



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Domestic abuse and sexual violence

**Help and Support for Older People
in Wales**

**An independent voice and
champion for older people**

To obtain the most appropriate support and advice,
contact the **Live Fear Free Helpline**:

0808 8010 800 (Freephone)

<http://livefearfree.gov.wales>

If you believe you or someone else is at significant risk of imminent serious harm, **contact the police without delay** by dialling 999.

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Visit www.olderpeoplewales.com for more information about the Commissioner's work, or follow the Commissioner on Twitter: [@talkolderpeople](https://twitter.com/talkolderpeople)

Domestic abuse and sexual violence

Domestic abuse and sexual violence is about an abuser or abusers exerting their power and control over another. This is not something only experienced by young people – anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse and sexual violence. For some older people, it will have been a significant feature for most of their adult lives, an on-going problem for 20, 30, and 40 years or even longer.

For others, domestic abuse and sexual violence will start when they reach older age and/or become frail or cognitively impaired.

Who is affected by the abuse?

It is estimated that over 40,000 older people in Wales are being abused in their own homes every year.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence can affect anyone regardless of their gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity. People with a disability are at even greater risk of being abused than those without a disability.

Who is perpetrating the abuse?

The abuser can be a spouse, ex-spouse, partner, ex-partner, son, son-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, grandchild or another extended family member. In some incidences there may even be multiple abusers.

Types of abuse

- **Physical abuse:** includes punching, kicking, biting pinching, scratching.
- **Sexual abuse:** includes rape, touching someone in a sexual way against their will, making someone do something of a sexual nature which they are not comfortable with.
- **Psychological/Emotional abuse:** include being insulted, called names or sworn at, being threatened, undermined, belittled, excluded or repeatedly ignored, threats to harm others you care for, prevented from seeing others that you care for.
- **Financial abuse:** includes stealing money or possessions, being made to give money, possessions or property. The use of fraud to take money, possessions or property. Taken or kept power of attorney or attempt to take or keep power of attorney.
- **Coercive control:** Coercive control is a complex pattern of abuse using power and psychological control over another - financial control, verbal abuse, forced social isolation. These incidents may vary in seriousness and be repeated over time. Essentially the abuser seeks to exert control over the person's life and decisions.

Is domestic abuse and sexual violence a private matter?

Domestic abuse and sexual violence is socially unacceptable and must be everyone's concern.

In many incidences, criminal assaults are being committed that result in serious injury and, in some cases, homicide. Domestic abuse can be fatal and must be taken seriously.

It can be difficult to break the cycle of abuse without the appropriate help and support of others.

What options are there to help stop the abuse?

- There are many options available to people who are being subjected to domestic abuse, as well as people who can provide support and help to stop the abuse.
- In many cases, the offences being committed by the perpetrator/s are criminal. Where a criminal offence has been committed or is suspected, the police have a duty to investigate. The police have a policy to take positive action in cases of domestic violence and, in some cases, the alleged perpetrator may be arrested and prosecuted where there is sufficient evidence.
- Civil justice remedies, such as an injunction, non-molestation order or restraining order, can be also be considered where appropriate and where this is felt would be helpful in protecting those subject to abuse.

- In sexual violence cases, independent, confidential advice and support can be sought from a local Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).
- Local specialist domestic abuse services are also available to provide on-going support and advice.

What can I do if I am being abused or want to help someone who I know or I suspect is being abused?

You need to act now.

If you believe you or someone else is at significant risk of imminent serious harm contact the police without delay by dialling 999.

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