

## Domestic abuse

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This leaflet is for pregnant women who are experiencing domestic abuse and gives help and information on what to do.

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For most women, pregnancy is a time of happiness and anticipation, but that isn't the case for every pregnant woman.

One in four women experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives. Unfortunately, domestic abuse can often begin or worsen during pregnancy. We recommend taking action, as abuse can increase the risk of miscarriage, infection, premature birth, low birth weight, fetal injury and fetal death.

The Home Office 'official' definition of domestic abuse is:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behavior, 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: physical, sexual, mental, financial or emotional abuse." Any woman can experience domestic abuse regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability or lifestyle.

If you feel that you are, or have been, affected by domestic abuse and wish to talk about your experiences, your midwife, GP or health visitor can offer guidance, support and signposting to local support agencies.

If either you, or someone you know, have experienced or is experiencing domestic abuse, Berkshire Women's Aid is a local support agency that can provide support, information and somewhere safe to stay for women and children. Berkshire Women's Aid can be contacted 24 hours a day on 0118 950 4003.

For women living in West Berkshire A2 Dominion can provide support. Call the Domestic Abuse Helpline on: 0800 731 0055 The Helpline is staffed from 10am-4pm Monday to Saturday. For 24 hour advice call: 0808 2000 247 (National Domestic Violence Helpline).

Thames Valley Police Berkshire West Domestic Violence Unit is able to offer a wide range of support and action to those who are experiencing domestic abuse – telephone 0845 850 5505. However, if it is an emergency you should dial 999.

## Other useful contact numbers

- **Sahara Asian Women's Project** – contact via the Berkshire women's Aid (BWA) helpline (0118 950 4003). The project provides emergency accommodation, practical advice and counselling for Asian women.
- **Karma Nirvana** – Specialise in Honour Based Violence 0800 5999 247 (www.karmanirvana.org.uk)
- **Samaritans 0118 926 6333**. Available at all times on the above number, or ring their national link 0345 909090. The Samaritans can put you in touch with people who can help, and can provide emotional support to anyone in distress.
- **Crossing Bridges 0118 959 7333** (10am until 4pm, Monday to Friday) 5 Queens Road Reading. Reading. Crossing Bridges is a safe and friendly place where you can get professional help on a range of issues, from legal advice and police support, to health and benefits advice. Please phone first for an appointment to ensure that appropriate help is available when you arrive.
- **Broken Rainbow – Helpline for Lesbian, Gay and Bi-Sexual Victims – 0300 999 5428**

We realise that acknowledging the abuse and taking action is a major step and may be scary, but there is help and support available for you.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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