

# FOCUS ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse and sexual violence within young people's relationships are more common than most people think. Young people experience the highest rates of domestic abuse of any age group. They may experience abuse in their own intimate partner relationships or they may witness or experience domestic abuse from a family member.



# 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 YOUNG PEOPLE?

In addition to the usual symptoms, domestic abuse in young people often shows up as a drop in self esteem, or a long list of rules that their partner has set, such as who they can see, what they can wear, what they can spend money on and how their home must be kept.

Sometimes a young person will have bruises, or other signs of physical injury, or they might be pressured into sexual activity they are not comfortable with. Young people are also very vulnerable to technology-assisted abuse, including grooming and the sharing of explicit images.

Embarrassing you or putting you down.

Pressuring you to have sex when you don't want to.

Controlling who you see or where you go.

Taking money from you and refusing to give it back.

Blaming you for their actions or their anger.

# RED FLAGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Preventing you from working or attending education.

Looking at you or acting in a way that scares you.

Stopping you from seeing your friends or family.

Threatening to hurt you or actually hurting you.

Blocking you after a disagreement.

Looking through your phone and social media.

Pressuring you to do things sexually that make you feel uncomfortable.

Tracking you via apps or cameras.

Controlling what you wear.

# CONSENT AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships can be confusing. Especially if you really like someone but they want to do things you're not comfortable with. Deciding whether you're ready to be sexually active with your partner is 100% your decision. If you're not feeling comfortable or ready then nobody has the right to pressure or force you. Even if you've said "yes" to something before, you don't have to say "yes" again.

Respecting each other's boundaries is part of a healthy relationship. If you're thinking about doing something sexual, then everyone must be consenting and comfortable with it. It's your responsibility to know whether your partner is consenting.

# WHAT IS GROOMING?

Grooming is when someone builds your trust and makes a connection with you to get you to do something sexual or illegal. Someone could be groomed by someone they know, by a stranger or by a person they met online. That person could be older, the same age, or even someone who's in a position of authority over you, like a teacher or sports coach.

Because grooming involves using trust against people, it can be hard to recognise when it's happening. There are lots of different reasons someone might groom another person. They might try to: have sexual conversations or share sexual messages; get someone to send nudes or sexual images or video; take part in live streams or video chats that become sexual; pressure or threaten someone into selling drugs, hurting other people or doing something illegal; blackmail someone into giving money, sharing images or giving out personal information; meet up in person, or travel somewhere new.

# SPOTTING ONLINE GROOMING

Meeting new people is natural when you're spending time online, but it's not always as easy to tell when someone is grooming you (trying to trick or persuade you to do things). Grooming can happen anywhere you meet people online, including: social media and messaging apps, dating sites, video and group chat apps, and online games.

Remember that the photos, videos and even text someone else sends to you might not always be real—they could have been stolen from someone else or faked using AI tools. **Nobody has the right to pressure you or make you feel like you should do something you don't want to do.**

Sites where you can meet people online aren't always designed for young people, especially things like dating apps. It can help to think about ways you can stay safe online, and what to do if things you're not expecting happen.

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC ABUSE AS A YOUNG 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, teacher, family member, or an organisation like North Ayrshire 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.

**5**

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

**4**

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

# HELP FOR YOUNG WOMEN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

If you recognise any of the signs of abuse, even if you're unsure, it's important to get help. There are lots of organisations and services who can support you.

**If you're in immediate danger, call 999.** If you can't speak, press 55 when the call connects. This will let the operator know you need urgent help.

## **Childline**

Childline is a free and confidential service available to those 18 and under. If you call Childline the number won't appear on your phone bill.

**0800 1111**

**[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)**

## **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](http://nawomensaid.com)**

## **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**

CEOP is a law enforcement agency that helps to keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and grooming online.

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

## **The Revenge Porn Helpline**

Supports all adult victims of intimate image abuse in the UK.

**0345 6000 459**

## **CHAYN**

Chayn create open, online resources and services for survivors of abuse. They have a fantastic DIY guide to online safety.

**[www.chayn.co/safety](http://www.chayn.co/safety)**

# HOW TO TALK TO A YOUNG PERSON ABOUT ABUSE

When a young person is going through a tough time, you can't always fix the problem. But you can make a huge difference by listening and being there. When a person can share what they're going through and feel understood, their difficult feelings become easier to manage. Just knowing they can talk to you helps them feel less alone and more able to cope.

Starting these conversations isn't always easy. Try to pick a calm, private moment, and gently bring the subject up. If they're not ready to talk, don't force them. If they are ready to talk, really listen to what they say. Make it clear that you believe them. Avoid coming up with quick solutions to complicated problems. But do show that you're confident there will be a way to make it better.

When you're supporting someone else, it's important to take care of yourself, too.

# DOMESTIC ABUSE & YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND: STATISTICS

- 40% of teenagers are in abusive dating relationships.<sup>1</sup>
- 25% of girls aged 13-17, and 17% of boys, have experienced physical force (pushing, slapping, hitting or being held down) in a relationship.<sup>2</sup>
- 72% of girls and 51% of boys had experienced emotional violence (most commonly “being made fun of” and “constantly being checked up on”).<sup>3</sup>
- 23% of young people exposed to domestic abuse are also demonstrating harmful behaviour themselves.<sup>4</sup>
- 20% of children in the UK have lived with an adult perpetrating domestic abuse. That’s 1 in 5 kids.<sup>5</sup>
- Only 9% of girls report feeling safe in online spaces.<sup>6</sup>