

## **Lewisham's VAWG COVID-19 response**

Domestic violence and abuse is likely to increase during this period based on evidence from countries a few weeks ahead of us in this pandemic. In turn we want our VAWG partners to know that support is available for victims during this time.

### **Familial Abuse (Family Violence)**

#### **What is familial abuse?**

Familial abuse is when someone uses abusive behaviour to control and/or harm a member of their family, or someone with whom they have an intimate relationship. <sup>[1]</sup>

A family member can become an abuser at any time and in some cases a trusted loved one can suddenly change and become a perpetrator of violent or sexual abuse. Due to the trust that is built by families, family members can be more susceptible to abuse and more vulnerable than other members of society. <sup>[2]</sup>

Any member of a family can perpetrate, and be the victim of, family abuse – it is important that perceptions of abuse in the family are not limited to seeing children as the sole victims and parents as the only perpetrators. It is also important to understand the secrecy with which offenders operate; in many cases most members of a family will be unaware that abuse is taking place – it is likely that knowledge of the abuse is limited to the victim and their abuser. <sup>[2]</sup>

#### **Examples of Familial Abuse**

Family violence includes many different forms of physical and emotional abuse, as well as neglect carried out by family members or intimate partners. It may include a single act of violence, or a number of acts that form a pattern of abuse. Family violence can have serious- and sometimes fatal-consequences for victims and for those who see or hear the violence. <sup>[1]</sup>

Some examples of the ways in which a family member could abuse a relative include: <sup>[2]</sup>

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<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Physical abuse may fall under domestic abuse and involves controlling an individual through physical means. Physical abuse usually manifests itself via contact that is intended to intimidate an individual and usually results in pain, injury, and other physical harm.
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>	Perhaps more difficult to spot than physical abuse, emotional abuse – also known as psychological abuse – does not leave a mark on its victim. Emotional abuse usually manifests itself via verbal abuse with the express intention of humiliating an individual and making them feel worthless. Other actions that could be constituted as emotional abuse include making threats, abusing other family members in front of an individual, or ignoring someone completely. Emotional abuse is usually used to try and gain psychological control over a family member, usually with the intention of exerting control and power.
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	Family members can commit sexual abuse, with this act sometimes being categorised as sexual exploitation. Sexual contact is not necessary for sexual abuse to take place and many examples of sexual abuse do not include contact between victim and abuser, for example grooming or introducing a victim to another abuser.
<b>Neglect</b>	Neglect is a form of abuse that is usually categorised by families failing in their duty of care to a child. Neglect normally stems from an unwillingness to provide for the needs of a child and can result in a child being left hungry, dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, and medical or health care.

Abuse within the family dynamic can encompass a number of different abuse types, with everything from domestic violence to sexual exploitation taking place within a family home.

Due to the emotional trauma caused by family abuse it can be difficult to know where to turn if you are a victim of, or you witness, abuse by a family member; however, it is crucial that such abuse is reported.

As with any case of abuse, the most important factors are stopping the abuse, seeking justice against the abuser, and recovering from the traumatic experience.



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### Seeking Help

Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge

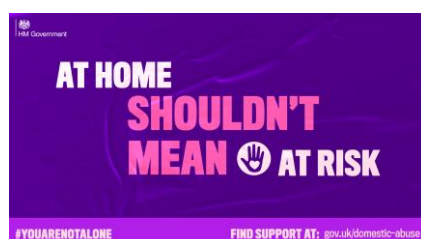
[0808 200 0247](tel:08082000247)

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

Domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality or social background. If you are suffering from physical, sexual, psychological or financial abuse, or are being threatened, intimidated or stalked by a current or previous partner or close family member, it's likely you're a victim of domestic abuse.

You may be feeling frightened, isolated, ashamed or confused. If you have children it may be that they too are suffering, whether they witness abuse or not.

Remember, you are not to blame for what is happening. You are not alone, and above all **you do not have to suffer in silence** <sup>[3]</sup> – [help is available to report domestic abuse.](#)



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### National resources for guidance

#### Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse)

#### Apps to support those experiencing domestic abuse

[www.hestia.org/brightsky](https://www.hestia.org/brightsky)

#### COVID-19/Coronavirus: Safety Advice for Survivors

[www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-safety-advice-for-survivors](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-safety-advice-for-survivors)

#### Domestic abuse and COVID-19

[www.safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19](https://www.safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19)

#### National campaign to raise awareness of the Silent Solution system

[www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-silent-solution-system](https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/national-campaign-raise-awareness-silent-solution-system)

### Useful numbers and websites

#### Athena

Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse

Helpline: 0808 2000 247

To contact the Athena directly: 08001124052

[www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/one-stop-shop-services/athena](https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/our-services/one-stop-shop-services/athena)

[www.refuge.org.uk](https://www.refuge.org.uk)

#### Early Years Alliance - Lewisham Children's and Family Centres

[www.lewishamcfc.org.uk](https://www.lewishamcfc.org.uk)

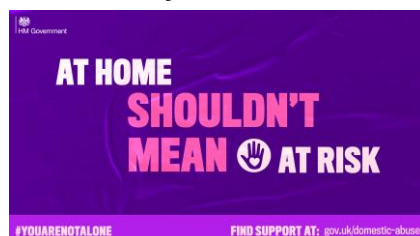
**The Deaf Health Charity – Sign Health** [www.signhealth.org.uk/our-projects/deafhope-projects/](https://www.signhealth.org.uk/our-projects/deafhope-projects/)

Text: 07970350366

#### RASASC (Rape and sexual abuse centre)

0808 802 9999

#### African Advocacy Foundation



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www.africadvocacy.org  
020 8698 4473

**Rights of women:**  
rightsofwomen.org.uk

**National stalking helpline – Suzy Lamplugh Trust**  
www.suzylamplugh.org  
0808 802 0300

**Respect Helpline for men**  
0808 8010327  
respectphoneline.org.uk/help-for-domestic-abuse-victims

**Women's Aid live chat**  
This is an online chatting service which is ideal for victims who are self-isolating and do not want to be heard.  
chat.womensaid.org.uk  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)  
0117 944 44 11

**GALOP National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline**  
0800 999 5428  
[www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse)

## Future Training Sessions in Lewisham

### Africa Advocacy Foundation - Harmful practices awareness training

Harmful Practices are everybody's business. They affect us all directly or indirectly.

Join our virtual training to update/improve your knowledge & understanding of FGM,

CALFB, breast flattening, trafficking & child marriage.

- 18/08/20: Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- 15/09/20: Child & forced marriage

All sessions will be from 11-12:30pm on Zoom.

Please contact Anne Flaherty if you would like to join these sessions.

[anne@africadvocacy.org](mailto:anne@africadvocacy.org)



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### Future bulletins

Please let me know if there is anything you would like to feature or promote within these bi-weekly bulletins. [isis.pottinger@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:isis.pottinger@lewisham.gov.uk) or [charlene.noel@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:charlene.noel@lewisham.gov.uk)

For any other enquires please email [Vawg@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Vawg@lewisham.gov.uk)

For MARAC enquires please contact [Theresa.Stone@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Theresa.Stone@lewisham.gov.uk)

### References

[1] <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/fv-vf/about-apos.html>

[2] <https://abuselaw.co.uk/abuse-types/abuse-in-the-family/>

[3] <https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/what-is-domestic-abuse/>

