Domestic Abuse

OUR SERVICE TO YOU

This leaflet aims to explain the actions Lincolnshire Police will take when called to incidents involving domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse is a serious problem which Lincolnshire Police are determined to tackle.
What is Domestic Abuse?

If you are aged 16 or over and suffering from physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse, or are being threatened, intimidated, controlled, coerced or stalked by a current partner, previous partner or family member you could be a victim of domestic abuse.

Anyone can experience domestic abuse, it can happen in all kinds of relationships regardless of age, race, sex, sexuality, disability, wealth, geography or lifestyle. It is rarely a one off event.

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

If you are being abused by your partner, ex partner or someone close to you, there are three important steps you can take

1. Recognise that it is happening to you
2. Accept that you are not to blame
3. Get help and support

How can the Police help?

If you or someone you know is suffering from abuse you can contact us in a variety of ways:

- Call 999 – if a crime is currently taking place or someone is in immediate danger

- Call 101 – if you wish to speak to the police and it is not an emergency

- Alternatively you can pop into your local police station. For details of where our stations are and when they are open call 101 or visit www.lincs.police.uk

- For those who cannot use a phone due to hearing impairment or another communication issue please contact us via Textphone/Typetalk 01522 558263, Text: 07761 911287 or email: force.control@lincs.pnn.police.uk

We want you to report domestic abuse to us

- because no one has the right to treat another individual in this way;

- because the chances are the person committing the abuse is also committing a crime;

- because the abuse could escalate and put you in serious danger, and because we want to prevent it happening to you again.
What We will Do

- Lincolnshire Police attends all domestic abuse incidents.
- All complaints will be fully investigated.
- When an incident is reported to us it is graded according to the response required. If urgent attendance is thought to be necessary, officers will attend immediately. However, it may be appropriate for officers to visit at an arranged time.
- Once we have spoken to you, we will look into the incident further and if a crime has taken place there will be a full investigation. Whatever action we take, we will keep you fully informed. You should be told if the offender is arrested, charged, bailed or the subject of an out-of-court resolution such as a caution or a reprimand.
- The officer who responds to your call will deal with your case sensitively. They will assess the risks to you, and to your children (if appropriate) by asking a series of questions. We will take details of a safe way to contact you to offer further guidance, support and advice.

We are Here to Protect You

- Our first priority – to ensure your safety and that of any children that may be with you.
- Our officers will ensure that you are dealt with respectfully and spoken to away from the person responsible for the abuse. They will ask you a range of questions to try to ascertain your current level of risk of serious harm.
- If you have been physically injured it is important your injuries are examined by a doctor. Our officers will arrange medical care if necessary.
- If appropriate, we will arrest the suspect at the time to protect you further from harm and give you time to think. If that’s not possible, we will do all we can to locate them.
- We will take your wishes into account when we decide what to do next.
- We will liaise with the Crown Prosecution Service who decide whether to prosecute or not.
- If you are required to give evidence in court at a later date we can support you thorough this process if you wish.
We will Stay in Touch

We will stay in contact with you and see you through the whole investigation. Our aim is to contact you within 24 hours of you reporting the offence to let you know what is happening. We will keep in touch with you in a way that is accessible to you; if you have any specific needs please make the investigating officer aware.

You can call the investigating officer (OIC) directly to find out how your case is going to talk about anything that may be worrying you.

- If a crime has been committed we will pass information about you to Victim Support so that they can offer you emotional help and support, unless you specifically ask us not to do so.
- If a crime has not taken place and you feel that some support would be helpful we can still pass your information to Victim Support with your consent. In more rural areas, we may ask a specially trained outreach worker to contact you, but we will seek your consent first.

Going to Court

If your case goes to court the following should happen:

- You will be contacted by the Witness Care Unit. They will be your single point of contact throughout the court process, providing you with practical support and information.
- If you are required to give evidence, on the day you will be offered support from Victim Support’s Witness Service, which is confidential.

Can the Civil Law help me if I do not want to involve the Police?

Yes. The Family Law Act 1996 allows you to apply for a Non Molestation Order or Occupation Order. You should seek advice from a solicitor as you may be eligible for Legal Aid. Most solicitors will provide a free 30 minute consultation.

Under both Civil and Criminal Law, if your partner is convicted of criminal harassment or an offence involving fear of violence, the court may also grant a Restraining Order.
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Victims at High Risk of Serious Harm

You may be referred on to a Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and offered the support of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). An officer will discuss this with you and seek your consent.

The MARAC will share information and ensures other agencies can help safeguard you and your family. The IDVA can offer you practical options and will develop a safety plan tailored to your circumstances.

Young People experiencing Domestic Abuse

Lincolnshire Police recognises those aged 16 and 17 could be a victim of domestic abuse. Please report what you are suffering to someone you trust, or call us. The Government also has a national Teen Abuse Campaign, see www.disrespectnobody.co.uk for further information and advice.

Practical Help

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for Lincolnshire Police. Officers dealing with your case can also refer you to other sources of emotional and practical support such as victim services, advocacy support and other partner organisations that may be able to help you.

We also work closely with specialist domestic abuse agencies in the county who can assist you with other related issues you may have such as housing, injunctions, counselling or financial advice.

Lincolnshire Police is committed to protecting victims of domestic abuse whilst holding people who commit offences to account.

See page 8 for useful contacts and organisations.
Keeping Safe

Making the decision to seek help or leave an abusive relationship is difficult. Remember:

• **You are not alone:** Domestic abuse can affect people in all kinds of relationships. Statistics estimate it affects 1 in 4 people at some point in their lives.

• **You are not to blame:** someone using violence and abuse always makes a choice about the ways they behave

• **You can’t change your partner’s behaviour:** He/She needs to realise they have a problem and to seek help. Respect is a helpline for people concerned about their behaviour towards their partners **0808 802 4040**

• **You are in danger if you ignore the abuse:** abuse tends to be more severe and happen more often over time, sometimes only ending when one person actually kills the other.

• **Take action, do not remain isolated and report what is happening:** get help from someone you trust, or you can contact an organisation that offers information and support.

Thinking about leaving and making the decision to leave can be a long process. Planning doesn’t necessarily mean you have to carry it through immediately, or at all. Either way, it may help you to consider all your options. **We understand that everyone’s situation is different**

and you won’t be forced to make any choices you don’t want to make. Making a safety plan may help you to feel more in control of the situation and give you the confidence to take action to protect yourself (and your children).

Here are some tips to help you draw up a safety plan:

• Find out about local organisations offering information and support

• Keep a diary of incidents and keep it safe (the police have some available if you need one)

• Work out where you can quickly and easily access a phone (mobile, neighbour, friend or relative)

• Keep a list of emergency contact numbers with you, including relatives, friends and local police

• Keep keys, some money, and a set of clothes for you and your children packed ready in a bag and leave it with a friend or relative you can trust. Have an extra set of keys for the house or car
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- If you can, confide in a close neighbour you can trust – they may be able to provide somewhere you can go in an emergency or can contact the police if they hear sounds of a disturbance.
- Teach your children to call 999 in an emergency and what they would need to say – name, address and telephone number.
- Rehearse an escape plan from your house should you need it. In an emergency dial 999, or leave immediately if you can. We may be able to help you return to the house if you need to collect belongings.

Leaving Safely:
- Have some money saved in case you need to use a taxi or bus.
- If you choose to leave in an emergency, try to take your children with you.
- If you do not have a mobile, find somewhere you can quickly and safely use the phone should you need to.
- Take official documents such as child benefit book, rent book, passport, marriage and birth certificates, any court orders, NHS cards.
- Take a few personal possessions which have sentimental value i.e. jewellery, photographs.
- Pack a bag with some clothes and general toiletries for you and the children and perhaps a few small toys.
- Take any medication/prescriptions you or your children might need.
- Any documentation relating the abuse – such as injunctions, restraining orders, medical records, police reports.
- Leave when it is safe to do so.

Getting through a separation:
- If you need to collect belongings from your home, don’t go alone. If you later discover you have left something essential behind, you can ask for a police escort so you can get it safely.
- Try not to engage in conversation with your abuser – this allows them to believe you are still interested in them and gives them an opportunity to verbally/emotionally abuse you.
- Let trusted family/friends/neighbours/colleagues know what is going on and how they can support you.
- If you are remaining in the family property, change the locks, install intruder and smoke alarms and outside lighting if possible – the police can give advice on security.
- Seek legal advice regarding child contact, civil orders or injunctions.
- If you need help or advice on housing, contact your local council’s housing department.
How can I help a Friend or Family Member who is experiencing Domestic Abuse?

**Break the isolation.** If you think a friend or loved one is being abused, try telling them that you’re concerned, why you’re worried and ask if they want to talk to you about it. Let them know you want to help, you don’t have to have all the answers.

**Prioritise safety – yours and theirs.** Do not offer to talk to the abuser, be careful not to intervene personally. Ring the police if they or you are in immediate danger.

**Support** your friend or family members in whatever decision they are making about their relationship. Do not judge.

**Stay in contact** with them over time and help to explore what choices are on offer. Try to focus on safety rather than the abuser or the relationship.

Reassure them that the abuse is not their fault and that you are there for them.

**Practical tips:**
- Agree a code word or action that if they say to you or you see, you know they are in danger and they cannot access help themselves.
- Find out information about services available
- Get some support for yourself
- Don’t give up on them – you may be their only lifeline.
Other help is available

There are a number of other organisations that provide advice and support to victims of domestic abuse. These are detailed on the county website [www.domesticabuselincolnshire.com](http://www.domesticabuselincolnshire.com).

Women’s Aid and Refuge also run a freephone 24 hour national domestic violence helpline on [0808 2000 247](tel:0808%202000%20247).

Useful Contacts and Organisations

- **Spring Lodge Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)**
  - [01522 524402](tel:01522%20524402)
  - [01371 812686](tel:01371%20812686)
  - Email: [info@springlodge.org](mailto:info@springlodge.org)
  - Website: [www.springlodge.org](http://www.springlodge.org)

- **Lincs Adult Social Care**
  - [01522 782155](tel:01522%20782155)

- **Lincs Children’s Social Care**
  - [01522 782111](tel:01522%20782111)

- **Ending Domestic Abuse Now in Lincolnshire (EDAN Lincs)**
  - [01522 510041](tel:01522%20510041)
  - (providing countywide outreach and emergency accommodation)

- **East Lindsey DA Service (ELDAS)**
  - [01507 609830](tel:01507%20609830)
  - (providing emergency accommodation)

- **South Lincs DA Service (SoLDAS)**
  - [01205 311272](tel:01205%20311272)
  - (providing emergency accommodation)

| Officer’s Details |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
Don’t be afraid to ask for help more than once.

We all have the right to live without fear of violence and abuse.