Women's Equality – Domestic Violence

Help and support for women facing domestic abuse

USDAW EQUALITIES

This leaflet aims to give practical support and advice to Usdaw members who are experiencing domestic violence.

This leaflet is primarily aimed at women because crime statistics show that the vast majority of domestic violence is perpetrated by men and experienced by women, particularly when there is a pattern of repeated and serious physical assaults, or when it includes rape or sexual assault, or results in injury or death. Men can also experience abuse (both within gay and straight relationships); however, women's violence towards or abuse of men is often an attempt at self-defence, and is only rarely part of a consistent pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour.

However, most of the advice in the leaflet will also help men experiencing domestic violence. Usdaw produces a separate leaflet for men in this situation,

Male Domestic Violence – Help and support for men facing domestic abuse (Leaflet 405):
www.usdaw.org.uk/405

If you are facing domestic violence Usdaw can help by:

- Giving you advice about your rights at work.
- Letting you know about specialist organisations that support women in your situation.
- Making sure you get the right support at work.

We have written this leaflet with help from Women's Aid, the national charity supporting women and children facing domestic abuse. You can find out more about Women's Aid including how to get in contact with them on page 4 of this leaflet.

What Is Domestic Violence?

Here's a definition used by Women's Aid:

"An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also a family member or carer."

Domestic violence and abuse affects women of all ages and races, from all walks of life and every social class. It happens everywhere – from large cities to rural communities. It is just as much about verbal abuse and controlling behaviour as it is about physical or sexual violence. In most cases domestic abuse is a continuous series of attacks, rather than a one-off incident.

In this leaflet the term 'violence' includes abuse and behaviours that may not be physical.

Many kinds of domestic abuse constitute a criminal offence, including physical and sexual assault, rape, threats to kill, harassment, stalking and putting people in fear of violence.

Domestic abuse affects the lives of many of our members and Usdaw is committed to supporting any member in this situation.

The following list of abusive behaviours may help you to recognise if you, or someone you know, is in an abusive relationship.

- **Destructive criticism and verbal abuse:** shouting; mocking; accusing; name calling; verbally threatening.
- **Pressure tactics:** sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnecting the telephone and internet, taking away or destroying your mobile or laptop, taking the car away, taking the children away, or threatening to report you to welfare agencies unless you comply with his demands; threatening or attempting suicide or self-harm; lying to your friends and family about you; telling you that you have no choice in any decisions, withholding or pressuring you to use drugs/other substances.
- **Disrespect:** persistently putting you down in front of other people; not listening or responding when you talk; interrupting your telephone calls; taking money from your purse without asking, refusing to help with childcare or housework.
- **Breaking trust:** lying to you; withholding information from you; being jealous; having other relationships; breaking promises and shared agreements.
- **Isolation:** monitoring or blocking your telephone calls, emails, social media accounts; telling you where you can and cannot go; preventing you from seeing friends and relatives; shutting you in the house.

- **Harassment:** following you; checking up on you; not allowing you any privacy (for example, opening your mail, going through your phone), repeatedly checking to see who has phoned you; embarrassing you in public; accompanying you everywhere you go.
- **Threats:** making angry gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting you down; destroying your possessions; breaking things; punching walls; wielding a knife or a gun; threatening to kill or harm you and the children; threatening to kill or harm family pets; threats of suicide.
- **Sexual violence:** using force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts; having sex with you when you don't want it; constant pressure or harassment to have sex when you don't want to; forcing you to look at pornographic material; forcing you to have sex with other people; any degrading treatment related to your sexuality or to whether you are lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.
- **Physical violence:** punching; slapping; hitting; biting; pinching; kicking; pulling hair out; pushing; shoving; burning; strangling; pinning you down; holding you by the neck; restraining you.
- **Denial:** saying the abuse doesn't happen; saying you caused the abusive behaviour; being publicly gentle and patient; crying and begging for forgiveness; saying it will never happen again; saying you wind him up; saying he can't control his anger.

What Can I Do if I Am Facing Domestic Violence?

Everyone has the right to live their life free of violence and the fear of violence.

You may feel overwhelmed and frightened by the prospect of leaving your husband or partner and it is usually only with help and support from several sources that women finally feel ready to take this step. Most women may leave and return several times before they are able to make the final break.

If you are thinking about leaving you may feel worried about losing your children and about where to go, about money and about being lonely. Women can also worry about getting into trouble at work if they leave an abusive relationship because they may need extra support during this period, or the abuser may be more likely to visit the workplace.

Whether or not you decide to leave your partner you have a right to be protected under the law.

Expert Support

Refuge run a freephone 24-hour helpline whose purpose is to give women, children and their supporters the confidential support and information they need when they need it. The helpline number is **0808 2000 247**.

Fully trained and experienced female helpline workers respond according to caller's needs and may for example;

- Refer women (with or without children) to emergency safe accommodation.
- Provide information about legal, housing or welfare rights and options and referral to relevant services and professions.
- Carry out online crisis and safety planning.
- Offer emotional support and (if appropriate) refer to counselling services.
- Refer women to face-to-face support via community based drop-in or outreach domestic abuse services in their locality.

In addition to offering confidential support and information, helpline staff are a source of practical help and information about housing rights and entitlements, information on getting injunctions or reassurance about calling the police.

An Usdaw member shares her experience of domestic abuse:

"My husband took control of my life. He would lock me in the house so I couldn't go out by myself. I wasn't able to go out to work because of this. I became isolated from my friends and family. They told me he was no good for me but I stood up for him partly because of the embarrassment that it had gone so badly wrong. When I finally left I took my child and left with nothing more than the clothes on my back.

One of the hardest things about leaving is you feel you have lost your pride; it's the shame of admitting it's over. But it was the best thing I ever did. I would say to any woman in my situation that you should ask for help; speak to your local council, the police or a women's refuge. The police really helped me and came to court with me to help me get an injunction. There is help if you want to get out."

How Usdaw Can Help

Domestic violence and abuse at home can cause problems at work.

Some of the most common problems women face are:

- Being disciplined for needing time off sick.
- Often being late for work because of something that has happened at home.
- Not being able to agree to changes to your hours of work.
- Struggling to concentrate at work and worrying about being disciplined for this.
- Reduced performance or productivity.

Very often women don't feel they want to tell their manager the real reason for the problems they are having at work.

You can talk in confidence to your Usdaw rep or to a full-time Usdaw official about what's happening. They are experienced in supporting women facing domestic violence and abuse and can help you get the support you need at work. Whatever you discuss will remain confidential unless you agree to share it.

This might include:

- Transferring to another workplace.
- A change in your working hours if this would help.
- A change to your job role eg away from front line services if this is a risk factor.
- Supporting you to keep your current hours of work where you are under pressure to change them and this would worsen the situation.
- Negotiating adjustments to your start and finish times or the days you work.
- Time off work to attend appointments with domestic abuse agencies, lawyers, housing departments etc.
- Sickness absence being discounted from warnings or penalties.
- A period of time off or special leave.
- Revised performance targets or objectives.

As an Usdaw member you are entitled to free legal advice on any issue including domestic violence. You can speak to a solicitor free of charge who may take your case up for you. To find out more contact Usdaw's Legal Department. Their contact details are on page 9 of this leaflet.

An Usdaw member who experienced domestic abuse says that becoming a rep helped her move on.

"I had to ask permission from my husband to do anything; to leave the house, to talk to friends on the phone. He told me I wasn't allowed to join the Union but I did it anyway. I used to go to work in the morning but come home in my lunchbreak to get his tea ready as everything had to be just right when he got home from work in the evening.

At work people thought I was fine but I gradually lost friends as I never used to go out on any work do's; people thought I was unfriendly.

He told me I couldn't put weight on, I developed an eating disorder. He told me I was fat and that no one else would want me because I was so ugly.

He took away my confidence, my independence, my friends and family.

But it got to the point where I just felt I couldn't carry on like that. One night I did go out, with someone from work and there were 200 missed calls on my phone whilst I was there.

I came home, he threatened me and that was that, I left.

I became a rep at work and that helped me turn my life around as I was standing up for other people and that helped me stand up for myself."

You can talk in confidence to your Usdaw rep or to a full time Usdaw official about what's happening.

Where To Go For Help

There are a number of specialist support organisations which offer free, confidential advice and help to women experiencing domestic violence and abuse:

Women's Aid

Tel: **0808 2000 247**
24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline (ran by Refuge).

web: **www.womensaid.org.uk**
email: **helpline@womensaid.org.uk**

Refuge

Provides accommodation and specialist support.

Tel: **0808 2000 247**
24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

web: **www.refuge.org.uk**

GALOP

LGBT+ anti-violence and abuse charity.

Tel: **0800 999 5428**
(Mon - Tues 9.15am-8.00pm;
Wed - Fri 9.15am-4.30pm)

web: **www.galop.org.uk**
email: **help@galop.org.uk**

Jewish Women's Aid

National freephone helpline and services for Jewish women.

Tel: **0808 801 0500**
(Mon - Thurs 9.30am-9.30pm)

web: **www.jwa.org.uk**

Forced Marriage Helpline

Provided by charity, Karma Nirvana.

Tel: **0800 5999 247**
(Mon - Fri 9.30am-5pm)

web: w**ww.karmanirvana.org.uk**

Forced Marriage Unit

Helpline operated by the Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

Tel: **020 7008 0151**
(or **0044 20 7008 0151** if overseas)

web: **www.gov.uk/forced-marriage**
email: **fmu@fco.gov.uk**

Friends, Families and Travellers

Specific guidance available to download to support gypsies and travellers living with domestic violence.

Tel: **01273 234 777**
(Mon - Fri 10am-4.30pm)

web: **www.gypsy-traveller.org**
email: **fft@gypsy-traveller.org**

The Sharan Project

Lead charity supporting South Asian women in the UK experiencing domestic abuse.

Tel: **0844 504 3231**
web: **www.sharan.org.uk**
email: **info@sharan.org.uk**

England

Rape Crisis England and Wales

Tel: 0808 500 2222
(12 noon-2.30pm/7pm-9.30pm
7 days a week)

web: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Southall Black Sisters

Provides a range of services to Asian and Afro Caribbean women and children who have experienced violence and abuse. Can give telephone advice to women outside of the London Borough of Ealing.

Tel: 0208 571 0800
(Mon, Wed, Fri 9.30am-4.30pm)

web: www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

FORWARD (The Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development)

A campaign and support organisation promoting and safeguarding the health and rights of African girls and women.

Tel: 020 8960 4000
web: www.forwarduk.org.uk
email: support@forwarduk.org.uk

The Samaritans

24-hour confidential, emotional support for anyone in a crisis.

Tel: 116 123
web: www.samaritans.org.uk

Men's Advice Line

The Men's Advice Line is a confidential helpline offering support, information and practical advice to men experiencing domestic violence.

Tel: 0808 801 0327
(Mon – Fri 10am-5pm)

web: www.mensadviceline.org.uk
email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Respect Phoneline

Helpline offering information and advice to people who are abusive towards their partners and want help to stop.

Tel: 0808 802 4040
(Mon – Fri 10am-5pm)

web: www.respectphoneline.org.uk
email: info@respectphoneline.org.uk

Scotland

Scottish Women's Aid

Tel: 0800 027 1234
(24-hour)

web: www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk

Shakti Women's Aid

Provides help in Scotland for minority ethnic women that have experienced domestic abuse.

Tel: 0131 475 2399
web: www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk
email: info@shaktiedinburgh.co.uk

Wales

Welsh Women's Aid

Tel: 0808 80 10 800
(24-hour)

web: www.welshwomensaid.org

Black and Asian Women Stepping Out (BAWSO)

BAWSO help black and minority ethnic women in Wales who are experiencing domestic violence.

Tel: 0800 731 8147
(24 hour)

web: www.bawso.org.uk

Northern Ireland

Women's Aid Federation

Tel: 028 9024 9041
(24-hour)

web: www.womensaidni.org
email: info@womensaidni.org

Usdaw Contacts

Usdaw Legal Plus

In addition to the legal assistance provided to members about work-related problems, Usdaw operates a Union Law Scheme that gives free legal advice on other matters arising outside of work. This includes domestic violence. Under the Usdaw Scheme you are entitled to speak to a solicitor free of charge for initial advice. The solicitor may then take up the case for you. Contact Usdaw's Legal Department at the address/telephone number below.

Legal Department,
Usdaw Head Office,
Voyager Building,
2 Furness Quay,
Salford Quays,
Manchester M50 3XZ

Tel: 0161 224 2804

Usdaw Contacts

Listed below are the contact names and addresses of the officials who co-ordinate the Union's equality work in your area.

South Wales and Western Region

Li Gunter
Plymouth Office

Tel: 01752 765 930
email: plymouth@usdaw.org.uk

Eastern Region

April Harris
Waltham Cross Office

Tel: 01992 709 280
email: walthamx@usdaw.org.uk

Midlands Region

Stuart Warren
Redditch Office

Tel: 01527 406 290
email: redditch@usdaw.org.uk

North Eastern Region

Lisa Collins
Leeds Office

Tel: 0113 232 1320
email: leeds@usdaw.org.uk

Scottish Region

Rhiannon Yardley
Glasgow Office

Tel: 0141 427 6561
email: glasgow@usdaw.org.uk

Southern Region

Robert Francis
Morden Office

Tel: 020 8687 5950
email: morden@usdaw.org.uk

North West Region

Annette Bott
Warrington Office

Tel: 01925 578 050
email: warrington@usdaw.org.uk

Equalities Section

Usdaw

Usdaw Head Office,
Voyager Building,
2 Furness Quay,
Salford Quays,
Manchester M50 3XZ

Tel: 0161 224 2804
email: equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk

More Information

Usdaw Nationwide

Wherever you work, an Usdaw rep or official (Area Organiser) is not far away. For further information or assistance, contact your Usdaw rep or local Usdaw office. Alternatively, you can phone our Freephone Helpline **0800 030 80 30** to connect you to your regional office or visit our website: **www.usdaw.org.uk**
You can also write to the Union's Head Office. Just write **FREEPOST USDAW** on the envelope and put it in the post.

Join Usdaw

You can join online at:
www.usdaw.org.uk/JoinUs

Scan to join today

What Happens Next

Once we process your application, you will receive a membership card with our Helpline telephone number and a New Member's Pack giving details of all the benefits and professional services available to you.

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Stock photography, posed by models

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