What happens when a domestic abuse concern is reported?

Cheshire East Council

This guide is written in plain English for people living with dementia and their carers who may be experiencing domestic abuse in Cheshire East.

Some of the words with special (or specific) meanings **are in orange**. There is a glossary (word book) at the back of this document which explains what these words mean.

Introduction

If you have received this guide, it means that you or someone you know has raised a concern that you may be experiencing domestic abuse. In this guide, we will explain what happens next.

What is domestic abuse?

The word **abuse** means someone is treated badly.

The phrase **domestic abuse** means being treated badly by someone like a partner, ex-partner, parent or another family member.

This is often someone who lives in the same house, but not always.

Domestic violence and **domestic abuse** are the same thing. Both can involve physical harm, but not always. They can include non-physical harm too such as shouting and making threats. They can also include where someone is making you do things you don't want to do; this is called **controlling behaviour.**

Domestic abuse is **ALWAYS** wrong.

A bit more about domestic abuse…

Abusive behaviour is an action that causes harm. The person causing the harm is the abuser. Anyone can be abusive – men, women, parents, children or any other family member.

And anyone can be abused – married, unmarried, gay, straight, living together, living apart, with or without children.

Domestic abuse can involve:

Physical abuse - harming someone's body

Verbal abuse - using words to insult someone

Emotional abuse - deliberately hurting someone's feelings

Sexual abuse - doing something sexual that the other person doesn't want to do

Coercive and controlling behaviour - making someone do something they don't want to do

Financial abuse - controlling or taking someone's money

Abuse happens because someone wants to have control over another person. It's about doing things their way. It's about one person having all the power in a relationship.

What is dementia?

Dementia describes a group of symptoms that include problems with memory, thinking or language, and changes in mood, emotions, **perception**, and behaviour.

Dementia is a **progressive** disease, which means symptoms may be relatively mild at first, but they get worse over time. There are many types of dementia, but Alzheimer's disease is the most common. ***(Definition taken from "What is Dementia?" by the Alzheimer's Society)***

Who is a carer?

A carer is anyone – including children and adults – who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help and cannot cope without support. This could be due to illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction. The care they give is unpaid.

What happens next when professionals hear about a domestic abuse concern?

A **Social Worker** can contact you to discuss the concern.

They will ask about how you are feeling and consider your immediate safety and the options which may be available. They will ask you what is important to you and what you want to happen next.

They will check you feel safe and if you don't feel safe, they will support you to get to a safe place away from further harm. They will ask you about the concern and what is worrying you and what you want to happen next.

They will ask who you would like to be involved to support you. This may be family, a friend, or an advocate.

An advocate is someone who will talk to you and listen to your views and wishes. They will support you to make important decisions about your concerns. With domestic abuse concerns, they are called an **Independent Domestic Violence Advocate / Advisor (IDVA).** The IDVA will talk to you about what you want and support you with a plan to help you feel safe.

If you need help in an emergency, contact:

Police - Dial 999 and ask for the police if you are in danger and there is an immediate risk. Alternatively, you can contact the Police on 101 or online via the Cheshire Police website: www.cheshire.police.uk

If you are Hearing Impaired, you can use **BSL 999**
999bsl.co.uk/

If you are hearing or speech impaired, you can also use **Text Relay** to contact the emergency services Contact 999 using Relay UK - How to use Relay UK I Relay UK (bt.com)

You can also be supported to contact the Police by any of the people mentioned below.

A professional This could be a social worker, support worker, doctor, or nurse. They can support you if you need to speak to someone in private or get immediate help by helping you think of a “safe word”. Using this word will indicate when you need help and those supporting you will know what to do as you’ll have discussed this with them first. The social worker/IDVA might work with other organisations to make sure you feel safer. The fire service sometimes get involved in cases of Domestic Abuse to support, if for example there has been threats of arson made. We are usually contacted by the agency supporting the individual/family

Domestic abuse support services If you live in Cheshire East, you can contact our Domestic Abuse Hub. This is one single number that you can contact 24 hours a day. They will assess what support you need and link you with how to access that support.

You can contact Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub (CEDAH) by phone, email or online:

Mobile: (text number only) 07777 941464
Telephone: 0300 123 5101 or 999 in an emergency
Email: cedah@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Professionals may also ask to speak to you on your own if they are worried about your safety and risk of harm. They may suggest you see a doctor if they are concerned about injuries or your health.

Social Workers can support you with information and advice. Depending on your situation, they may also decide to make some enquiries. They will make this decision based on your views and wishes, and the information they gather about their concerns.

As part of these discussions, the Social Worker may ask questions about any **physical health** or **mental health conditions** you have and how these impact on your ability to do daily tasks such as cooking, showering, and getting out and about. If you are staying in hospital or a care home, the Social Worker may also ask the Nurse or Carer some questions about your wellbeing. This is helpful for the Social Worker to understand what kind of support you may need and any risks.

The Police may be contacted if it is felt there is a crime. If so, they will lead the **enquiry** and **investigate** what has happened.

If the Police are not investigating, then a Social Worker or another **practitioner** may lead the enquiry. This will be referred to as **safeguarding enquiry.** An enquiry means finding out what action is needed to help support you to keep safe and to stop the abuse from happening. This may involve holding a meeting.

Any outcome from the enquiry will be shared with you and you will be kept involved. The enquiry will close once there are actions in place that you are happy with to stop the abuse.

During the enquiry, the social worker, care provider or other professional will help you to prepare essential items – such as medicines, mobility aids and important photos or jewellery – if you feel you need to move to a safe place.

Keeping safe - if you leave

Leaving someone who is abusing or harming you might feel scary. It might be a long time before you feel ready.

It might also be unsafe, so talk to your social worker or Independent Domestic Violence Advocate / Advisor, to plan what support you would need if you chose to leave safely, and how this would happen.

If you're at risk of being hurt and you have to leave quickly, there are people who can help you do that.

If you can't get access to the following list of items safely, **don't worry** - someone will help you to do this after you have left.

You might need:

Things you use every day

- Mobility aids - such as a walking frame
- Continence aids
- **Prescription Medications**
- Hearing aids (including batteries)
- Spare pairs of glasses
- Money, bank cards, bank books
- Car keys and house keys

Important documents

- Photo ID
- Birth/death certificates
- Passports
- Driving licence and car documents
- Repeat Prescriptions
- **Benefit cards** or payment books
- Housing and bills documents from your landlord or mortgage company, gas, electricity, water, phone, internet provider, etc
- Insurance documents

Important personal belongings

- Address and telephone book
- Special items such as, family photos/albums, special jewellery, small items that are important to you
- Clothes and toiletries
- Hard-to-replace items such as your mobile phone or laptop

Keeping safe - if you stay

If you don't feel as though you can leave your home situation – or aren't ready yet – there are things, you can do to keep safe:

- Keep some money and spare keys in a safe place
- Keep your mobility aids in reach / easily accessible
- Store your medicines in their original containers together
- Contact the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub – they can support you whether you stay or leave
- Keep copies of your important documents in a safe place (for example, someone else's house)
- Save emergency contact numbers to your phone, including people like the police, friends, family, Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub, - and disguise names if you can
- Save a local taxi number to your phone's emergency numbers list so you can get away easily if you don't drive
- Tell someone you trust that you are being abused
- Tell your doctor if you have any physical injuries
- Think about safe ways to leave

If you can't do these things safely, don't worry - there are people who can help you.

If you are in hospital or another setting where the person you are concerned about is visiting you, then please talk to the Nurse or someone you trust about how we can help you to feel safe.

Remember:

Dial 999 and ask for the police if you are in danger and you are at immediate risk. Alternatively, contact the Police on 101 or online via the Cheshire Police website: www.cheshire.police.uk.

- If you are Hearing Impaired, you can use BSL 999 **999bsl.co.uk/**
- If you are hearing or speech impaired, you can also use Text Relay to contact the emergency services Contact 999 using Relay UK - How to use Relay UK I Relay UK (bt.com)

If it is safe to do so:

- Write notes
- Take photos of any physical injuries – but make sure you tell the police about them too
- Keep copies and/or screen shots of nasty texts, messages, emails or letters
- Tell your social worker, support worker or named worker
- Always ring your named contact if you need help.

If you leave - what happens next?

- You will get support from professionals after you leave the relationship
- You may have mixed emotions
- If you have care and support needs, that support will continue
- Your social worker or support worker will follow the plan you have put in place for when you decide to leave.

Glossary (Word Book)

Benefit cards
A payment card that you might use to collect your benefit payments.

Coercive

A pattern of behaviours someone uses to gain control and power by taking away a person's independence and self-esteem. This can include acts of intimidation, threats, and humiliation.

The following types of behaviour are common examples of coercive control:

- Isolating you from your friends and family
- Controlling how much money you have and how you spend it
- Monitoring your activities and your movements.

Controlling Behaviour
When one person expects, compels, or requires others to cater to their own needs - even at others' expense. For example, your partner might insist you change clothes if you're wearing something they don't like.

Enquiry
An act of asking for information.

Independent Domestic Violence Advocate / Advisor (IDVA)
Their role is to address the safety of people at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members to secure their safety.

Investigate
To search for facts – especially those that are hidden or need to be sorted out in a complex situation. The goal of an investigation is usually to determine how or why something happened.

Mental Health Conditions
Health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these.)

Physical Health
The wellbeing of the body.

Prescription Medicines
Drugs that can be obtained only by means of a physician's prescription.

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Professionals
Means relating to a person's work, especially work that requires special training.

Practitioner
A person engaged in the practice of a profession, occupation, etc.

Perception
The recognition of things using your senses, especially the sense of sight.

Physical Health
The wellbeing of the body.

Progressive
A condition that gets worse over time, resulting in a general decline in health or function.

Safeguarding Enquiry
A condition that gets worse over time, resulting in a general decline in health or function.

Safeguarding Enquiry
Any action taken or started, by the local authority in response to a concern that abuse or neglect may be taking place.

Social Worker
Professionals who aim to enhance overall wellbeing and help meet the needs of communities and people.

Temporary Accommodation
Buildings or rooms where people live or stay on a short-term basis - or somewhere they can stay until they find somewhere else.

Notes

Notes

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