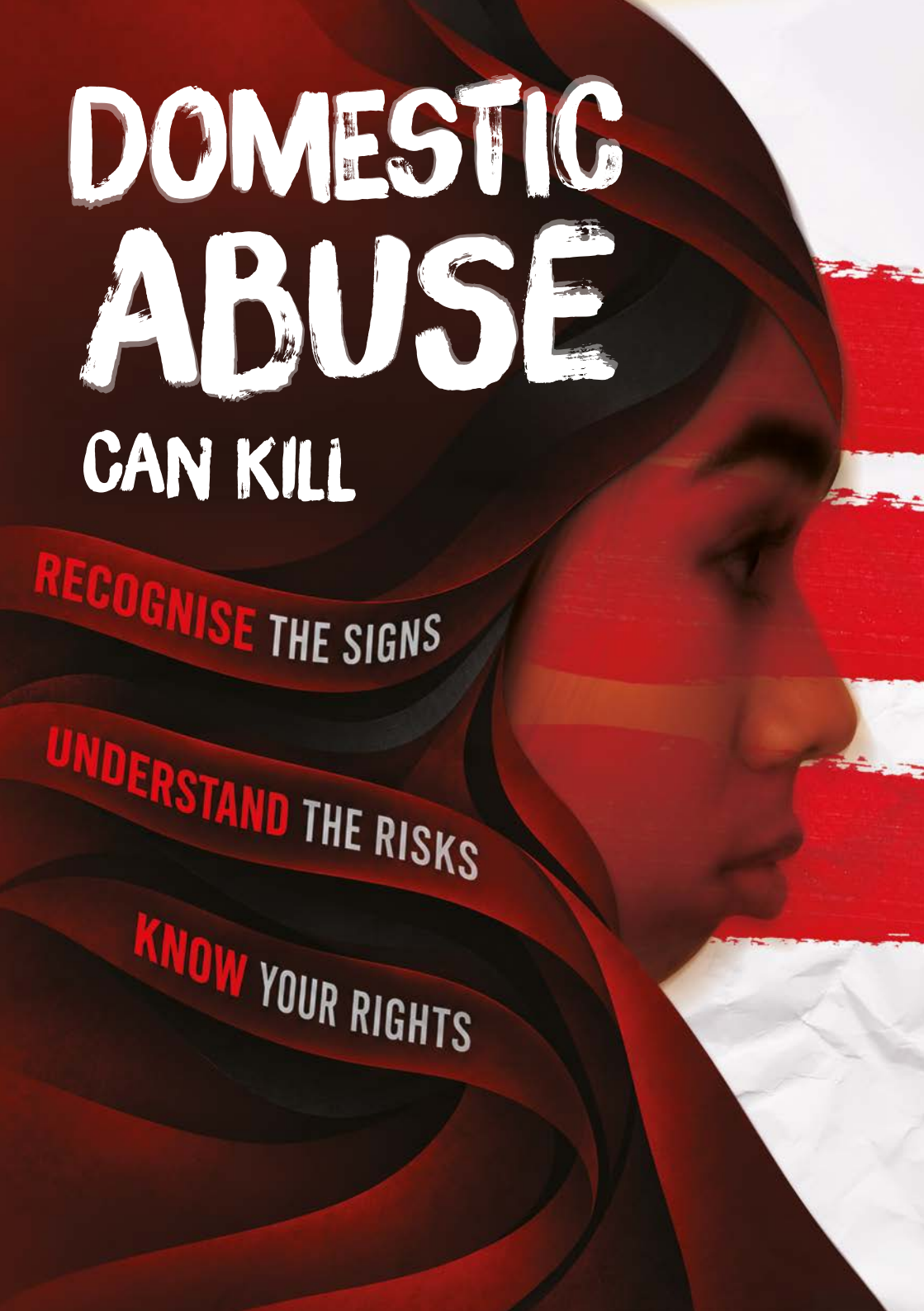
DOMESTIC ABUSE
CAN KILL
RECOGNISE THE SIGNS
UNDERSTAND THE RISKS
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

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Recognise the Signs



Protect Yourself



Get Support

This information booklet has been produced by Muslim Women's Network UK

This booklet is for everyone. Some sections focus on the particular vulnerabilities and risks experienced by minority ethnic women / Muslim women, reflecting issues commonly reported through our services and identified in our research.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) includes a range of harmful behaviours such as domestic abuse (including coercive control, stalking, tech abuse, sexual and financial abuse etc), as well as other forms such as modern slavery, intimate image abuse, and litigation abuse. These forms of abuse often overlap and can occur simultaneously and are not all mentioned in the legal definition.



Physical Abuse

When assault or physical force is used such as striking with or without an object (including throwing objects), beating, pushing, shaking, slapping, kicking, pinching, burning, spitting, pulling hair, strangling, suffocation etc.



Non-fatal Strangulation

Deliberate pressure applied to the neck to restrict breathing, often used to control or intimidate. This can involve the use of hands, arms, legs, feet, or objects such as a scarf or belt.



Non-fatal Suffocation

The use of unlawful force that interferes with a person's ability to breathe - such as covering the mouth, nose, or compressing the chest without causing death but posing serious risk of harm.



Sexual Abuse

Any sexual act forced upon a person without their consent, which can occur inside or outside of marriage. This includes unwanted, unsafe, or degrading sexual activity, such as rape or sexual assault, which can also include pressuring victim to have sex with other people.



Rough Sex

When sexual activity takes place without consent (including pressuring someone to take part), where pain, violence, or humiliation is used for psychological or sexual gratification. This may include acts such as strangulation and can lead to actual bodily harm, serious injury, or even death.



Intimate Image Abuse

The non-consensual sharing, or threat to share, sexually explicit images or videos, often online - with the intent to shame, humiliate, or cause distress to the person depicted.



Drug-Facilitated Sexual Abuse

Secretly administering drugs or excessive alcohol to incapacitate a partner and then sexually abusing the victim which may include allowing other people to sexually abuse or rape the victim *(similar to the Pelicot case in France)*. Signs are hard to spot and may include feeling intoxicated suddenly, confused, memory gaps and unexplained bruising, soreness and sexually transmitted infections.



Controlling and Coercive Behaviour

Controlling and coercive behaviour is a pattern of abusive acts used to dominate another person.

Coercive behavior involves using intimidation, assaults, humiliation manipulation or threats or other forms of abuse to harm, instill fear and punish.

Controlling behaviour involves restricting a victim's freedom and independence and isolating them to make them dependent and easier to control.



Examples include:

- Dictating when they can sleep, eat or leave the home.
- Preventing them from working, studying or practising their religion.
- Controlling access to money, transport or medication.
- Controlling where they go, who they see or what they wear.
- Monitoring movements, phone calls, messages, emails or social media.
- Cutting them off from friends and family.



Psychological Abuse

A pattern of verbal or non-verbal behaviour that causes emotional harm or psychological trauma, such as anxiety, depression, or fear. This can include shouting, swearing, name-calling, blaming, threatening, mocking, isolating, ignoring, excluding, humiliating, manipulating, controlling, and intimidation. It may also involve silent treatment and threats of harm or abandonment.



Reproductive Abuse

This is also known as reproductive coercion and involves stripping a person of their bodily autonomy to dictate their reproductive choices and can include: pressuring, threatening, or forcing a partner to get pregnant, sabotaging birth control or force a partner to terminate a pregnancy.



Harassment and Stalking

A pattern of unwanted behaviour that causes alarm, distress, or fear. This can include malicious phone calls, threatening messages, abusive language, and damage to property. Stalking is a form of harassment and may involve following someone, monitoring their activities, or forcing contact—often through social media or other means. The impact is often significant, causing emotional harm and restricting the victim's freedom.

Technological Abuse

The act of spreading false or harmful information about a victim on their own or others' social media; creating fake social media accounts impersonating the victim; engaging in 'trolling' by sending abusive, offensive, or intentionally provocative messages on social media or online forums; and the use of spyware, trackers and cameras to invade privacy.

Neglect and Action of Omission

Failing to address medical or physical care needs, denying access to necessary health, social care, or educational services, and withholding essential life necessities such as medication, sufficient nutrition, or adequate heating.





Financial Abuse

The control or exploitation of economic resources, which may involve withholding wages, benefits, or savings; denying access to money; restricting access to essentials like food; forcing someone to beg for money; stealing money including taking out loans in the victim's name; or spending or gambling money needed to maintain the household.

Economic Abuse

A form of control in which an abuser manipulates or restricts a person's ability to obtain, manage, and sustain economic resources. This includes financial abuse but also extends to limiting access to education, employment opportunities, financial information, transportation, housing, and basic necessities. The aim is to create dependence and undermine the victim's independence and autonomy.

Litigation Abuse

After separating from an abusive spouse or partner, the abuser may misuse the court system to continue exerting power and control, often by filing excessive motions, petitions, adjournments, or frivolous lawsuits to harass the victim. For Muslim women, this can include pressure to relinquish financial rights in exchange for a swift Islamic Shariah divorce.

Honour Based Abuse

The following statutory definition of honour-based abuse was introduced in the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

Honour-based abuse occurs where:

- A person engages in abusive behaviour towards another person who is:
  - a member of their family; or
  - someone with whom they have a relevant connection.
- The abusive behaviour is motivated wholly or partly by the perpetrator's perception that the victim has behaved, is behaving, or may behave in a way that:
  - brings shame or dishonour on the perpetrator, the victim, either family, or the perpetrator's community; and
  - does not comply with the accepted norms of behaviour within the perpetrator's community.



- Abusive behaviour includes:
  - Physical abuse
  - Sexual abuse
  - Psychological abuse
  - Emotional abuse
  - Economic abuse
  - Controlling or coercive behaviour
  - Intimidation
  - Threats of violence
  - Spiritual or faith-related abuse

Forced Marriage

A marriage that is arranged or conducted by families where the individual does not freely consent or where consent is given under pressure or coercion.

Female Genital Mutilation

A range of procedures that involve the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs, carried out for cultural or other non-medical reasons.

Spiritual Abuse



It is the misuse or distortion of religious teachings to justify or excuse abusive behaviour and to discourage victims from seeking help.

Examples include repeatedly threatening to issue an Islamic divorce (talaq) as a means of coercive control and falsely claiming that a victim is sinful or possessed.

It can also involve perpetrators blaming sexual abuse on the influence of a spirit or jinn, rather than taking responsibility for their actions.

Muslim Family Law Info

Useful resource on Muslim marriage and divorce
www.muslimfamilylawinfo.org.uk

Immigration Abuse

It is when a perpetrator exploits a victim's insecure immigration status to control, entrap, and threaten them. This can involve threatening to report them to authorities and withholding important documents such as passports or Home Office paperwork.

Transnational Abandonment

Transnational abandonment is a specific type of immigration abuse. It is when a person, often a British citizen or resident, abandons their spouse (typically a foreign national) in the spouse's country of origin, effectively blocking their return to the UK. This abandonment is frequently carried out through deception or coercive tactics. Children may also be abandoned alongside the spouse.



Modern Slavery

Involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring, or receiving of children, women, or men through force, coercion, exploitation of vulnerability, deception, or other means - with the purpose of exploiting them. It is a criminal offense under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and includes holding someone in conditions of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them. This may also involve marriage that results in domestic servitude, forced labour or sexual exploitation.

DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Domestic Abuse Statistics



816,493

Domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by police

3.7 million people aged 16+ years experiencing domestic abuse anually

Women 2.2 million (60%) **Men 1.5million** (40%)

15.4% account of all offences recorded by the police

Domestic abuse crime suspects referred to the Crown Prosecution Service:

76,000

Domestic abuse crime suspects charged by the Crown Prosecution Service:

54,000

41,000 Offenders convicted of domestic abuse related crime

(Source: ONS, year ending March 2025)

Every 30 seconds
a domestic abuse victim calls the police asking for help



Less than 24%

of domestic abuse crime is reported to the police

1 in 4 women

in England and Wales will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime

Domestic abuse costs the UK an estimated

£23 billion a year

A victim of domestic abuse will have been

assaulted 35 times

before contacting the police

Around **3 women a week die** by suicide as a result of domestic abuse



(Source:Refuge)

Domestic Homicide / Suicide Rates

In the four-year period 2020-24

279 women were victims of suspected suicide following domestic abuse (over the four year period)

369 | women were killed

Therefore, an average of almost **TWO women** were **killed every week** over the four-year period

88 (24%) women killed were of **black** and **minoritised** communities, who make up **18%** of population (Census 2021)

Black and minoritised are therefore over represented by 33%

Note: in previous years black and minoritised communities made up 22%, therefore their homicide rates have increased

36 (10%) women killed were **Black** but make up **4%** of the population (Census 2021)

34 (9%) women killed were **Asian** and make up **9%** of the population (Census 2021)

3 (0.8%) women killed were of **mixed ethnicities** and **15 (4%)** women were of **'other' ethnicities**

Source: Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP): Domestic Homicides and Suspected - Victim Suicides 2020-2024 (Year 4 Report) https://www.vkpp.org.uk/assets/Year-4-Report_publication-with-footnote.pdf

Domestic Homicide Risk Indicators

Top indicators of domestic homicide risk, identified through Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) include:

- **Separation**
  Particularly when attempting to leave, seek divorce or navigating child contact disputes.
- **Stalking and harassment**
  Obsessive monitoring, repeated uninvited visits to the home or workplace, destroying property, and persistent digital or physical stalking *(**94%** of homicide victims had been stalked)*.
- **Escalation of abuse**
  A rapid or noticeable increase in the frequency, severity, or types of violence and control experienced by the victim, including non-fatal strangulation *(most women are killed by strangulation or by stabbing using a sharp instrument)*.
- **Coercive control and obsessive jealousy**
  A sustained, systematic pattern of dominance, restriction, and intimidation, which often manifests as extreme jealousy and attempts to isolate the victim from friends and family.
- **Pregnancy**
  Intimate partner abuse frequently escalates during pregnancy, making it a high-priority risk factor for serious harm or homicide.
- **Extreme victim isolation**
  Trap the victim in an abusive environment, escalating the abuser's unchecked control.
- **Threats to kill or commit suicide**
  Explicit threats made by the perpetrator to kill the victim, themselves, or children, as well as threats of sexual violence.
- **Perpetrator risk factors**
  A history of abusive / controlling behaviour, substance misuse, possession of weapons or an extensive criminal record significantly increases the risk of a perpetrator committing serious or fatal violence.

A victim's own intuitive fear of being killed should also be taken seriously.

SAY HER NAME



In memory of women from racialised minority communities who have been killed in the UK by a male (which includes being killed by a partner / ex-partner, family, another known person or stranger, their information is listed on a dedicated page called Say Her Name **www.mwnuk.co.uk/say-her-name**

Fawziyah Javed 31

Pregnant when she was murdered by her husband in September 2021





Muslim Women's Network UK have launched **Amal Safety Mobile App**

- Information on how to recognise abuse
- Safety Advice
- Advice on legal rights and protections
- Facilities to record evidence

VULNERABILTIES AND RISKS

Pregnancy

According to *SafeLives*, around **30%** of domestic abuse begins during pregnancy, rising to **40%** between pregnancy and a child's second birthday.

Pregnancy is a particularly high-risk period because:

- Domestic abuse during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth, and domestic homicide.
- Some perpetrators perceive the pregnancy as a loss of control or attention, leading to the onset or escalation of abusive behaviour.
- During pregnancy, a woman's physical, emotional and financial dependence on her partner may increase, making it more difficult to leave or seek help.
- Pregnancy and the early years of parenthood can intensify coercive and controlling behaviour.



Domestic Homicide Reviews consistently identify pregnancy as one of the top risk indicators for domestic homicide.

Please tell a health care professional - If you are pregnant or a parent being abused, there is help available. You can speak to a GP, midwife, obstetrician, health visitor or social worker.

Age Group Most Vulnerable to Domestic Abuse

While younger and older women are at greater risk of domestic abuse, it is important to remember that domestic abuse can affect individuals of all ages.

Students and people who were not in employment were more likely to experience domestic abuse than those in employment. *(ONS, 2025)*.

Older women are underrepresented in domestic abuse service use, despite evidence to suggest that they experience domestic abuse at similar rates to younger women. They take much longer to seek help especially even more so if they are dependent on their family members or carers. As well as physical and verbal abuse, it may also include taking advantage of their vulnerability and controlling and accessing their finances and property.



Young Women, particularly those aged **16-24**, are at the **highest risk** of experiencing domestic abuse.

This age group is more vulnerable to both physical and psychological abuse within intimate relationships.



Key factors contributing to this increased risk

- **Relationship dynamics**
  Younger people may be in newly formed relationships with less established relationship patterns and communication skills, making them more susceptible to controlling and abusive behaviours.

- **Social and financial dependence**
  Younger adults may be more financially reliant on their partners or family members, increasing their vulnerability to coercion and control.

- **Lack of experience**
  Less experience navigating healthy relationship dynamics can make it harder for young people to recognise, report, and escape abusive situations.

- **Social isolation**
  Social isolation can further exacerbate the risk of abuse, as victims may have limited support networks or access to help.

Immigration Status

People with insecure immigration status often face additional barriers to escaping domestic abuse. This may include those who have:

- Arrived in the UK on a spouse or partner visa.
- Overstayed their visa.
- Entered the UK as a dependant on a work or family visa.
- Had an asylum claim refused.
- Entered as a student or carer.
- Any other temporary or uncertain immigration status

These victims may be reluctant to report abuse because they are financially dependent on the perpetrator, have limited or no access to public funds and safe accommodation, or fear that seeking help could jeopardise their immigration status or application. Perpetrators often exploit these fears as a means of coercion and control.



Those who have arrived on a spouse or partner visa may also be at risk of transnational marriage abandonment, where they are taken overseas before their visa is due for renewal and then abandoned in their country of origin or another country, leaving them unable to return to the UK.

Note: If the victim of abuse is an asylum seeker, they may not report fearing that it may affect their asylum claim.
If a victim reports domestic abuse while living in a National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation, they cannot be placed in a refuge. NASS has a duty to move the person at risk to alternative NASS accommodation.

Disability

Those who have a disability are more than twice likely to experience domestic abuse compared to those without a disability (ONS 2025) because of reliance on the perpetrator as a carer (including financial dependence on them) and reduced access to services, communication barriers (particularly for those who have learning disabilities or visual / hearing impairments).

Converts to Islam

Converts to Islam (also known as reverts) are not inherently more vulnerable to domestic abuse because of their conversion. However, perpetrators may exploit circumstances that increase their vulnerability. The Muslim Women's Network Helpline has identified the following:



- **Social isolation**
  Some converts may become distanced from family or friends following their conversion, leaving them with fewer sources of support. Perpetrators may exploit or deepen this isolation.

- **Limited knowledge of Islamic rights**
  Perpetrators may exploit new Muslims' limited knowledge of Islamic teachings on marriage, divorce and women's rights, misusing religion to justify abuse.

EFFECTS AND BARRIERS

Effects of Domestic Abuse

In addition to injuries and the emotional trauma, domestic abuse victims can also experience:

- Living in fear
- Becoming isolated from friends and family
- Low self esteem
- Blaming self for abuse
- Feelings of lack of power
- Feeling shame
- Feelings of depression and anxiety
- Self harm (including eating disorders)
- Feeling suicidal
- Turning to drugs and alcohol
- Feelings of guilt
- Unstable housing situations

Children who witness domestic violence can also suffer these consequences.

Barriers to Seeking Help

Violence against women continues to remain under reported. Women find it difficult to come forward and report abuse and the reasons can vary such as:

- **Fear**
  of further violence / retaliation, not being believed, losing children, being judged / ostracised or being homeless.
- **Shame and stigma**
  feelings of guilt or embarrassment, worried about social stigma and pressure to preserve family honour or stay silent for the sake of the family's reputation.
- **Isolation**
  not being able to speak English, being monitored, movements restricted and contact restricted with family, friends and social networks.
- **Financial dependence**
  not having access to money or public funds and not being able to provide for children.
- **Cultural or religious pressures**
  family or community pressure to remain in marriage such as divorce being frowned upon and misuse of religious texts to discourage separation.
- **Immigration and legal status**
  uncertainty about legal rights especially if not in a legally valid marriage or having an insecure immigration status.
- **Vulnerability**
  being dependent on the abuser for personal care, mobility, and financial support (such as older people and those with disabilities).
- **Lack of awareness**
  not recognising abuse is being experienced, especially if it's emotional, coercive, or economic rather than physical and also hoping the perpetrator will change.
- **Lack of knowledge about support**
  not being aware of support services or legal protections.
- **Systemic barriers**
  inadequate or culturally insensitive responses from police, social services, or community support services, long waiting lists for housing, counselling, or legal aid and / or previous negative experiences with institutions.

SAFETY ADVICE

1. Keep with you any important and emergency telephone numbers.
2. Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency, and what they would need to say (for example, their full name, address and telephone number).
3. If you can trust your neighbours tell them to call the police if they hear sounds of a violent attack.
4. Pack an emergency bag for you and your children.
5. Try to keep a small amount of money on you at all times.
6. Know where the nearest phone is, and if you have a mobile phone, try to keep it with you.
7. If you suspect that your partner is about to attack you, try to go to a lower risk area of the house - for example where there is a way out and access to a telephone. Avoid the kitchen or garage where there are likely to be knives or other weapons; and avoid rooms where you might be trapped, such as the bathroom, or where you might be shut into a cupboard or other small space.
8. Try to set aside a small amount of money each week, or even open a separate bank account.
9. Plan an escape route and be prepared to leave the house in an emergency.
10. Take important documents relating to yourself and your children e.g. identification, birth certificates, passports, cheque books, credit / debit cards, driving license, child and welfare benefit information, documents relating to house, national insurance number.

11. Take other items such as keys for house, work and car, items of sentimental value, jewellery, photos.

12. Take your children with you, otherwise it may be difficult or impossible to have them living with you in future. If they are at school, make sure that the head teacher and all your children's teachers know what the situation is, and who will be collecting the children in future.

13. As a victim of stalking and domestic violence, you are allowed to join the electoral register anonymously to ensure you are not put at risk.

14. Make sure that your address does not appear on any court papers.

15. Avoid using shared credit or debit cards or joint bank accounts.

16. Your mobile phone could be 'tracked'. If in doubt, change your phone.

17. Try to choose a safe route, or alter the route you take or the form of transport you use, when approaching or leaving places you cannot avoid - such as your place of work, the children's school, or your GP's surgery.

18. If you have any regular appointments that your partner knows about - change appointments or location.

19. Try not to place yourself in a vulnerable position or isolate yourself.

20. Keep a low profile on social media and change your privacy settings.

21. Change address of vehicle because if you commit motoring offence – the letter with location of offence will go to your old address alerting your partner / family in which city you are located.

Online Safety Advice

The actions below may alert the perpetrator and increase the abuse. Use a safer device to seek specialist support and plan any changes. Preserve evidence where possible.

TACTICS USED	ACTION YOU CAN TAKE
Monitoring through smart devices, including doorbells, hidden cameras, voice assistants, baby monitors and connected children's toys.	Check for hidden cameras or audio devices. Review linked accounts, change passwords and remove unauthorised access.
Accessing phone including WhatsApp/ text messages.	Change password, remove the perpetrator's fingerprint or facial recognition access, and sign out of unfamiliar WhatsApp linked devices. Secure Apple or Google account.
Accessing emails or installing spyware on devices.	Change passwords from a safer device. Check recovery details, signed-in devices and email forwarding. Enable two-factor authentication.
Tracking location through phones, cars, GPS trackers, dashcams and fitness, shopping, food delivery or travel apps.	Review location sharing, app permissions and shared accounts, including children's devices.
Using social media to monitor harass and impersonate you.	Secure accounts and review privacy settings and followers. Save evidence, report abuse or fake profiles.
Sharing or threatening to share intimate images, including sexual deep fakes, without consent.	Save threats, usernames and links. Report content to the platform and consider contacting police. Seek removal support from the Revenge Porn Helpline.
Accessing online banking, making unauthorised transfers or monitoring spending.	Contact your bank promptly to report concerns and secure access. Discuss a separate account and options for freezing or closing joint accounts.

LEGAL PROTECTIONS

You must always call 999 when in immediate danger

Legal Definition of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse was legally defined in the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** as follows:

Domestic abuse is any single incident or a pattern of conduct towards a **personally connected individual*** aged 16 or over where the behaviour is abusive, which may consist of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse (behaviour that has substantial adverse effect on the ability to acquire or maintain money or other property and / or obtain goods or services).

*** Personally connected individuals are:**

- ✔ due to be, currently, or have been, married or civil partners to each other;
- ✔ presently, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- ✔ presently, or have been, parents (or had a parental relationship) to the same child;
- ✔ are relatives.

In the UK domestic abuse is not a single, specific criminal offence. When domestic abuse occurs, perpetrators are charged with and prosecuted under specific criminal offence such as such as assault, harassment, or coercive control, rape, stalking, non-fatal strangulation, murder etc.



Recognising Children in the Domestic Abuse Act

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 formally recognises **children under the age of 18 as victims of domestic abuse** in their own right. A child is legally regarded as a victim if they "see, hear, or otherwise experience the effects" of domestic abuse and are related to either the victim or the perpetrator. This means a child does not need to be in the same room or directly harmed to be classified as a victim.

Note: Children aged 16–17 can be classified as perpetrators if they perpetrate domestic abuse against someone aged 16 or over to whom they are personally connected, (e.g. partner, sibling or parent).

Witnessing Abuse But Failing to Act

Witness who sees or hears domestic abuse can be prosecuted for failing to act if:

- They live with the victim and fail to take reasonable steps to protect a child or vulnerable adult from harm.
- They obstruct justice by actively covering up the crime, lying to the police, destroying evidence, or intimidating the victim to stop them from coming forward. They can be charged with perverting the course of justice or assisting an offender.



Evidence-Led Prosecutions

An evidence-led prosecution is also known as a 'victimless prosecution.' It is when a criminal case proceeds without the cooperation or formal testimony of the alleged victim. This approach prevents violent or controlling offenders from evading justice if the victim is too intimidated to testify, withdraws their statement, or refuses to engage with authorities.

Evidence can be used such as:

- **Body-Worn Camera (BWC) footage**

  Initial, unscripted accounts given by the victim or witnesses to police at the scene.

- **999 recordings**

  Frantic or distressed calls made during the incident, which can be admitted as spontaneous statements

- **Physical evidence**

  Photographs of injuries, property damage, or medical reports.

- **Corroborating witness testimony**

  Statements from neighbours, responding officers, domestic abuse helplines / organisations or medical professionals.

- **Digital footprint**

  Text messages, emails, or call logs between the suspect and the victim



Harassment and Stalking

Protection from Harassment Act 1997 was introduced on 16 June 1997 and was amended in 2012 by Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 to also include offences of stalking. This was strengthened by the Crime and Policing Act 2026 so that Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) can be made by courts on conviction or acquittal (without needing a separate pre-application from the police). New measures also include statutory guidance for police to be able to disclose the stalker's true identity to victims at the earliest opportunity for safeguarding purposes.

Coercive Control

Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 created a new offence of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an intimate or family relationship. The new offence came into force on 29 December 2015 and carries a maximum of 5 years imprisonment, a fine or both.

Intimate Image and Other Tech Abuse



Perpetrators may use technology to facilitate abuse, including sharing or threatening to share intimate images without consent, whether real or digitally manipulated ('deepfakes'). In England and Wales, legal protections have been strengthened through amendments to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 made by the Online Safety Act 2023, the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 and the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

More information can be found in this MWNUK information booklet
www.mwnuk.co.uk/information-booklets

Non-Fatal Strangulation

Non-fatal strangulation and non-fatal suffocation are forms of domestic abuse and is when a person intentionally affects their ability to breathe by putting pressure on the victim's neck or putting a hand / pillow over the victim's mouth or compressing the chest.

These are specific offences as part of the government's landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and came into force on 7 June 2022.



7X

Victims of non-fatal strangulation are seven times more likely to be murdered by their current or former partner.

More information can be found in this MWNUK information booklet
www.mwnuk.co.uk/information-booklets

DAPN / DAPO

Legal tools to improve protections for domestic abuse victims introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 included:

A Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DAPN)

is an **immediate**, police-issued notice that bars a perpetrator from contacting the victim or coming to their home. Breaching a DAPN is not a criminal offence, but it grants the police the power to arrest the perpetrator without a warrant.

A Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO)

provides flexible, **longer-term** protection and can mandate rehabilitation programs or electronic tagging. Within 48 hours of issuing a DAPN, the police must apply to the Magistrates' Court for a DAPO. A DAPO can last for as long as the court deems necessary and breaching it is a serious criminal offence under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

A key difference between a Non-Molestation Order (NMO), which is discussed later, and these orders includes:

- **DAPN** can be issued immediately while an NMO has to be granted by a family court judge.
- **DAPO** can require positive action such as mandatory attendance at substance misuse programs, mental health assessments, and domestic abuse perpetrator courses while NMOs tells an abuser what not to do (e.g., do not contact or approach).



Note: Pilot DAPN / DAPO programmes were not introduced by police forces until 2024 / 2025.

Injunctions

Victims can get protection from abuse under civil law through a court order (called an injunction or protection order). These orders can help prevent further abuse to the survivor and her children, remove the abuser from the home and keep them away.

The three most common types of emergency injunction that provide protection against domestic violence are:

Non-Molestation Orders

- Stops abuser from threatening or using violence, harassing, communicating with you.
- Typically granted for 12 months.
- If breached – abuser can be arrested.
- You can apply if there has been a recent threat or use of violence usually within last 5-7 days.

Occupation Orders

- Suspend rights to occupy or visit family home.
- Evicts abuser from home and prevents abuser from returning.
- 100m protection around home.
- Can be granted for 6-12 months.
- Power of arrest can be attached.
- You can apply if there has been a recent threat or use of violence.

Prohibited Steps Orders

- Forbids someone from taking your child away from your care and control.
- No power of arrest attached though police may assist informally.
- Enforceable in the County Court as contempt of court.
- This can be used if a recent threat has been made to take away your child.

Legal, Financial and Housing Support

Victims of domestic abuse who are divorcing or separating from an abusive partner can get legal aid. This can help with: divorce, child contact and how to share money / assets. To get legal aid the victim must be able to give the solicitor some evidence that they have been a victim of abuse or coercive control.

Types of evidence can include:

- Criminal conviction
- An undertaking (where someone has promised the court to stop doing certain things e.g. not harass, threaten etc and a court had accepted that instead of serving an injunction)
- Police caution
- Ongoing criminal proceedings
- Protective injunction
- Letter from a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Finding of fact by a court
- Letter from social services
- Letter from GP, doctor, nurse, midwife or other health professional
- Letter from domestic violence refuge





Local Authority Duty to Provide Accommodation

Under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002 local councils have a duty to provide accommodation to victims of abuse who have been made homeless. To be considered a priority, the individual must meet the following criteria: be pregnant, have dependent children, or have vulnerability (e.g. old age, mental illness, disability etc). After providing emergency accommodation they can provide you permanent accommodation.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Broadens the definition of abuse to include controlling, coercive, and economic behaviors. It amends the Housing Act 1996 so that all eligible survivors fleeing abuse instantly qualify for "priority need," bypassing complex vulnerability tests to guarantee quicker access to temporary housing. Tier one local authorities in England are under a statutory duty to assess needs and provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.

Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Bill also requires Local Authorities in England, when re-housing an existing lifetime tenant who needs to move or has recently moved from their social home to escape domestic abuse, to grant such tenant a lifetime tenancy in their new home.

Victim's Compensation

Victims may be able to claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) for domestic violence if there is evidence that a "crime of violence" has taken place. This means that physical or sexual violence is awarded compensation.

It will NOT be paid if the victim remains with the perpetrator and for the following:

- Emotional abuse
- Stalking
- Harassment and bullying
- Financial abuse
- Coercive control
- Minor isolated physical injuries, such as bruising, a black eye, broken nose, broken ribs, or small cuts, scrapes or swelling



You can make a claim online. It does not cost anything to apply. You do not have to use a legal adviser. If you choose to use one, you cannot claim the cost back. You will usually get a decision within 12 months, but it can take longer.

Contact the CICA helpline if you need help

0300 003 3601

Monday - Friday
8.30am to 3pm

Find out more at
www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-criminal-injury/make-claim

Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC)

The MVDAC was previously known a Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) Concession. It allows migrant victims of domestic abuse whose relationship has broken down to access independent immigration status and public funds for three months. During this time, they must prepare and submit an application for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) as a victim of domestic abuse or arrange to leave the UK.



The application can be made here:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-benefits-for-visa-holder-domestic-violence

Emergency Funds and Grants

Domestic abuse organisations, such as Women's Aid and Refuge, receive government funding to distribute small emergency grants. Other domestic organisations may have their own limited funds they can offer. These can help cover immediate costs like food, baby supplies, or travel. There are a number of funds available to women who have experienced domestic abuse.

You can search a full list of available funds on the Turn2us website:
www.grants-search.turn2us.org.uk

VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Victims' Right to Review

The Victims' Right to Review (VRR) scheme lets you challenge a decision by the police or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to close a domestic abuse case without bringing charges. You must submit a request to your local police force or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) within three months of being notified of the no-charge decision.

Victims' Code

The Victims' Code focuses on victims' rights and sets out the minimum standard that organisations such as the police and CPS must provide to victims of crime.

1. To be able to understand and to be understood.
2. To have the details of the crime recorded without unjustified delay.
3. To be provided with information when reporting the crime.
4. To be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to your needs.
5. To be provided with information about compensation.
6. To be provided with information about the investigation and prosecution.
7. To make a victim personal statement.
8. To be given information about the trial, trial process and your role as a witness.
9. To be given information about the outcome of the case and any appeals.
10. To be paid expenses and have property returned.
11. To be given information about the offender following a conviction.
12. To make a complaint about your rights not being met.

Victims identified as **Vulnerable**, **Intimidated**, **Persistently Targeted**, (and subject to) **Serious Crime** (known as VIPS) are eligible for **enhanced rights**. Some victims will fall into more than one category.

Vulnerable

- Under 18 years of age at the time of the offence
- Mental disorder
- Impairment of social function / intelligence
- Physical disability

Persistently Targeted

- Repeatedly
- Deliberately
- Subject to harassment
- Subject to stalking
- Campaign over time
- Not necessarily recorded

Intimidated

Consider:

- Suspect's behaviour
- Offence type
- Circumstances
- Age of victim
- Social factors
- Cultural factors
- Victim's views

Serious Crime

If they are a victim of:

- Domestic abuse
- Hate crime
- Terrorism
- Sexual offence
- Human trafficking
- Attempted murder
- Kidnap
- False imprisonment
- Arson with intent
- Wounding and GBH with intent

It is important to inform police / CPS that you fit the VIPS criteria to ensure enhanced support is received.

Enhanced support may include:

- being offered a referral to a specialist support service,
- being contacted sooner after key decisions, and
- having access to special measures.



Clare's Law

Clare's Law is also known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) where an individual or third party can ask law enforcement to check whether a current or former partner has a violent or abusive past.

Raneem's Law

Raneem's Law will result in domestic abuse specialists being embedded in 999 control rooms across police forces and ensure victims receive specialist support. However, the scheme will be rolled out over a number of years.

Raneem's Law was established in memory of Raneem Oudeh and her mother Khaola Saleem, who were murdered by Raneem's ex-husband in August 2018.



There were 13 reports made to the police about concerns for Raneem's safety, but NO ARRESTS were made.

On the night she was killed, she rang **999 four times** but the police did not respond in time.

ISLAM: CHALLENGING ABUSE

Domestic Violence is Prohibited

In Islam, domestic violence is not allowed. For example, the Prophet (pbuh) never beat any of his wives.

"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." **(Quran 30: 21)**

"O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the dowry you have given them - except when they have become guilty of open lewdness. On the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them, it may be that you dislike something and Allah will bring about through it a great deal of good." **(Quran 4:19)**

"O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from this pair scattered (like seeds) countless men and women. Reverence Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and reverence the wombs (that bore you); for Allah ever watches over you." **(Quran 4:1)**

"They (your wives) are your garment and you are a garment for them." **(Quran 2:187)**

Narrated Mu'awiyah al-Qushayri*: "I went to the Apostle of Allah (pbuh) and asked him: What do you say (command) about our wives? He replied: Give them food what you have for yourself, and clothe them by which you clothe yourself, and do not beat them, and do not revile them."*
(Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 11, Marriage (Kitab Al-Nikah), Number 2139)

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has said: "The most perfect believer is one who is the best in courtesy and amiable manners, and the best among you people is one who is most kind and courteous to his wives" **(Tirmidhi)**

Distortion of Religious Texts to Justify Domestic Abuse

Although Islam is against domestic violence, unfortunately some men do try and justify their abusive behaviour using their faith. They wrongly use a particular verse in the Quran (4:34) to say that God has allowed husbands to beat their wives:

> *Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct (nushuz), admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all).* **(Quran 4:34)**

This results in:

- Some scholars saying wife beating is allowed in Islam.
- Some scholars saying beating is acceptable as long as it is light and does not inflict serious injury and does not leave marks on your face.
- Some scholars saying beating is symbolic in that you have to use a miswak (a small thin stick /twig used to brush teeth) – which does not cause harm due to its size.

Scholars who soften the verse are not doing women any favours because symbolic or not, it is the idea that a man can discipline his wife that is at the heart of their various interpretations. How to challenge this idea is discussed in the next section.

How to Challenge Distortion of Religious Texts

Beating a wife, whether severe, light or symbolic is not the right interpretation of verse 4:34 because in contradicts the Quran's spirit of mercy and justice. Also an analysis of 4:34 and other texts reveals the following:

1. Hadith About Not Striking Face

Some scholars use the following hadith to justify wife beating. However, it does not prove the interpretation that wife beating is allowed because the hadith is a general and not aimed at nor mentions wives.

> Narrated AbuHurayrah: *"The Prophet (pbuh) said: When one of you inflicts a beating, he should avoid striking the face."* **(Sunan Abu-Dawud, Book 38, Prescribed Punishments (Kitab Al-Hudud), Number 4478).**

2. Use of Miswak saying

This is used to justify that beating is only symbolic as it should be done with a miswak (toothpick). However, this saying actually belongs to Imam Shafie, and not to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who was around a couple of hundred years after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

3. Daraba means beat in Verse 4:34

Some scholars tell us that men are allowed to hit their wives because of the Arabic word adribu from the root word 'daraba' mentioned in verse 4:34 which they say means 'beat.'

However, 'Daraba' actually has up to 26 meanings. Despite this, men choose the harshest meaning, which is 'beat.' Patriarchal societies play a part in influencing the scholars to choose the most negative meaning. It is not surprising they chose a meaning that fitted with their context in which women were heavily discriminated against. However, the Quran tells us to pick the best meaning in his words:

> *"Those who listen to the word, and follow the best (meaning) in it: Those are the ones whom God has guided, and those are the ones endued with Understanding." (Quran 39:18).*

A key rule to understanding the words of the Quran is to go to other places in the Quran where the word daraba or the word beat / strike is used.

"Words are used elsewhere in the Quran to imply the meaning of 'beat, strike or hit.' However, daraba is not used."

Some examples where verses talk about beating but Arabic word 'daraba' is not used:

a. The words for (beat) as in [to hit] found in Surah Baqarah 2:275 ... *kama yaqoomu allathee yatakhabbatuhu ash-shaytanu mina almassi.*

"..like the standing of someone beaten by the devil (Satan) leading him to insanity."

b. And in Surah Ta Ha 20:18 Allah Says, *"Qala hiya Aasaya atawakkao Aalayha waahushshu biha Aala ghanamee waliya feeha maaribu okhra."*

"This is my stick, whereon I lean, and wherewith I beat down branches for my sheep and wherein I find other uses."

"When daraba is used elsewhere in Quran, it is not used to mean beat."

When daraba is used elsewhere it is not translated into beat / strike but translated to one of the other meanings such as: "set forth" as follows:

a. Surah Ar-Ra'd (13:17) yadribu Allahu al-amthala *"Thus Allah sets forth a parable"* [here the word "yadirbu" is from the exact same root da-ra-ba].

b. Surah Ibrahim (14:24): Alam tara kayfa daraba Allahu mathalan.. *"Don't you see how Allah sets forth a parable?.."*

c. Surah An-Nur (24:35) wa yadribu Allahu al-amthala li-naasi *"..and Allah sets forth parables for mankind.."*

"The scholars also don't tell us that 'daraba' has many different meanings which include: to separate, to part, to throw, to dispatch, to raise etc."

If the intention of verse 4:34 was to beat the wives, then this contravenes the next verse (4:35) which talks about a reconciliation procedure and getting arbitrators involved. Now if the man had beaten his wife, she is unlikely to want a reconciliation. However, if the daraboo is translated as to leave or depart then the next verse makes sense i.e. after time apart, they are more likely to want to reconcile.

"If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: For Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things." **(Quran 4:35)**



RESOURCES



National Helplines

- National Domestic Abuse Helpline
  www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
  0808 2000 247 (24 hours)
- National Centre for Domestic Violence
  www.ncdv.org.uk
  T: 0800 970 2070
  Provides free emergency injunction service for survivors of domestic abuse
- National Stalking Helpline
  www.suzylamplugh.org
  0808 802 0300
- Revenge Porn Helpline
  www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk
  T: 0345 6000 459

Legal Advice

- Citizen Advice Bureau
  www.adviceguide.org.uk
  Go to 'Law and Rights' then 'Taking Legal Action' then 'Help with Legal Costs'.

- Community Legal Services (CLS)
  www.clsdirect.org.uk
  T: 0845 345 4345
  Can provide information on rights to legal aid.
  CLS is also a part of Legal Services Commission.

- The Law Society
  T: 020 7242 1222
  Can provide a list of legal aid solicitors in your area.

- Child Law Advice
  T: 0300 330 5480

- Rights of women
  - National Family Law Advice Line
    T: 020 7251 6577
  - Immigration and Asylum Law Advice Line
    T: 020 7490 7689

DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE.
PLEASE ASK FOR HELP.

Join the **Muslim Women's Network Member Platform** to stay up to date with the latest news, information and opportunities related to Muslim women. Register at:
https://www.mwnhub.com/register

DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE

PLEASE TELL SOMEONE

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Company Limited by Guarantee Number: 06597997

Contribution towards design
and publication of this booklet by

Esmée Fairbairn FOUNDATION

November 2026