

## Interpersonal Conflict Resource

**At the sharpest end of interpersonal conflict is Domestic Abuse.** There is already evidence to suggest that rates of domestic abuse are increasing during the current Covid-19 situation, with some police forces in England already noticing an increase in reports of domestic abuse. The National Domestic Abuse helpline has seen a 25% increase in calls and online requests for help since the lockdown, the charity Refuge says. With much of the world on coronavirus lockdown, there are warnings that those living with domestic abuse could become hidden victims of the pandemic.

### What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is more than physical violence. It can also include, but is not limited to: coercive control and 'gaslighting'; economic abuse; online abuse; verbal abuse; emotional abuse; sexual abuse.

### How do we, as the church, gauge how serious a situation is?

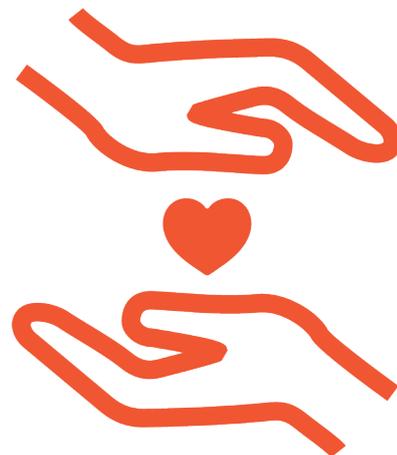
Here are some questions to ask to help assess whether the person you are speaking to is a victim of domestic abuse

- Are you feeling worried about being in danger?
- Has your partner ever threatened you, or intimidated you by using violent language or smashing up the furniture?
- Has there been a threat to kill or harm you or your child(ren)?
- Is your partner using illegal drugs or alcohol dependent affecting his/her behaviour?
- Does your partner treat you in a way to purposefully humiliate, ridicule, insult, embarrass or intimidate? If so whom is this in front of? How frequent and what is the severity? Listen out how for attacks on sanity, dignity, extreme cruelty, trauma, hopelessness/futility, narcissism, entitlement.
- Do you have any other concerns, fears or anxieties that I should be aware of?

If the answers to these questions raise concerns, it's really important to follow the church safe guarding protocol and immediately contact the named safe guarding lead. However it's important to advise the person who is disclosing the abuse that they must call 999 if they are in immediate danger. **Domestic violence and abuse is a crime.**

### Silent Solutions

There is a system for victims of domestic abuse who might be afraid of further danger and escalation of harm if they are overheard when calling 999 in an emergency. When somebody calls 999, an operator will ask which emergency service is required. If you are not able to ask for help, your call will be forwarded to a police system and you will hear an automated message. If 55 is pressed by the caller, the system will detect this. The operator will then transfer the call to the relevant police force as an emergency.



### What help is out there?

**National Domestic Violence free Helpline** – 0808 2000 247 (24 hrs a day)

**The Men's Advice Line** for male domestic abuse survivors – 0808 801 0327

**The Mix** free information and support for under 25s in the UK – 0808 808 4994

**National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline** – 0800 999 5428

**Samaritans (24/7 service)** – 08457 909090

**Rights of Women** advice lines, there are a range of services available:

<https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice/advice-lines/>

**Childline** - Free, confidential helpline dedicated to children and young people: 0800 1111.

**NSPCC** - The NSPCC Helpline provides advice and support to adults who are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child. the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000.

**Respect** - UK membership association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and associated support services. Helpline for perpetrators: Call 0808 802 4040 (free from landlines and most mobiles).

**The Hideout** - Women's Aid have created this space to help children and young people to understand domestic abuse, and how to take positive action if it is happening to you.

Women's Aid - National charity working to end domestic violence against women and children.



### How are children involved? And are children affected?

In relationships where there is domestic violence and abuse, children witness about three-quarters of the abusive incidents. Children of any age are affected by domestic violence and abuse. At no age will they be unaffected by what is happening, even when they are in the womb. Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on anyone who experiences it, but what is often overlooked is the equally devastating impact on children. It can be painful and traumatising for a child to see someone they love be abused, and there is also the danger that they might be try to intervene and come to harm.

### What about if it is not Domestic Abuse but an escalation of parental conflict? How we can we help parents through this stressful period?

If we are sure that there is no domestic abuse occurring then we can think about how to help parents with managing parental conflict. All relationships experience some levels of conflict, it is unavoidable but the way in which disagreements are managed makes all the difference to children. Parental conflict that is frequent, hostile, verbally or physically abusive, and remains unresolved is harmful to children.

## Tips to pass onto Parents to resolve conflict well

### Ways to prevent arguments developing and getting out of control

**Start conversations gently:** Try to be kind and respectful and be ready to listen as well as speak.

**'I' not 'You':** explain how you are feeling, rather than blaming the behaviour of your partner.

Remember you and your partner cannot read each other's minds.

**Be specific:** instead of saying 'you always....', try to focus on the specific issue that you want to talk about. Don't raise issues from the past.

**Find common ground:** Try to find areas you can agree on.

**Be open to compromise.**

**Express your feelings little and often:** rather than bottling them up and letting them explode.

Expressing our feelings and needs helps them to appreciate how we are feeling which will help build connection between us.

**Call a 'time-out'** if you feel you are losing your temper and might say things you'll regret or want to avoid it escalating.

### How to repair the relationship after conflict

Sometimes tensions will escalate, tempers flare and conflict results, but especially living under lock down it's important to find a way through the tension and repair the upset.

**Give it some time to allow feelings to calm down** (although not too long)

**Take responsibility for what you've done and apologise:** Being able to say sorry, shows that we value the relationship, and want to be able to repair it.

**Communicate** how you're feeling during this very stressful and uncertain time is more important than ever, as you're both likely to be struggling with similar things. This will help you both avoid things boiling over again.

**Listen to each other and try and understand the other person's perspective**

**Don't hold a grudge.** Forgiveness is a key part of every relationship, because we all make mistakes and can end up upsetting each other.

When we say 'sorry', and forgive each other, we can:

- Start re-building our emotional connection
- Reduce our desire to seek revenge
- Strengthen our relationship
- Model healthy relationship habits to our children

Forgiveness does not mean that we pretend there was no hurt or wrong-doing, or that we have forgotten it – but it means that we are choosing to move on together, for the sake of our relationship. If we are both committed to saying 'sorry', and offering forgiveness, when we face challenge and conflict, then our relationship is stronger, and our children will also be learning how to get on with others, and forgive and be forgiven.

Remember it's important to talk with our children afterwards, help them to see you have made up after the conflict.

