

Domestic Abuse

This report seeks to provide a basic understanding of domestic abuse within East Herts, looking at our data from the last 3 years. This includes: analysing data regarding the demographic of clients; understanding how our clients accessed us (pre Covid) and the impact of lockdown; exploring the type of abuse and context of abuse faced by our clients; and where people can go for dedicated support.

1. What is Domestic Abuse?

According to the gov.uk website, the definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and emotional.

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.”

It is important to note that there is currently no statutory definition for domestic violence and abuse, however a statutory definition is being proposed by the new Domestic Violence Bill currently going through Parliament.

Domestic abuse victims have a high level of repeat victimisation, often with the severity of incidents escalating over time. This has an extreme adverse effect on the physical and mental health of the victims and of children witnessing abuse.

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) year ending March 2019: an estimated 7.5% of women (1.6 million) and 3.8% of men (786,000) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

2. What our data tells us

Overall, from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2020 we helped at least 78 clients with domestic abuse related issues, with numbers increasing year on year. It is worth noting that actual stats are likely to be higher as there is an element of under reporting built into the system.

➤ **Pre Covid (2017-20)**

- We were the client's first contact point regarding the abuse in 49% of instances. 46% had already contacted the police and 19% had contacted another charity.
- Under 18s were in the household where abuse was occurring in 67% of cases.
- Most common age groups were 25-29, 35-39 and 50-54; these groups make up 50% of all our cases.
- 90% of our clients were female and 60% were white British.
- 61% of clients came to us for help in person.
- Emotional and psychological was the main form of abuse listed (39%) but some clients suffered several forms.
- The most common context of abuse was against a woman by a current/ex male partner (70%).

➤ **Post Covid**

- There has not been a reported increase in domestic abuse clients coming to us for help over lockdown. This could be because our in-person advice service stopped and many DA clients used this access channel prior to lockdown (61%). We are working with partners to ensure that DA clients receive appropriate advice and support.

3. Support

We can be contacted by phone (Adviceline Mon-Fri 10am-4pm 03444 111 444 or Message Line anytime 01920 459 944), email, webchat or [Messenger](https://citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk/get-advice-2/) (see <https://citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk/get-advice-2/>).

There are also a number of local organisations that can provide specialist 24 hour support on domestic abuse:

- Safer Places - www.saferplaces.co.uk, 03301 025811
- Sunflowers - www.hertssunflower.org, 0808 8088 088