single person or their close family to meet their changing care and support needs.
- This can create a prime environment for an abuser to exert power and control over their lives. As someone with caring capacity, an abuser has greater opportunity to isolate victims and control the relationships (such as supportive family members, friends, the wider community).

What can Coercive Control look like ?

Missing appointments

Misunderstood behaviours

Manipulative Abusers

Lack of Resources/Services

Surveillance & Scrutiny

Financial Implications

Isolation & Control

Undermining

Blaming/Explaining symptoms on disorientation

Financial/Economic abuse

Changes in Physical Appearance

Controlling the environment

Degrading behaviour

Capacity

In accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005, a person is judged to have capacity until there is clear proof otherwise, as determined by formal assessment.

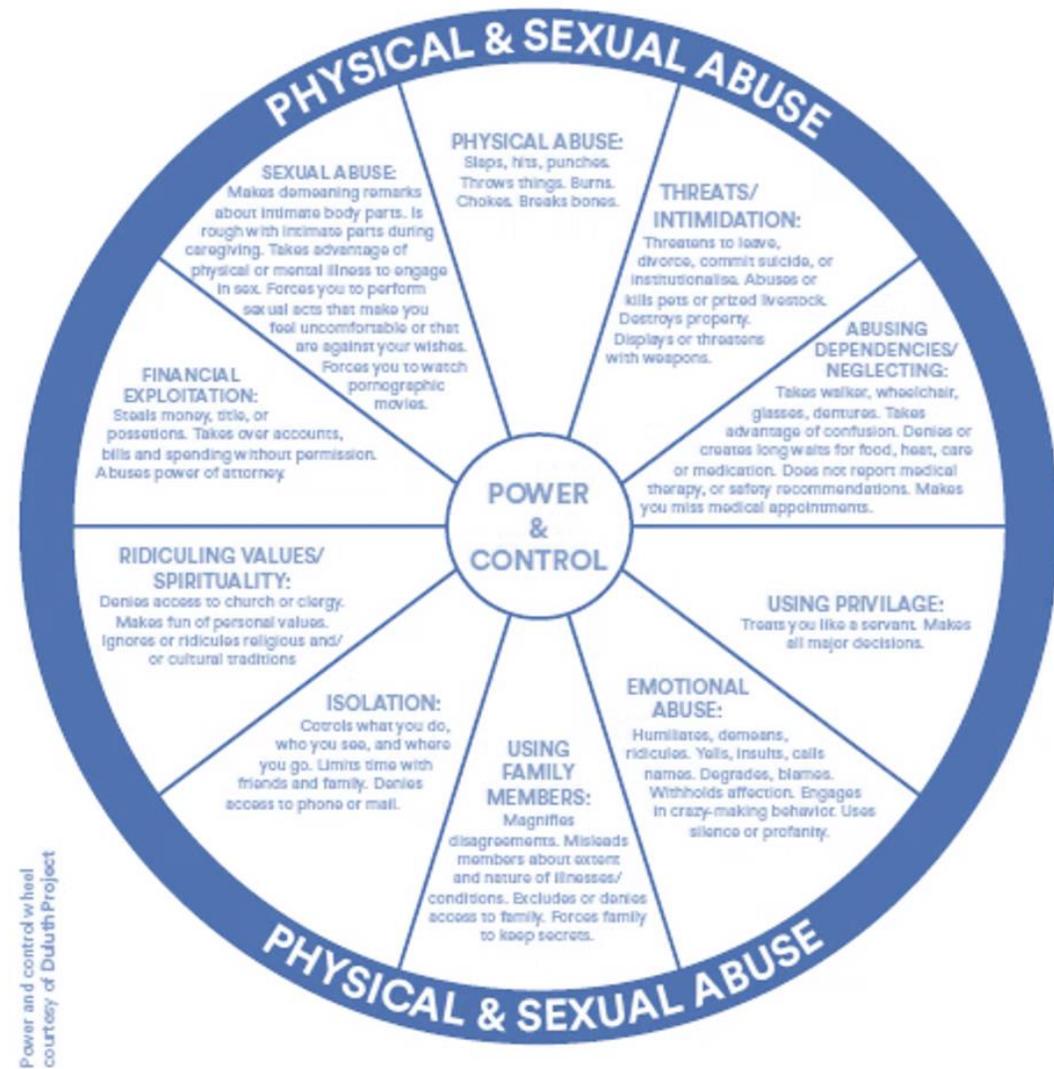
When a person has been experiencing coercive control over a long period of time, this can make the process more complex and challenging requiring patience.

As with domestic abuse in general, professionals may feel that a person's decision-making is impacted by the abuse they are experiencing, while the individual apparently retains legal capacity. Whilst this maybe the case, it is important that older survivors that have the capacity to make decisions are given the choice to do so even if it is deemed as unwise.

Supporting survivors through the decision making process not "rescuing and removing"

Remember: it takes on average 35 times for a woman to leave an abusive relationship. Older victims are less likely to attempt to leave their perpetrator in the year before accessing help.

Power & Control



Impact of Domestic Abuse

what might domestic abuse in older people look like?

Physical	Emotional & Psychological	Behavioural	Interpersonal	Practical
Bruises, injuries, weight loss, sleeplessness, repeated hospital admissions	Experiencing guilt, shame and anger	Appearing uncomfortable or fearful, angry, irritable, nervous	Abuse disrupting other relationships/friendships, loss of trust, expectations of rejection, loss of contact with services and others in the support network	Neglecting important needs because of energy and resources spent managing the abuse, disrupted living situation, homelessness, having finances affected
Arthritis, chronic health issues, digestive difficulties	Depression, Post traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, self-blame	Avoiding other people, becoming isolated and withdrawn	Ongoing lack of healthy safe relationships, making it very difficult to discuss experiences, difficulty in building trust	Receiving inadequate care, loss of home and community, reduced access to resources affecting independence

Child to Parent Violence

- The Home office domestic abuse definition acknowledges that anyone above the age of 16 can be a perpetrator(s), and while there is no legal definition for domestic abuse involving those under the age of 16, there is an information sheet from the Home Office which recognises Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA).
- One in four homicides by a loved one involve a victim aged 60 and over, and of these they will have an almost equal chance of being killed by a partner or spouse as by an adult child or grandchild.

Child to Parent Abuse

Barriers to Disclosing

- Child to parent abuse is underreported – survivors less likely to call police on their child for fear of their child being put through the criminal justice process
- Survivors feeling responsible for their child's behaviour, fear they may be blamed or may blame themselves for their child's behaviour.
- If the child perpetrating abuse is also the carer of the survivor, then it could make the survivor reluctant to report abuse for fear of having the care/support withdrawn
- Additionally, if the survivor is fearful of receiving external support or going into a care home this could mean they are reluctant to disclose abuse for fear this would happen to them.
- Survivors could also fear being denied contact with their grandchildren if they disclose
- Survivors may feel more isolated because they are fearful of disclosing to other family members or are fearful that someone will find out the abuse is happening
- Survivors will often minimise abuse and often refer to wanting support and help for their child.
- Social networks can be very important to older people and as such maintain relationship with the perpetrator of abuse can often be seen as something important to the survivor
- Reluctance to make their child homeless

Additional Barriers For Survivors

Housing

Immigration

Language

Disability

Age

Mental Health

Class

Religion

Race

Sexuality

Culture

- Not able to obtain Independent Accommodation
- May be financially dependent on APTR or dependent – i.e spousal visa
- May not understand support available. APTR may interpret
- Survivor reliant on APTR for care & support needs
- Generational attitudes with strong gender roles and minimisation of domestic abuse
- Stigma around Mental health can make survivors fear being believed
- Survivors from a socially disadvantaged class may have fewer resources
- Belief systems can sometime prohibit survivors from leaving abusive relationships due to fear.
- Survivors may experience institutional and structural racism preventing them from seeking support
- The myth that Domestic Abuse only occurs in heterosexual relationships silences LGBT survivors
- Survivors reliant on their community may fear being ostracised or not believed if they come forward

Short Case Studies

What Abuse is happening? What might be the barriers?

- Mary has been married to Gary for 45 years they own their home together and both reside in the property. Mary has mobility issues and a hearing impairment. Mary notes that Gary has been abusive through out the marriage. Mary states that she just wants to live the remainder of her life in peace but is finding it increasingly difficult living with Gary who turns the heating off, throws food at her, steals her post, wakes her up a few times in the night and is verbally aggressive.
- Zainab and Arun are husband and wife and live together in their small retirement flat. You receive information that their adult son comes to their property regularly, banging on the door demanding money. There have been incidents where he has thrown object inside the house and has locked Arun in the living room. Zainab also presented to A&E with a sprained ankle and shared that their son pushed her.
- Neil is 65 years old and has a younger girlfriend Vicky who is 40. Vicky is always coming to Neils house demanding money. Vicky misuses drugs and Neil has tried to get her help but she refuses. Nicky knows when his pension comes in and always appears at the door o that day. Banging and making a fuss until he lets her in. If Neil refuses, Nicky will smash his belongings. Nicky has also made threats to kill or harm him and has stolen many of his beloved possessions. Nicky has taken Neil's Freedom Pass numerous times which has left him stranded. Neil has been experiencing depression and feels helpless.
- Carmella and Vittorio have been together for 20 years, Carmella has recently been diagnosed with early dementia. Vittorio locks Carmella in the house, which he says is for her safety. He has also stopped her from attending the day centre which she enjoyed. Vittorio wont let Carmella go anywhere alone and does not let her handle any money. There are times where the ambulance has called and Carmella has disclosed that Vittorio pushed her and raped her but quickly rescinded. This is explained away by Vittorio who says she is confused because of her dementia
- Martin lives at his home with his daughter Lucy. Lucy is his carer. However, Martin presents as thin and malnourished. Additionally, Martin is never allowed to attend appointments, with Lucy constantly making up excuses. There are concerns as Martin has had large amounts of money spent. Neighbours also disclose antisocial behaviour at the house and often hear Lucy shouting at Martin.

Breaking down Barriers

Be clear in addressing any minimising or self blame by the survivor

Do not excuse abusive or controlling behaviour

Discourage the survivors belief that such behaviour can be attributed to bad

Name the abuse as domestic abuse

Come up with a safety plan/ asking neighbours to call police.

Offer referral to DV Service

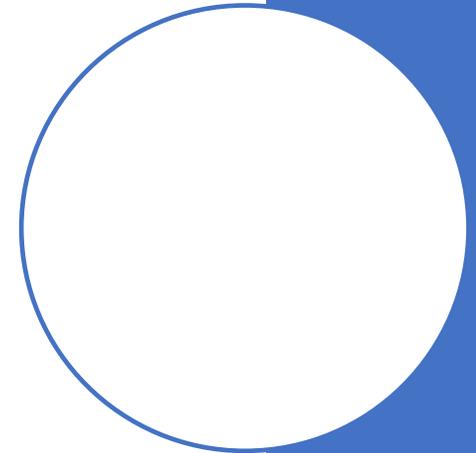
If abuser is also providing care explore safeguarding procedures.

Listen

Be Non-judgemental

Do not be directive -

Referral to an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA)



What Support do older survivors need?

Ensure you are speaking to them in a private, safe space **Away** from the abuser.

Look for opportunities for further support through services that they are already engaged with such as GP, or day centre

Be non judgemental, non directive and open

If it is helpful, frame your concern as a “routine enquiry”

Familiarise yourself with services in the borough such as IDVA service & MARAC.

Where Concerned confidently complete a Safelives DASH Ric & MARAC referral

Remember: it is better to safely enquire about potential domestic abuse than to not act resulting on potentially fatal risks. As such, it is always worth exploring abuse, even if you are wrong.

Where to Signpost

Advance (IDVA Service)

- Medium and High Risk
- Male and Female Survivors
- Aged 16+
- Living in Brent
- Consent from service user is essential

T: 07398454898

E: brent.admin@advancecharity.org.uk

- brent.admin@advance.cjsm.net

MARAC

brent.marac@advance.cjsm.net

brent.marac@advancecharity.org.uk

CouRAGEus

CouRAGEus@advancecharity.org.uk

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline

The freephone, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline [0808 2000 247](tel:08082000247)

Support Services within Brent

The Silver Project for older women - work with women over 55 who have current ongoing support needs (unless historic abuse is still affecting current support needs). Please be aware that we can only offer practical support - if the client requires emotional support only please refer to counselling services. We support women experiencing sexual abuse within a Domestic Violence context. In Brent telephone support only

Asian Women's Resource Centre - offers safety planning, advice and information, advocacy and support services to Asian women who have experienced domestic abuse. Services available in Azerbaijani, Gujrati, Hindi, Kurdish, Marathi, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu

Brent Reach - General floating support to vulnerable people residing in Brent. Clients must be 18+ and have some kind of additional vulnerability – Mental Health, Substance Misuse, Domestic Abuse, Offending History, Housing needs

Deafhope - Deaf women and children experiencing domestic violence

Depaul - Young people between 16 and 25 years in need of housing and additional support

IKWRO - Middle Eastern, Afghan and North African women experiencing domestic abuse

Kurdish Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO) - KMEWO provides free, confidential and non-judgemental services in a safe and friendly environment for Kurdish and Middle Eastern women.

English, Arabic and Kurdish-Sorani speakers. Farsi, Dari, and Turkish speaking volunteers can be arranged on request

Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA)- Latin American women and children and any other black minority ethnic woman who speaks Spanish or Portuguese experiencing domestic violence

GALOP - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender + (LGBT+) Domestic Abuse Casework Services

Men's Advice Line - Confidential helpline for men experiencing domestic violence

Refuge - Eastern European Advocacy Service

Solace Women's Aid - Community Based Services - Silver project for women over 55 residing in Brent (telephone support only)

Victim Support - Pan London Service - Standard to medium risk male and female survivors of domestic abuse

Women and Girls Network - Women and young girls (aged 11-18) experiencing or have experienced any gender based violence

Resources & Bibliography

- Age UK

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/campaigning/no-age-limit/>

- Safe Later Lives Report – Safelives

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Safe%20Later%20Lives%20-%20Older%20people%20and%20domestic%20abuse.pdf>

- Solace Womens Aid – Supporting Older Survivors

https://www.solacewomensaid.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/SOLACE_SupportingOlderSurvivors.pdf