


Women's

SAID

North Ayrshire

FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE & DOMESTIC ABUSE



Older women experience domestic abuse at least as much as younger women, but often face different barriers to accessing help. The impact of abuse on older people is profound and damaging, whatever form it takes and whoever is responsible for it. **No one deserves abuse**, and no matter what your situation, there are ways to find help. **It is never too late to get help.**



www.nawomensaid.com



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WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic abuse is defined as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common. It can take many forms and involve a number of factors. Abuse can occur within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to a person.

WHAT DOES DOMESTIC ABUSE LOOK LIKE IN OLDER PEOPLE?

In addition to the usual symptoms of domestic abuse, frequent and more severe injuries, confusion and disassociation are characteristics of late onset domestic violence. Social workers, police, and medical professionals find these specific indicators to be difficult to diagnose because they often occur in one form or another without the presence of domestic abuse.

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN NOW?

Abuse doesn't discriminate against age – and a large number of older women in Scotland are in abusive relationships that either begin in or persist into later life. Abuse can begin later in life or start earlier and continue into later years. There are many causes for late onset domestic violence, including stresses resulting from retirement, disability, shifting roles for family members and sexual changes. Older men and women are also more likely to experience domestic violence at this age if they enter a new relationship later in life.

WHY IS IT UNDERREPORTED ?

There are lots of reasons people don't report abuse in their later years of life. Retirement and disability often leave elderly individuals financially dependent on their abuser and they may fear falling into poverty or homelessness. If they do rely on their partner for caretaking and support they may have fewer options after leaving.

Because of generational norms, some older women feel that speaking out about domestic violence would be "airing dirty laundry," and prefer to keep their personal lives private. In addition, many individuals are anxious about leaving a partner late in life with the concern they may spend the rest of their days alone.

IF YOU THINK AN OLDER PERSON IS BEING ABUSED

Since there are unique reasons why older people don't report abuse, speaking up if you notice red flags could be the support someone needs to begin to get help. People are more likely to disclose abuse if they are offered repeated opportunities to do so—if you work with or are worried about an older person, be prepared to mention that there is support for domestic abuse a few times before they feel comfortable enough to report it. Make sure they are alone and feel safe when asking about domestic abuse concerns, and reassure them that you believe them.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC ABUSE AS AN OLDER PERSON

1

Acknowledge the abuse. This can be difficult, especially if you have been in denial or if the abuse was subtle.

2

Talk to someone you trust: a friend, family member, or an organisation like Women's Aid.

3

Record details about what happened. Include dates, times, locations, if you can. This can be helpful if you decide to report it, but it's also useful for you to see patterns of abuse.

4

Consider reporting the abuse. This is entirely your choice, and you can change your mind later.

5

Seek help from a professional who specialises in domestic abuse to help you through the healing process.

HELP FOR OLDER WOMEN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

There are lots of organizations to help women in Scotland who have experienced domestic abuse, including coercive control. **In an emergency, call 999.**

Hourglass

The Hourglass confidential Helpline provides information and support to anyone concerned about harm, abuse or exploitation of an older person.

**wearehourglass.scot
0808 808 8141**

North Ayrshire Women's Aid

A specialist local service that provides emotional and practical support to women affected by domestic abuse.

**01294 602 424
nawomensaid.com**

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

Free and confidential legal information affected by gender based violence such as domestic abuse.

**08088 010 789
scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk**

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Free 24-hour helpline for women who have experienced domestic abuse and violence, with all female advisors.

**0808 2000 247
nationaldahelpline.org.uk**

Age UK Advice Line

Free to call, open 8am-7pm,
365 days a year

0800 678 1602

Victim Support Scotland

Provides information, practical help, emotional support and guidance through the criminal justice system.

**0800 160 1985
victimsupport.scot**

DOMESTIC ABUSE & OLDER PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND: STATISTICS

- 44% of victims aged 61+ experience abuse from an adult family member compared to just 6% of those aged 60 or under.
- 32% of victims over 60 are living with the perpetrator after getting support, compared to 9% for victims 60 and under.
- 48% of victims aged 61+ have a disability and for a third (34%) this is physical.