

Women's

SAID

North Ayrshire

FOCUS ON DIGITAL AND TECH ABUSE



You have the right to be safe and respected online and in real life.

An abusive partner might send abusive texts, demand access to your devices, track you with spyware, or share images of you online. He might comment on your food delivery choice, or watch you without your knowledge. Any of this would count as technological or digital abuse, and it is important to learn how to protect yourself as much as possible.



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WHAT IS DIGITAL AND TECH ABUSE?

Digital abuse is when someone monitors, stalks, harasses, threatens, controls or impersonates another person using technology. This could involve stalking through social media, harassment by text message or humiliation by posting pictures or videos, for example. Digital abuse can happen to anyone but it most often happens alongside other types of domestic abuse.

It's not your fault if you're being abused, you have the right to privacy online and offline. There are steps you can take to keep yourself safe from digital abuse, but you should always do what's safe for you.

MONITORING AND STALKING

Like other types of abuse, digital abuse is used to control. Cyber stalking can involve: stealing or demanding to know your passwords, looking through your phone or computer without permission, using location tagging or spyware to monitor and track you, hacking of your phone or email, impersonating you online, and/or remotely controlling your smart home devices to intimidate you.

POSSESSIVENESS AND CONTROL

You have a right to decide how you use social media, your photos and who you wish to follow/communicate with online. Possessiveness and control can include restricting who you can text, message, follow or be friends with; demanding your constant attention through technology or making you feel unsafe for not responding to messages immediately.

SEXUAL COERCION & INTIMATE IMAGE ABUSE

Sexual coercion is unwanted sexual activity that happens when someone is pressured, tricked, threatened, or forced in a non-physical way. When sexual coercion occurs digitally, for example, someone demanding you take or send explicit photos or videos you aren't comfortable with, this can lead to image-based sexual abuse, or revenge pornography.

Intimate Image Abuse is a type of digital abuse which includes the sharing of private sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person, without their consent and with the purpose of causing distress/humiliation.

Using your social media accounts without your permission.

Sending you threatening messages.

Creating a profile page without your permission.

Using smart home devices to spy on you or make your life unpleasant.

EXAMPLES OF DIGITAL AND TECH ABUSE

Hacking your phone or email.

Sending threatening messages to other people whilst pretending to be you.

Using spyware on your devices or checking location services on your apps to track you.

Controlling your bank accounts

Posting about you online.

Threatening to share images of you.

Posting about you online or by text/messenger.

Taking away your control of smart home devices such as cameras, lights, thermostats.

Posting (or threatening to post) photos of you without your consent (also known as revenge porn)

Constantly sending you messages or calling repeatedly.

WHO CAN HELP SURVIVORS OF DIGITAL/TECH ABUSE?

In an emergency, call 999. There are lots of organizations to help women in Scotland who have experienced sexual abuse.

National Cyber Security Centre

Advice on protecting yourself online
www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberaware/

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

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

Refuge's Digital Break-Up Tool

Refuge have a brilliant new Digital Break-up Tool that helps you secure commonly used apps on your phone, laptop, or tablet.

refugetechsafety.org/

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

WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE DIGITAL ABUSE

1

Acknowledge the abuse, and take steps to increase your online safety, if it is safe to do so (it is not always safe to do so).

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.

TECH ABUSE IN SCOTLAND: STATISTICS

- In 2024-25, 550 crimes under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 and 260 crimes of Stalking were cyber-crimes. This represented an estimated 21% of crimes recorded under the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 and 27% of crimes of Stalking.¹
- In 2024-25, an estimated 4,070 Sexual crimes (27%) recorded by Scottish police were cyber-crimes.²
- 1,490 Sexual crimes recorded in 2024-25 were both cyber-crimes and had a victim under the age of 18.³
- 16% of women in refuge services had experienced surveillance/harassment online or through social media by their abuser.⁴

[1, 2, 3] Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2024-25, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-2024-25/pages/police-recorded-cyber-crime-in-scotland/> ; [4] Women's Aid (2023). The Domestic Abuse Report 2023: The Annual Audit, Bristol: Women's Aid. Available online.