

DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Domestic Abuse Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies.

The National Spiritual Assembly recognizes that believers will be among those affected by domestic abuse; for example, as a survivor of domestic abuse, as an individual who is currently living with domestic abuse, as someone who has been impacted upon by domestic abuse or as an individual who perpetrates domestic abuse. For a definition of domestic abuse see Section 3 Part C in *Domestic Abuse Guidelines for Local Spiritual Assemblies*.

The National Spiritual Assembly aims to raise the capacity of Local Spiritual Assemblies to be aware of potential domestic abuse and to provide the necessary environment and procedures to protect people who experience it. The purpose of this policy and the Domestic Abuse Guidelines is to enable Local Assemblies to do this.

Most cases involve abuse against women by men therefore most of the policy is stated in these terms. However, the National Spiritual Assembly recognizes that the abuser may be a woman and the victim a man, and the same policy and Domestic Abuse Guidelines apply.

Principles

1. Perpetrating domestic abuse is against the Teachings of the Faith.
2. Domestic abuse is one incident or a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, coercive control, psychological and/or emotional abuse, physical or sexual abuse, financial or economic abuse, harassment and stalking, and online or digital abuse, including social media. This policy and the Domestic Abuse Guidelines apply to all these forms of abuse.
3. The safety of the person reporting abuse, any children in the home and those helping them is a priority.
4. The National Assembly takes the view that not reporting domestic abuse and concealing it is not only detrimental to the well-being and safety of the victim, but also damages the reputation of the Faith. To conceal it undermines the fundamental principles of justice on which the Faith is based and deprives the community of the assurance of protection from such behaviour. It believes that the reputation of the Faith is best served by demonstrating – both within and outside of the Bahá'í community – an unswerving adherence to the principles of social justice so clearly enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.
5. Be aware that children who witness abuse in the home, or live in a home where abuse is perpetrated, are themselves damaged by this, are at risk of 'significant harm', and that social services may need to become involved to protect them. Child protection is the responsibility of all citizens and not solely of professionals or specific individuals such as teachers or social workers.

The Responsibilities of the Local Assembly

1. To develop the capacity to recognize and effectively address domestic abuse in all its forms.
2. To this end, the Local Assembly should study this Policy and the Domestic Abuse Guidelines and consult on the steps they need to put in place to apply them.
3. To appropriately assist those affected by any form of domestic abuse.
4. Local Assemblies, their members and all within the community have a direct responsibility to adequately respond to any concerns regarding domestic abuse if there are children within the household, as they are likely to be witnessing domestic abuse and are therefore at risk of ‘significant harm’.
5. To contact the Community Care Team (CCT) as soon as the Local Assembly becomes aware of the possibility of domestic abuse. The CCT can provide guidance and advice as necessary.
6. To refer a person outside their area who approaches the Local Assembly to the National Assembly or to the designated contact on the Community Care Team.
7. To have some means put in place for a safe space where a person alleging abuse (or a first or other responder) can talk confidentially; and to provide that safe space as soon as the Local Assembly becomes aware of the situation.
8. To act swiftly when the Local Assembly is first contacted regarding domestic abuse. In general, the default overall position should be that some kind of action be taken. Doing nothing is rarely, if ever, an appropriate response.
9. To take the matter seriously and not minimize the damaging effect of domestic abuse.
10. To create an environment in which those involved in domestic abuse know they can trust the Local Assembly and be assured of its confidentiality and commitment to justice and fairness.
11. To be fully aware of – and to ensure that individuals are aware of – the necessary degree of sensitivity and confidentiality required when discussing such matters, both with the individual concerned and within the Local Assembly.
12. To ensure that the person making allegations of domestic abuse, and the person who has been accused, are also aware of the level of confidentiality that is being observed.
13. To ensure that any support worker appointed is appropriate to the needs of the person they are supporting. It is not usually appropriate for a man to be appointed as the support worker for a female who is alleging abuse nor, conversely, to appoint a woman to be the support worker for a man against whom allegations of abuse have been made.

A QUICK AND SIMPLE GUIDE TO WHAT TO DO STRAIGHT AWAY

PROCEDURE

In applying this procedure, the Local Assembly should use extreme care not to take any action that it or the abused person feels might further endanger anyone.

The Local Assembly's approach is to do everything it can to protect and safeguard the victim and any children by providing the guidance outlined and providing practical assistance if required. It must deal with all aspects of the matter confidentially and discreetly, without involving the local community. This is not the time to mention or discuss reconciliation, which is part of a different process to be taken later, if appropriate.

The Local Assembly should try to follow the procedure formulated by the National Spiritual Assembly when a case is brought directly to its attention. If this is not possible, it should be reported immediately to the National Assembly Secretary.

“First responder”: what to do and how to do it

1. The first Local Assembly member to hear of alleged domestic abuse should deal with it as quickly as possible¹. If that member cannot take speedy action, the matter should be referred to another Assembly member to take the appropriate action. The first responder should not be considered as someone who listens to backbiting but rather, someone who is taking the allegations seriously.
2. Deal with the “victim” in such a way as to build up her trust in the Bahá'í administration and confidence in the love and support of the Local Assembly, including prompt practical action.
3. Do **not** tell the victim that she should keep the matter hidden, for the good name of the Faith or for any other reason, from those who could help, either inside or outside the Bahá'í community.

¹ Where there is no Local Assembly, the first responder should contact the Bahá'í Community Care Team: cct@bahai.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline

(run in partnership with Women's Aid and Refuge)

Emergency helpline:
0808 2000 247
Free, open 24 hours

Emergency website:
<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk>

England – Emergency Helpline:
0808 2000 (free, 24-hour service)

Northern Ireland Domestic and Sexual Abuse helpline:
0808 802 1414 (free, 24-hour service)

Wales Live Fear Free - All Wales Abuse and Violence Helpline:
0808 801 0800 (free, 24-hour service)

Scotland Domestic and Sexual and Forced Marriage helpline:
0800 027 1234 (free, 24 hour service)

Bahá'í Community Care Team
cct@bahai.org.uk

Bahá'í Office for Safeguarding Children
osc@bahai.org.uk or 07788 143183

4. Find out if there is any immediate danger. Ask: ‘Are you, your children or anyone else in any immediate danger?’

- a. If the answer is yes:

Encourage the person to call 999 or the local police right away. It is best if the victim makes the call. Have the number for the police at hand to give out if necessary.

If the victim seems reluctant or hesitant, offer to call on her behalf. Ask, ‘Would you like me to call the police for you?’ If the answer is yes, find out where the person is calling from and how to get there, as well as the caller’s name and phone number, if you do not know. Immediately relay that information to the local police. DO NOT go to the home or location yourself.

If children or other vulnerable people living in the household are themselves in danger, take this into account in proceeding with these guidelines. They may also require a place a safety.² Remember that children who witness domestic abuse are themselves at risk of ‘significant harm’.

- b. If the answer is no, recall that there are many forms of domestic abuse: many forms do not cause physical injury but are nevertheless dangerous:

Ask: ‘Can you talk now?’ ‘Do you need medical help?’ ‘Do you need immediate help, such as a safe place to go and the means to get there or a place where you can make phone calls safely?’ ‘Do you need someone to help take care of the children?’

Make appropriate responses according to the answers.

5. Find out if the call is for the Local Assembly. Ask: ‘Are you calling to bring this to the attention of the Local Assembly or did you just want to talk to me personally?’ ‘Do you want to meet with the Assembly?’
6. Ask what the safest way is to contact her in future. It may not be safe for her to receive phone calls, emails or letters if these are controlled or monitored by her partner. Home visits may also not be safe, including for the visitor. If she cannot think of any safe way, suggest meeting in a public place or at the home of a person she trusts.
7. Respond to the call in a calm, assertive, and supportive manner. ‘You were right to bring this to the attention of the Local Assembly, and it took courage to do it.’ Do not express shock or disbelief, as these responses may discourage the person from contacting the Local Assembly again or reinforce a sense of embarrassment, shame, or feeling of responsibility for the abuse.
8. Assure the caller of the confidentiality of information pertaining to the call.

² Ask ‘Are the children witnessing violence or abuse?’ If the victim then goes to the police or local domestic abuse services this will be looked into by them. However, if the victim discloses abuse but does not at this stage want to take it any further or speak to any external agencies the police regarding this, if children are in any way involved Local Assembly has a duty of care to protect them. If you are unsure you can speak anonymously to social services about your concerns and get advice.

9. At first, for safety's sake, assume the allegations are true but without prejudging the issue. Later the Local Assembly can hear both sides.
10. The victim will normally be apprehensive for several reasons:
 - a. That she will not be believed.
 - b. That nothing will be done.
 - c. The other person's reaction when he learns that others have been told.
11. The victim should be given immediate assurance on several matters:
 - a. If she is in immediate fear of further abuse or violence, tell her that she is free to tell the abuser that such behaviour is totally unacceptable and that she has already reported it to the Local Assembly.
 - b. If she does not wish to do this, or finds it does not work, and wishes to leave the abusive situation, with or without the children, the Faith will find a short-term refuge whilst the matter is being sorted out.
 - c. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, a person who is subjected to domestic abuse can obtain a court order (a Non-Molestation Order and/or an Occupation Order³), often within 24 hours, on application to a family court.
 - d. In Scotland, a person who is subjected to domestic abuse can apply for a non-harassment order with the assistance of a solicitor, who can raise the matter in court. Alternatively, she may seek an interdict⁴ from a civil court.
 - i. The court is likely to act first and ask questions afterwards.
 - ii. The victim should take advice from a solicitor as to what she may need to do to protect her position in her own circumstances, both for her own reassurance and in case there is any action she feels she should take immediately.

Do

- Listen patiently and compassionately. Treat the caller with courtesy, respect, love and
- kindness. Recognize that each person responds differently to crisis. Remember not all abuse is physical violence.
- Listen carefully to hear the caller's story. Restate, clarify, and ask open-ended questions.
- Ask questions and note the caller's responses instead of giving answers. If there are answers the Local Assembly needs to provide, it will do so later.

³ A victim of domestic abuse can get a Non-Molestation Order or an Occupation Order by application to the family court. If the court agrees that there is an immediate risk of harm, it will hear the case without the other person being told (ex parte). However, there will be another court hearing in two weeks to enable the alleged abuser to have his say. Both must attend that hearing. If the court agrees with the applicant, the court order will be confirmed and will last for a set period of time. If the court agrees with the other side, then the order is finished at that point. It is not necessary to have a solicitor to apply for an order or to go to court. However, if a person wants a solicitor, legal aid may be available.

⁴ An interdict is a civil court order that tells a person not to do something or to stay away from someone or a specific place, such as the victim's house.

- Note any commitments or promises made to the caller and follow up on them.

Don't

- Blame, judge, or criticize the caller.
- Make decisions for the caller or tell him or her what to do. These are decisions for individuals to make, and your personal ideas should not be imposed on them. Bear in mind that only the abused party can decide whether to leave or stay in an abusive situation and may not wish to involve civil authorities.
- Hurry the caller's decision process.
- Suggest that praying alone will solve all the problems.
- Suggest that a person should take anger management classes.
- Tell the person that they should try to reconcile with the abuser.
- Make promises you or the Assembly can't keep.

The Secretary of the Local Assembly should be informed immediately and be kept informed. (If the alleged abuser is the Secretary then the Chair or other nominated person should then be informed.) The Secretary should then quickly contact the Community Care Team (CCT). The CCT can then provide guidance and advice as necessary.

Note: If either party has a relative or close friend on the Local Assembly, the first responder is to contact the National Spiritual Assembly and seek advice before taking the matter to the Local Assembly.

DOMESTIC ABUSE GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

These guidelines are to be read and studied in conjunction with the Domestic Abuse Policy.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Section 1: A quick and simple guide to what to do straight away | 8 |
| A. Principles | 8 |
| B. Procedure | 8 |
| “First responder”: what to do and how to do it | 8 |
| Immediate response of the Local Assembly | 8 |
| C. Helpful contacts | 10 |
| Section 2: A quick guide to providing ongoing support to individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse | 10 |
| A. Principles | 10 |
| B. Reconciliation of the parties | 11 |
| C. Rehabilitation of abusers | 11 |
| D. Supporting families including safeguarding children | 12 |
| E. Attendance of parties at Bahá’í gatherings | 13 |
| Section 3: Helpful additional resources for Local Assemblies | 14 |
| A. Addressing domestic abuse in the context of Bahá’í beliefs | 14 |
| 1. Domestic abuse is at complete variance with the Bahá’í teachings | 14 |
| 2. Protecting the reputation of the Faith | 14 |
| 3. The relationship between justice and unity | 15 |
| 4. The relationship between gender inequality, power and domestic abuse | 15 |
| 5. The individual’s right to privacy | 16 |
| B. Quotations from the Bahá’í texts for study | 16 |
| Domestic abuse is contrary to the spirit of the Faith | 16 |
| Domestic abuse and the family | 17 |
| C. Domestic abuse in the UK: Legal framework | 17 |
| Definition of domestic abuse | 18 |
| Legal remedies | 19 |
| D. Recognizing signs of domestic abuse | 19 |
| E. Guidance for protecting victims of abuse | 20 |
| F. Dispelling myths | 21 |
| G. For more information | 24 |

SECTION 1: A QUICK AND SIMPLE GUIDE TO WHAT TO DO STRAIGHT AWAY

A. Principles

Please refer to the Principles in the Domestic Abuse Policy. Particularly note the need for sensitivity and confidentiality.

B. Procedure

In applying this procedure, the Local Spiritual Assembly should use extreme care not to take any action that it or the abused person feels might further endanger anyone.

The Local Assembly is to do everything it can to protect and safeguard the victim and any children by providing the guidance outlined and providing practical assistance if required.

The Local Assembly must deal with all aspects of the matter confidentially and discreetly, without involving the local community. This is not the time to mention or discuss reconciliation, which is part of a different process to be taken later, if appropriate.

The Local Assembly should try to follow the Policy and procedures formulated by the National Spiritual Assembly when a case is brought directly to its attention. If this is not possible, it should be reported immediately to the Secretary of the National Assembly.

“First responder”: what to do and how to do it

The “first responder” is the first Local Assembly member⁵ to hear of alleged domestic abuse. What the first responder should do immediately and how to do it are set out in the Policy itself.

Immediate response of the Local Assembly

1. The Local Assembly may need to convene an emergency meeting or a conference call.
2. The Local Assembly should immediately consult the Auxiliary Board member for Protection.
3. The Local Assembly may wish to assign one person as its liaison (possibly the first responder) during this period.
4. Having ascertained from the first responder the best way to contact the victim, use that method to contact her. The Local Assembly should reassure her that it is taking her allegations seriously and that it is praying for her. Where the abuser is a Bahá'í, after reassuring the victim tell her that the Local Assembly will not tolerate such behaviour and that the abuser will need to be confronted with the allegations. Say that the Local Assembly would like to consult with her about how this might be done without endangering her or her family.

⁵ Where there is no Local Assembly, the first responder should contact the Bahá'í Community Care Team: cct@bahai.org.uk

The message should not mention reconciliation with her partner, which is part of a separate process.

5. The Assembly should immediately make arrangements for a refuge⁶ to be available to receive the wife (and children where appropriate) and inform the woman of this, so that she can avail herself of the opportunity should this become necessary. The refuge could be available at any time of the day or night with for example:
 - a. The home of a mature Bahá'í family in another Bahá'í community
 - b. Bed and breakfast accommodation
 - c. A women's refuge (or men's refuge)
 - d. The home of a Local Assembly member, if nothing else is available immediately

The victim should be informed that if necessary, the Local Assembly will meet any expenses involved. In cases where a victim does not wish to leave, the Assembly may encourage her to devise a carefully thought-out escape plan. For this she will need the expert assistance of local women's shelters or other support agencies. This can then be implemented should the victim change her mind about leaving.

6. Contact the alleged abuser and arrange for a consultation. It is not good practice for the Local Assembly to consult with the parties together. The aim at this point is to stop the abuse, not to try to reconcile the couple, which is a different process in the context of a Year of Patience.
7. None of these interventions should be implemented if there is a risk of placing members of the community in danger. The safety of the abused person and those helping them is the first goal.
8. Note that once outside authorities, for example social services or the courts, become involved, the Assembly should not expect to be engaged in the investigation of material facts but should be appropriately supportive of the family during this period.
9. Notes should be kept by everyone involved in helping with a situation involving domestic abuse. These should be retained by the Local Assembly in a confidential file following GDPR guidelines.
10. Caution: While an Assembly should be prepared to do everything possible to ensure the safety of everyone involved in any domestic abuse situation that comes to its attention, it should not attempt to set up a crisis hot line or response unit, as those are not its functions, nor should it place other members of the community in danger by attempting to intervene directly in a crisis situation.

⁶ It should be noted that generally a person seeking a refuge from an agency such as Women's Aid will be offered one away from the county in which she lives and the address will remain confidential, so that the abuser cannot come to the refuge.

C. Helpful contacts

National Domestic Violence Helpline (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge)

Emergency number: 0808 2000 247 (free, 24-hour service)

Emergency website: <http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk>

England: Emergency helpline: 0808 2000 (free, 24-hour service)

Northern Ireland Domestic and Sexual Abuse helpline: 0808 802 1414 (free, 24-hour service)

Wales Live Fear Free - All Wales Abuse and Violence Helpline: 0808 801 0800 (free, 24-hour service)

Scotland Domestic and Sexual and Forced Marriage helpline: 0800 027 1234 (free, 24-hour service)

Bahá'í Community Care Team: cct@bahai.org.uk

Bahá'í Office for Safeguarding Children: osc@bahai.org.uk or 07788 143183

SECTION 2: A QUICK GUIDE TO PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE

The purpose of this section is to build the capacity of the Local Assembly to deal with those involved in domestic abuse, to ensure their ongoing safety, to provide support for individuals and families affected, to ascertain the facts of any alleged abuse, and to deal with the abuser appropriately and to rehabilitate him.

A. Principles

Please refer also to the Principles in the Domestic Abuse Policy. Particularly note the need for sensitivity and confidentiality.

1. The Local Assembly needs to create an environment in which those involved in domestic abuse know they can trust the Local Assembly and be assured of its confidentiality and commitment to justice and fairness.
2. The Local Assembly needs to create an environment which provides a safe space to talk for someone alleging abuse. The abused person needs to feel she can speak to anyone about what is happening to her without being accused of backbiting. This is not license to backbite but a space where a victim can confidentially confide in another as she builds her confidence to take matters further with the Local Assembly or another agency.
3. The Local Assembly should explain that it is following the guidelines set out by the National Spiritual Assembly. If appropriate, they can share the guidelines with them in consultation and point out that they are available on the UK Bahá'í Resources website.
4. The Local Assembly will be using consultation with each party separately to deal with the matter.
5. The Local Assembly will do everything possible to ensure the safety of everyone involved in any domestic abuse situation that comes to its attention but it is not able to provide a hot line or an emergency response unit, as these are not its functions.

6. The Local Assembly will not place other members of the community in danger but will use the professional and emergency services available, e.g.: the police, if immediate intervention is required.
7. The Local Assembly should consider appointing a support worker or workers for each party and the children. In appointing the support workers, it should ensure that they are appropriate for the needs of the person they are supporting. It is usually not appropriate for a man to be appointed as the support worker for a female who is alleging abuse, nor to appoint a woman to be the support worker for a man against whom allegations of abuse have been made. In some cases, it might be appropriate to consult with the person regarding who might be the most appropriate person to support them.
8. A Bahá'í abuser may be subject to consideration of the removal of some or all of his administrative rights by the National Spiritual Assembly.

B. Reconciliation of the parties

The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.

Bahá'u'lláh

Unity is impossible if there is no justice. Therefore, any act of injustice needs to be addressed for unity to be established.

Often the goal of reconciliation results in institutions and individuals overlooking the reality of an unjust and unhealthy situation in a home, and as a result the victim feels they are themselves to blame for the abuse they suffer or feel pressured to “work harder” or “forgive” the abuser, and to stay in or return to an abusive relationship.

The goal of the initial processes of the Local Assembly is to stop abuse. If the parties wish to continue their relationship, it cannot be one of abuse. The Local Assembly may provide the means for this reconciliation when it is assured that the abuse will no longer occur. Such means will require consultation. Consultation cannot take place where fear of violence or abuse is present. A victim of abuse does not need to be reconciled to it.

Should the abuse stop and the parties wish to reconcile, the Local Assembly will facilitate this, bearing in mind the need to ensure that neither party feels pressurized by the other or by the Assembly to reconcile.

Should the parties wish to undertake a year a patience, the rules for the process of reconciliation during that period apply, provided there is no abuse or threat of abuse.

C. Rehabilitation of abusers

- An abuser may wish to end his pattern of abuse and overcome the reasons why he abuses. The Local Assembly may pray with him, consult with him and share with him quotations from the Bahá'í writings about this subject (see *Quotations*). At the same time, the Assembly should recognize that abusive behaviour is not easy to change and generally requires professional assistance. The Local Assembly may signpost him to local resources and agencies.

- It is not appropriate to suggest to an abuser that he should take courses on anger management. Domestic abuse does not occur because the man has a temper. It is far more complex than that and is related to perceptions of power, gender inequality and control, among other issues.

An abusive person's anger is one of the tools to control the victim. Evidence shows that abusive men who complete anger management programmes do not stop abusing. They merely choose another tool to reach the same end. (See Edward Gondolf and David Russel, *The Case Against Anger Control Treatment Programs for Batterers*)

- A Bahá'í abuser may be subject to consideration of the removal of some or all of his administrative rights by the National Spiritual Assembly. The Local Assembly may advise the National Spiritual Assembly if this should be considered. Factors to take into account include a criminal conviction for abuse, the response of the abuser to his abuse and his efforts to overcome it, and the effect of the abuser on the victim, children and the wider community.

D. Supporting families including safeguarding children

A family experiencing domestic abuse will require loving support. At the same time, the Local Assembly needs to be clear that if there are children or young people in the household, it needs to consider child safeguarding.

A person reporting abuse wants the abuse to stop but may not want to remove herself from the family home for a number of reasons, such as fear of retaliation from the abuser, removal of their children into care, their children being turned against them, and having no other means of financial support. The family is faced with difficult choices and may need support over an extended period in order to make a decision that is right for the parents and their children.

In the UK a child is deemed at risk of harm or significant harm if he or she witnesses or hears domestic abuse taking place between family members. From a childcare law and social work perspective, statutory intervention is required when a child is deemed to be at risk of "significant harm". However, many local authorities now have a policy that focuses on an early intervention approach with families to try and reduce domestic abuse issues in the home. In terms of the harm experienced this is mainly considered to entail emotional and physical harm although it can also be considered as a form of neglect of the child.

It is acknowledged within child care law and social work practice that it is commonplace for children to be exposed to some degree of argument and upset within the home but that relationship difficulties are private matters. However, when the degree of animosity entails aggressive arguments (including name calling, using demeaning words towards one another, etc), physical aggression (including throwing items, pushing, hitting, kicking, punching) or sexual violence then it is deemed that any child exposed to such behaviour will experience harm. It is believed that harm can result from a one-off incident or exposure to repeated domestic abuse. Parental alienation, "a situation in which one parent turns their child against the other parent, intentionally or unintentionally, resulting in the child's apparent want to reject all contact with that parent" is also harmful to the child and is not consistent with the Bahá'í teachings on family unity.

A vital point that needs reiteration when dealing with such matters is the recognition that child protection is the responsibility of all citizens and not only of is not the remit of specific

individuals or professionals such as teachers or social workers. Therefore, Local Assemblies, their members and all within the community have a direct responsibility to adequately respond to the safety and welfare of the children in a household where domestic abuse is alleged, as the children are likely to be witnessing it and are therefore at risk of “significant harm”.

The Local Assembly should ask directly about violence towards the children. “Are the children witnessing violence or abuse?” If the victim then goes to the police or local domestic abuse services, this will be looked into by them. However, if the victim discloses abuse but does not at this stage want to take it any further or speak to any external agencies including the police regarding this, if children are in any way involved the Local Assembly will have a duty of care to protect them. If the Assembly is unsure it can speak anonymously to social services about its concerns and get advice. It should also contact the Bahá’í Office for Safeguarding Children for advice at osc@bahai.org.uk.

The Assembly should also consult about how to best support the children in a family, recognizing they may be traumatized, confused, feel isolated or be subject to bullying by others. They may not thrive at school or feel able to participate in children’s classes or the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme. Expert assistance may be needed and the Assembly should consult the parent(s) separately about this.

E. Attendance of parties at Bahá’í gatherings

One of the difficulties a Local Assembly may face is that both the abuser and the abused, as well as their children, may continue to live in the same local community. It is very challenging for them to be together in the same meetings, and it may also be difficult for other members of the community, who may not know how act sensitively and appropriately on such occasions. Managing such situations is one of the capacities of the Local Assembly which the National Assembly is trying to raise.

The approach taken in deciding how to manage this situation must include a process whereby by all parties are consulted with separately by their support workers to establish their preferences on this matter. If each party is content to attend meetings where the other person is present, then the matter is resolved. In such a case, the Local Assembly will need to ensure that the meetings do not become strained for anyone and that insensitive remarks are not made by anyone, including members of the community.

Should one or both the parties feel they cannot attend community gatherings at the same time, the Local Assembly needs to consider how the attendance of parties and their families can be managed, bearing in mind the need for justice and universal participation and the need to maintain a loving and supportive atmosphere at such gatherings.

In consultation between each party and their support worker, it may be suggested that each party take it in turn to attend such gatherings and a schedule set for this. The main reason for taking this position is not just that any such relatively close contact would be strained, but that the person making the allegations might otherwise opt not to attend meetings at all if they risked meeting their alleged abuser, which would be unjust. If this option is selected, consideration must be given to how the children will be able to attend all such gatherings. Should the person against whom the allegations have been made refuse to cooperate with this plan, the Local Assembly should consider whether it should instruct him to do so. This would not be a sanction nor make any assumptions of guilt in advance of the evidence.

This solution may not be workable if the victim feels that she is being penalized for the actions of the abuser and that this is unjust. Further consultation will be required between the support workers and each party to find a workable solution. For example, the alleged abuser may be asked to step back from such gatherings for a short time while the facts are being explored. At the same time, the Local Assembly itself must endeavour to ascertain the facts of the case in a timely manner so that the situation does not become a long-drawn-out process, which causes strain to the whole community as well as the parties and is not sustainable in the long term. If and when a year of patience is established, the Local Assembly made need to review these arrangements.

Section 3: Helpful additional resources for Local Assemblies

A. Addressing domestic abuse in the context of Bahá'í beliefs

1. Domestic abuse is at complete variance with the Bahá'í teachings

The Universal House of Justice has written:

Among the signs of moral downfall in the declining moral order are the high incidence of violence within the family, the increase of degrading and cruel treatment of spouses and children, and the spread of sexual abuse. It is essential that the members of the community of the Greatest Name take the utmost care not to be drawn into acceptance of such practices because of their prevalence. They must be ever mindful of their obligations to exemplify a new way of life distinguished by its respect for the dignity and rights of all people, by its exalted moral tone, and by its freedom from oppression and from all forms of abuse. (23 November 1993)

The National Spiritual Assembly wishes to convey a clear message that domestic abuse in all its forms is at complete variance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and is a criminal offence in the United Kingdom. The National Assembly will not tolerate acts of domestic abuse, or any other form of abuse, within the UK Bahá'í community. It encourages anyone who is subject to such abuse to seek the support and protection of the institutions of the Faith without delay, as well as to contact the police and/or professionals immediately.

Domestic abuse includes all forms of violence or abuse among family members, within the home and in close relationships (e.g. engaged couples). It encompasses behaviours in which one person uses coercion, intimidation, threats or violence to control the behaviour of another. They include verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuses, as well as neglect, property damage, terrorizing, corrupting, and stalking. In addition to the spiritual consequences for one who commits such acts, the above behaviours are violations of Bahá'í standards of conduct and may result in loss of Bahá'í administrative rights. Many of these behaviours are also against UK law and may result in civil or criminal penalties, including imprisonment.

2. Protecting the reputation of the Faith

The National Assembly takes the view that not reporting domestic abuse and concealing it is not only detrimental to the well-being and safety of the victim, but also damages the reputation of the Faith. To conceal it undermines the fundamental principles of justice on which the Faith is based and deprives the community of the assurance of protection from such behaviour. It

believes that the reputation of the Faith is best served by demonstrating, both within and without the Bahá'í community, an unswerving adherence to the principles of social justice so clearly enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

3. The relationship between justice and unity

Unity is a product of justice. True unity does not exist in the absence of justice.

The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.

Bahá'u'lláh

To seek unity in an abusive relationship requires that justice be established. The abuse needs to cease and the abuser needs to get the spiritual and therapeutic assistance required.

4. The relationship between gender inequality, power and domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men. It is a form of gender-based violence, violence 'directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately' (CEDAW, 1992).

Women are more likely than men to experience multiple incidents of abuse, different types of domestic abuse (intimate partner violence, sexual assault and stalking) and in particular sexual violence. UK Statistics regarding this can be found at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>

Abuse of all kinds is rooted in the unequal use of power and control in a relationship.

True equality between men and women will not be established unless prevailing conceptions of power that dominate contemporary thought are seriously questioned and fundamentally redefined . . . current conceptions of power tend to focus on the capacity to pursue one's self-interests, to compete effectively, to get others to act according to one's will, to dominate, to manipulate and to prevail over or against others . . . Understood and enacted in these terms, abuses of power and the unequal distribution of material sources and instruments of power have resulted in innumerable hardships and great suffering for women historically and into the present day... A reconceptualization of power in this sense requires a broadened appreciation of the sources of power available to humanity, which include the limitless and generative powers of unity, love, justice and equity, knowledge, humility, integrity and truthfulness -- powers humanity has been learning to draw upon over the centuries. Expressions of power emanating from these sources can be seen in the capacity to work creatively and constructively with others in the pursuit of common goals, the capacity to cooperate, and the capacity to transform social reality to reflect spiritual truths such as the equality of women and men. As we move beyond the material struggle to exercise power over or against others, and we develop the capacity to draw on these other sources of power accessible to every human being, we activate greater forms of individual and collective agency and create new possibilities for the well-being of women and men."

Advancing Toward the Equality of Women and Men, Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity

The association between gender inequality and violence against women seems self-evident, given the considerably higher proportion of intimate partner violence reported to have been

committed by men against women, as revealed in decades of studies. When examining such violence, the following statement by the Universal House of Justice affirms the traditional nature of these behaviours throughout the world:

A number of your questions pertain to the treatment of women, and are best considered in light of the principle of equality of the sexes which is set forth in the Bahá'í Teachings. This principle is far more than the enunciation of admirable ideals; it has profound implications in all aspects of human relations and must be an integral element of Bahá'í domestic and community life. The application of this principle gives rise to changes in habits and practices which have prevailed for many centuries.

Letter written of behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer,

24 January 1993

5. The individual's right to privacy

The National Spiritual Assembly respects believers' right to privacy. Whilst Local Spiritual Assemblies should encourage victims of domestic abuse to disclose it for the safety of themselves and all those in the family, and for the sake of the reputation of the Faith, it does not force them to share this information if they do not want to. It is important that from the outset that the privacy and protection of the person reporting abuse and that of the person about whom that report is made, is safeguarded. It should be made clear to the person reporting the case:

- to whom any disclosure of the report will be made
- what record will be kept and
- for how long it will be retained.

The situation may arise where an Assembly is made aware of domestic abuse but the abused person does not wish to share this information, and the Assembly is concerned that there is real danger of serious harm to someone. Remembering that perpetrating abuse or violence against anyone is a crime, the Assembly may have to report such abuse to the police and/or social services. If it does so, it must inform the victim that this is happening and ensure that appropriate action is taken to protect her and any children.

If the Assembly is unsure whether to take this step, advice can be sought from social services or one of the domestic abuse helplines.

B. Quotations from the Bahá'í texts for study

Domestic abuse is contrary to the spirit of the Faith

O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace.

The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O ye lovers of God! In this, the cycle of Almighty God, violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.149

... the stress laid in the statements of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on love and harmony as the hallmark of marriage, and in view of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's exhortation that each

member of the family must uphold the rights of the others, makes it clear that violence in the family is contrary to the spirit of the Faith and a practice to be condemned. It is clearly evident from the Bahá'í teachings that no husband should subject his wife to abuse of any kind, much less to violence; such a reprehensible action is the antithesis of the relationship of mutual respect and equality enjoined by the Bahá'í Writings - a relationship governed by the principles of Bahá'í consultation and totally devoid of the use of force to compel obedience to one's will. Of course, the prohibition against subjecting one's marriage partner to physical force applies to women, as well.

Letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the UK
25 September 1987

If the broad structure of society is to remain intact, resolute efforts, including medical ones, as necessary, should be made to curb acts of aggression within families particularly their extreme forms of wife beating and child abuse by parents. This is a matter of fundamental importance, for if the friends are not able to maintain harmony within their families, on what other basis do they hope to demonstrate to a sceptical world the efficacy of the pre-eminent character of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh? What possible influence could they hope to exert on the development of nations and the establishment of world peace?

From a letter written of behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 22 September 1983

The use of force by the physically strong against the weak, as a means of imposing one's will and fulfilling one's desires, is a flagrant transgression of the Bahá'í teachings. There can be no justification for anyone compelling another, through the use of force or through the threat of violence, to do that to which the other person is not inclined.

Letter written of behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 24 January 1993

Domestic abuse and the family

Family violence is a global and pernicious problem [that] must be addressed by the world community. It is not a private matter, but has become a global pandemic that the international community can neither ignore nor allow to be protected within the privacy of the family. It is an affliction that ravages all regions of the world, all economic and educational strata and all types of families. The family is the primary locus of human socialization and development. If that development process is denied or distorted, the adverse consequences can be irreversible. Behaviours learned in the home are replicated in the wider society.

Bahá'í International Community, Creating Violence-Free Families,
Summary Report of United Nations Symposium, May 1994

C. Domestic abuse in the UK: Legal framework

In the United Kingdom, two Acts deal with issues of domestic abuse: the Domestic Violence, Crimes and Victims Act, 2004 (and its amendments) deals with issues of domestic abuse; and the Serious Crime Act 2015 (the 2015 Act), which created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships (section 76). Any form of assault which is committed in the home is considered a crime. Local Spiritual Assemblies will need to seek out particular details of relevant legislation, as the situation unfolds.

As children are often living in homes where there is domestic abuse, it is important to draw attention to the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The Children Act 1989 states that in all court cases where the upbringing of a child is involved, "the child's welfare shall be

the court's paramount consideration". The 2004 Act states that the interests of children and young people are paramount in all considerations of welfare and safeguarding and that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility.

New legislation is being enacted all the time, and amendments are being made to previous legislation.

Definition of domestic abuse

In the UK domestic abuse is defined as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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.

Family members include "mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents whether directly related, in-laws or step-family. However, this is not an exhaustive list and may also be extended to uncles, aunts and cousins etc."

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional (Crown Prosecution Service <https://www.cps.gov.uk/domestic-abuse>).

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so-called "honour" based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

The Government definition also outlines the following:

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

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent 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 control is a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence

Domestic abuse can include:

- sexual abuse and rape (including within a relationship)
- punching, kicking, cutting, hitting with an object.
- withholding money or preventing someone from earning money
- taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear
- not letting someone leave the house
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or pet

- gaslighting (a form of psychological manipulation in which a person seeks to sow seeds of doubt in a person's mind, making her question her own memory, perception and sanity)

These acts are illegal in the United Kingdom and carry legal penalties, including imprisonment.

Parental alienation and falsely claiming parental alienation are also forms of domestic abuse.

Legal remedies

non-molestation order: a court order that protects a person and any relevant child from violence or harassment. You can obtain a non-molestation order against someone who has been physically violent or against someone who is harassing, intimidating or pestering you. You can apply for a non-molestation order even if you still want to (or have to) live with your abuser. This order is made in the family court. The person named in the order can be arrested if they break it. You may be able to get free legal representation.

occupation order: a court order that decides who can live in the family home or enter the surrounding area. It prevents the abuser from the family home, whoever owns it. This order is made in the family court. The person named in the order can be arrested if they break it. You can apply by yourself but you may be able to get free legal representation.

restraining order: an order made by the criminal court to prevent a person from contacting or pursuing a course of conduct with another person. The order is designed to protect the person named from crime against an individual and they can be made on conviction or acquittal of any criminal offence.

exclusion order (Scotland): protective court order that suspends the right of a married person, civil partner or cohabitee to live in the family home and prevents them visiting the children's school or a person's workplace. You do not need to be living in the family home at the time of applying for an exclusion order (e.g. you can be staying with friends and family or in a refuge). The earliest a court hearing will be is three days after the application but is more likely to be a week. The court can grant an interim exclusion order without hearing evidence from you or your partner. You will need a solicitor to assist you with this.

D. Recognizing signs of domestic abuse

(From a Bahá'í who is a family lawyer working in the public sector)

Some of the signs of domestic abuse as viewed from the viewpoint of a friend / observer / community member close to someone experiencing domestic abuse:

The person you know is displaying some of the following:

- is seen less often at social / community events
- is becoming a lot more critical of themselves -- this can often be verbalised
- is reluctant to proffer an opinion or point of view having previously been forthright.
- is looking stressed or worried all the time;
- is being unusually quiet
- has loss of appetite

- is hypervigilant
- is in a higher state of arousal at small things (jumpy)
- is wearing inappropriate clothing (e.g. jumper in summer)
- they 'check in' with their partner with a high frequency
- they seem afraid of their partner or is always very anxious to please him or her.
- changes tone or cuts phone conversations short when their partner is in the room.
- their partner often criticises them or humiliates them in front of other people.
- they have physical injuries (bruises, broken bones, sprains, cuts etc)
- they may give unlikely explanations for physical injuries

The person may become defensive and be reluctant to talk about any or all of the above for obvious reasons, but in general terms, if several of the above are being displayed it would be completely natural for someone to ask them if there is anything wrong out of a general concern. These may seem obvious but it is extremely easy when in a community to fall into a kind of affective presence, where because there is a community feeling the assumption is that everyone is experiencing the same feelings, it often takes someone trained or alert to the signs to spot someone suffering in this way.

E. Guidance for protecting victims of abuse

To further this purpose and the efficient application of this policy as a whole, the National Assembly strongly advises all Local Assemblies, as an immediate priority, to research and identify relevant resources available in their area, such as local protection and support services. A good place to start is the Women's Aid National Network at their website:

<http://www.womensaid.org.uk>

The following organisations or places can be contacted:

Local Courts

The Citizens' Advice Bureau

Women's Refuges

Housing Department

Community Health Centres

Department of Social Security

Police Departments

Medical Practitioners

Marriage and Family Counselling Services (e.g. Relate)

www.respect.uk.net

<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk>

If the Local Assembly members are not aware of the options available to the abused person (i.e. that they can access a refuge), they may feel that the option of the abused person leaving is too difficult/expensive/impossible, and will not be able to assist them in getting help. But if Local Assembly members are aware, they can then signpost the abused person to organisations that can help with this process.

F. Dispelling myths

There are many myths and assumptions and misinformation about domestic abuse. As Bahá'ís we need to make efforts to educate ourselves about the facts. Below are some common statements with some information to help us explore the truth.

This issue does not affect Bahá'ís

Domestic abuse happens across the whole spectrum of society — do not assume that because someone is a Bahá'í, or in a position of good standing, that they cannot be an abuser. The Universal House of Justice has written about domestic abuse, saying:

The stress laid in the statements of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on love and harmony as the hallmark of marriage, and in view of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's exhortation that each member of the family must uphold the rights of the others, makes it clear that violence in the family is contrary to the spirit of the Faith and a practice to be condemned.

From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a
National Spiritual Assembly, 12 April 1990

The Local Spiritual Assembly should handle this. There is no need to call in professionals, who in any case do not understand the spiritual aspects and the importance of unity in a Bahá'í marriage.

It is an important role of the Local Assembly to signpost people to the relevant professional services when they are required, much as you would give people information about the local doctor or school if they needed these services. Professionals can provide support and direction and have vast experience in this field.

We should not report abuse to the authorities, as it can harm the good name of the Faith.

The National Assembly takes the view that **not** reporting domestic abuse and concealing it damages the reputation of the Faith. To conceal it undermines the fundamental principles of justice on which the Faith is based and deprives the community of the assurance of protection from such behaviour. It believes that the reputation of the Faith is best served by demonstrating, both within and without the Bahá'í community, an unswerving adherence to the principles of social justice so clearly enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Reporting domestic abuse is wrong. It is backbiting.

It is not backbiting to report instances of domestic abuse to the Local Assembly or an Auxiliary Board member. Local Assembly members should have an active awareness of the risk of domestic abuse within the community and if they have concerns about a member of the community, or a pattern of behaviour they are seeing, they should act on this. One might find an opportunity to talk alone with the potential victim and ask, in a non-judgemental way, open questions, for example, “Is everything ok at home?” or “I noticed that bruise and wanted to check that you were all right”, or many others, depending on the situation.

Children, especially very young children, are not affected by domestic violence as long as they do not experience it themselves and they do not witness it directly.

It must be made very clear: if children are in the household, the first responder and the Local Assembly need to consider child safeguarding. Contact the Bahá'í Office for Safeguarding Children: osc@bahai.org.uk

Domestic abuse always involves physical violence.

Domestic abuse includes any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. These incidents can include coercive control; psychological and/or emotional abuse; physical abuse; sexual abuse; financial abuse; harassment; stalking; and/or online or digital abuse, including social media.

She must have done something to provoke him.

Domestic abuse is a complex issue and the reasons for it are many, including power and control. Violence and abuse of any kind is never acceptable:

The use of force by the physically strong against the weak, as a means of imposing one's will and fulfilling one's desires, is a flagrant transgression of the Bahá'í teachings. There can be no justification for anyone compelling another, through the use of force or through the threat of violence, to do that to which the other person is not inclined. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, "O ye lovers of God! In this, the cycle of Almighty God, violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned." Let those who, driven by their passions or by their inability to exercise discipline in the control of their anger, might be tempted to inflict violence on another human being, be mindful of the condemnation of such disgraceful behaviour by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Letter written of behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer,
24 January 1993

Why didn't she just leave?

People often wonder why a person would not just leave an abusive relationship. However, leaving can be more complicated than it seems. There are many reasons why people stay in abusive relationships. Here are just a few of the common ones:

Fear: A person may be afraid of what will happen if they decide to leave the relationship.

Believing abuse is normal: A person may not know what a healthy relationship looks like, perhaps from growing up in an environment where abuse was common, and they may not recognize that their relationship is unhealthy.

Embarrassment or shame: It is often difficult for someone to admit that they have been abused. They may feel they have done something wrong by becoming involved with an abusive partner. They may also worry that their friends and family will judge them.

Low self-esteem: When an abusive partner constantly puts someone down and blames them for the abuse, it can be easy for the victim to believe those statements and think that the abuse is their fault.

Love: So often, the victim feels love for their abusive partner. They may have children with them and want to maintain their family. Abusive people can often be charming, especially at the beginning of a relationship, and the victim may hope that their partner will go back to being that person. They may only want the violence to stop, not for the relationship to end entirely.

Cultural/religious reasons: Traditional gender roles supported by someone's culture or religion may influence them to stay rather than end the relationship for fear of bringing shame upon their family.

Language barriers/immigration status: If a person is undocumented, they may fear that reporting the abuse will affect their immigration status. Also, if their first language is not English, it can be difficult to express the depth of their situation to others.

Lack of money/resources: Financial abuse is common, and a victim may be financially dependent on their abusive partner. Without money, access to resources or even a place to go, it can seem impossible for them to leave the relationship. This feeling of helplessness can be especially strong if the person lives with their abusive partner.

Disability: When someone is physically dependent on their abusive partner, they can feel that their well-being is connected to the relationship. This dependency could heavily influence their decision to stay in an abusive relationship.

It was only one punch. You can't call that domestic abuse.

In the UK, domestic abuse is defined as **one incident** or a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence. Bahá'u'lláh states:

Ye have been forbidden in the Book of God to engage in contention and conflict, to strike another, or to commit similar acts whereby hearts and souls may be saddened.

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, para.148

Women often lie about abuse

The fear of being called a liar can and does deter women from reporting the abuse they have experienced. The UK Crown Prosecution Service for England and Wales released the first ever study of this in 2013, and concluded that false allegations are even more infrequent than previously thought. In the 17-month period that the study examined, there were 111,891 prosecutions for domestic violence, and only six prosecutions for making false allegations.

Women are just as abusive as men.

In the vast majority of cases, domestic abuse is experienced by women and perpetrated by men. Two women a week are murdered by a current or ex-partner in England and Wales alone. Of the 92,779 domestic abuse court prosecutions last year, 92.4% of defendants were male, and 84% of victims were female. It is a gendered crime which is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men.

Women are more likely than men to experience multiple incidents of abuse, different types of domestic abuse, and sexual violence particularly.

Domestic abuse exists as part of the wider spectrum of violence against women and girls, which also includes different forms of family violence such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called “honour crimes” that are perpetrated primarily by family members.

She never said anything before. It can't really be true.

On average high-risk victims live with domestic abuse for 2.3 years and medium risk victims for 3 years before getting help. (SafeLives (2015), Insights Into National Dataset 2013-14. Bristol: SafeLives.)

There are multiple barriers to victims seeking help and by making it clear that you are available to talk to may be all the encouragement they need to disclose a history of abuse (a Bahá'í GP).

He can be a good father even if he abuses his partner -- the parents' relationship doesn't have to affect the children.

An estimated 90% of children whose mothers are abused witness the abuse. The effects are traumatic and long-lasting. When a child witnesses domestic abuse, this is child abuse and the child is at risk of "significant harm". Between 40% and 70% of these children are also direct victims of the abuse which is happening at home.

Only women are subjected to domestic abuse

The majority of victims are women and children although research is highlighting the prevalence and context of male victims of domestic violence. Research and statistics, including MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference, a victim focused information sharing and risk management meeting attended by all key agencies in a locality, where high risk cases are discussed) statistics, show that about 90% of reported cases are perpetrated by men against women.

It only affects certain kinds of people

Domestic abuse does not discriminate. People of all classes, genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations and religions can experience domestic abuse. (Cambridgeshire Constabulary)

G. For more information

These websites will help you understand the meaning of domestic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. They will give you greater insight into the definition and signs of how to spot domestic abuse:

<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk>

www.respect.uk.net

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/>

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/recognising-domestic-abuse/>

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/>

[This has more links to follow on a variety of survival topics]

Wales: <https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/>

Northern Ireland: <https://www.womensaidni.org/>[for both women and men]

Scotland: <https://womensaid.scot/>

Specifically for men who are victims of domestic violence/abuse:

<http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk/>

and in Scotland:

www.abusedmeninscotland.org