

Staying Safe

Women are most at risk when they are about to leave an abusive relationship. It is therefore most important to do nothing that will jeopardise your safety or that of your children. Have a place of safety where you can go to in an emergency. This could be a relative, friend or refuge.

Under the Domestic Violence Act (1996) you are entitled to apply to your local court for the following orders:

Safety Order

A safety order, which prohibits the violent person from further violence or threats of violence

Barring Order

A barring order is an order where the judge can prevent the abuser from having access to the home.

Interim Barring Order

In special circumstances the court can grant an interim barring order which is an immediate order requiring the perpetrator to leave the home immediately

Protection Order

A protection order is an interim order, which can be applied for while waiting for an application for a barring order. Once applied for, it comes into effect immediately and gives the power to the Gardai to arrest and detain the offender where you are being threatened with violence.

Who Can Help?

There are people who can help you, who understand what you have been going through. They won't blame you for what has happened, or try to make you do what they think you should do. At Vita House we can listen, offer support and put you in contact with other services if needed.

Useful Contacts :

Vita House (090) 6625898

**Boyle Family Life Centre
(071) 9663000**

**Citizens Advice
Roscommon
(090) 6627922**

**Gardai Roscommon
(090) 6638300**

STOP Domestic Violence

Telephone/Fax: 090 6625898
E-mail: vitahouse@eircom.net
Web: www.vitahouse.org



What is Domestic Violence?

Violence against women is a widespread phenomenon, which crosses all boundaries of class, ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability. Domestic violence refers to the use of physical or emotional force or the threat of physical force, including sexual violence, in close personal relationships. Vita House in line with the task force report on violence against women (1997) is committed to the elimination of domestic violence. In line with this we provide support & counselling services for women and children who are / have experienced domestic violence.

Types of Violence

1) Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the control by violence or battering of another person or threat to use such means

2) Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse is the domination and control by the abuse of the body of the victim. The most serious type of sexual abuse is rape. Sexual violence is generally accompanied by other forms of violence.

3) Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse is the domination and control of another human being by means of withdrawing love, approval, respect, understanding, caring and touching which are basic human emotional needs. It can also involve putting the person down or ridiculing them in front of others and undermining them in their roles or responsibilities. Another form of emotional abuse involves exerting control over their lives by preventing them from seeing friends, relatives etc. This has the effect of systematically isolating the person and making them dependent on their partner.

4) Economic Abuse

Economic Abuse involves the withdrawal of financial means necessary to meet the basic financial and educational needs of the woman and her children. The abuser may exert total control of the finances making his partner dependent on him and may also be a way of preventing her from leaving him.

Recognising Domestic Abuse

Many people who are experiencing domestic violence might not know it because it is often associated with physical or sexual violence. However, domestic violence is often about a man exerting power and control over his partner and children. Physical or sexual violence may / may not be a part of this. However, violence is just a means to an end and men can often employ other forms of abuse to assert this power and control. For example by preventing them from seeing family / friends / making it very uncomfortable for them to do so. Women can often be prevented from taking up an interest, furthering their education or even from getting a job. Women who are subject to this type of domestic abuse often complain that their partners are always checking up on them or accusing them of having affairs. Men who are abusive can fly into rages over very little and destroy possessions / property. Women subject to this type of abuse often say they feel belittled or humiliated and some in more serious cases can live in a constant state of fear.

If you can relate to one or more of these experiences, this indicates that you may be experiencing domestic violence.

Why does it happen?

There is no single cause of domestic abuse. Domestic Abuse is, like all forms of violence against women, a complex phenomenon deeply rooted in the way society is composed and its structural inequality. Cultural beliefs, power relations, economic power imbalances and misguided notions of male dominance all play a part.

Who Is Responsible For The Violence?

The abuser is always responsible for the violence, and should be held accountable. There is no excuse for domestic violence and the victim is never responsible for the abuser's behaviour.

Is Domestic Violence A Crime?

Domestic Violence can include a number of different behaviours, and there is no single criminal offence of "domestic violence". Not all forms of domestic violence are illegal; some forms of emotional abuse,

for example, are not defined as criminal – though these can also have a serious and lasting impact on a woman or child's sense of well-being and autonomy. However, many kinds of domestic violence constitute a criminal offence, including physical assault, wounding, attempting to choke, sexual assault, rape, threats to kill, harassment, stalking and putting people in fear of violence.

Who Does It Affect?

Anyone who has been abused, but also any children in the family; friends; neighbours; relatives and work mates can also know what's going on, and be worried about it.

We need to understand the myths and stereotypes surrounding domestic abuse. Myths such as:

- It only happens in the poorest or marginalized communities
- It only happens to women who nag or deserve to be abused
- It only happens when he's had a drink, or taken drugs
- It is a social problem, not one I can help with
- Battering often stops on its own
- Women often provoke men into battering them
- Batterers' can't control their anger
- Women can leave anytime they want to
- Women could stop the violence by changing their own behaviour

Domestic abuse happens in all social groups. Whilst it might be aggravated by stress, unemployment, poverty, alcohol or mental illness, it is not caused by it. And no woman ever deserves it.

Another myth that we must challenge is that children are not affected by abuse in their home. We know that around 100, 000 children and young people live with the effects of domestic abuse and that 90% of them are in the same or next room when incidents occur.