



## Breaking the silence... wanting change

For women who are living with domestic violence or who have experienced abuse in the past

part of the Dignity initiative



## Living without Fear

Violence against women is a serious crime. Our church is committed to working towards a change in attitudes which condone abuse, and to support those who are affected by it. Women have a right to live their lives without the fear of violence and mothers have the right to raise their children in safety.

You have the right to live free from violence and fear. You are not to blame, and do not have to put up with it.

- ✦ Recognise that you are in an abusive relationship. Unless you do this nothing can change.
- ✦ Make a crisis safety plan to keep you and your children safe. We can help you do this.
- ✦ Seek support and practical help. You can start this by talking to someone you can trust.
- ✦ Get advice about your legal rights, protection under the law, safe housing and money.

## If you think you are at risk, make a crisis plan

- 1 Plan an emergency escape and get your neighbours' support if possible.
- 2 Keep money safe for taxis, bus fares and telephone calls.
- 3 Make sure you have your own key to the house.
- 4 Have clothes ready for you and your children in case of the need for a quick get-away.
- 5 Get the telephone numbers of your nearest Women's Aid group, the Police, Samaritans, and Social Services.
- 6 Try to have your Child Benefit Post Office Account card and bank books etc with you when you leave.

**In an emergency, call the police on 999**

## Do you need someone to talk to?

A church which displays this leaflet will be aware how hard it is to speak about what has happened or is happening to you.

Domestic abuse can take many forms. It may be a one-off physically violent attack, or repeated episodes, often increasing in severity. It may be emotional abuse, leaving you drained and exhausted, feeling worthless and humiliated. It may be abuse of property, or threats against children, pets or property.

Frequently, people who are being abused feel that it is their fault, and try to avoid situations or actions that seem to precipitate the abuse. It is always hard to speak about abuse. Remember that it is always the responsibility of the abuser, and not the fault of the victim. You may feel scared, confused, or ashamed, but there is no Biblical basis for enduring abuse in marriage, or an intimate relationship, and no Biblical teaching that expects you to continue suffering in silence, whatever your partner may have said.

If you are in an abusive relationship now, or if you have suffered in the past, you may need someone to talk to in confidence who can help you work through what options are available to recover control of your life and find healing for the past. Think whether you are ready to break the silence, and who you can trust enough. Ask the minister who you can speak to. If the abuse was in the past, you may want to talk to a counsellor so that you can move on in your life. If it is a current situation, the priority has to be your safety, and that of any children in the family.

You might prefer to talk to Women's Aid or Refuge who are there to support you and your children as you work to rebuild your lives. Remember that you are special, and that you have the right to live free from fear.

## Contact Numbers

### **24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247**

Run in partnership by Women's Aid and Refuge. Support, help and information for women experiencing domestic violence. If you wish, they will refer you to a local refuge and advice service or other sources of help, in strictest confidence. Open twenty-four hours a day, with trained support workers to advise you.

### **Women's Aid [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) 0117 944 4411**

### **Refuge [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk) (admin calls) 020 7395 7700**

### **Men's Advice Line [www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk) 0808 801 0327**

Information, support and advice to men experiencing domestic violence. Open 9-5 Monday-Friday.

### **Action on Elder Abuse National Helpline 0808 808 8141**

Support for older people experiencing abuse, open 9-5 Monday-Friday.

### **National Child Protection Helpline (NSPCC) 0808 800 5000**

### **The Association of Christian Counsellors [www.acc-uk.org](http://www.acc-uk.org) 0845 124 9569**

Ask if there is a Christian Counselling Service nearby, or phone the above number which will be able to give you the number of the Regional Representative for your area or the nearest counselling service.

### **RESPECT 0845 122 8609**

National phone line for perpetrators or professionals seeking advice.

**MACSAS 0808 801 0340 (7-9.30pm every Wednesday)**

An organisation supporting women or men sexually abused by clergy or ministers as a child or as an adult.

03/14