

# Independent Domestic Violence Advice Service



*"They helped me  
regain my confidence  
and rebuild my life"*

## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse means an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by a partner, ex-partner or family member. It is based on one person having power or control over another, and it often gets worse over time.

Domestic abuse doesn't just mean physical violence. It can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control: a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Harassment
- Stalking
- Online or digital abuse
- Forced marriage, female genital mutilation and so called "honour crimes" that are carried out primarily by family members, often with multiple perpetrators.

### Who does domestic violence happen to?

Domestic abuse is a gendered crime which in the majority of cases is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men. However, anyone can be abused, regardless of their social background, age, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity. Domestic abuse can happen between partners, within families or in shared homes.

## Domestic violence doesn't always mean physical violence

### Does your partner or someone at home:

- criticize you, put you down or call you names?
- make you feel scared to disagree with them or anger them?
- constantly check up on you or follow you?
- make it difficult for you to see family and friends?
- ever hit you?
- withhold money, food or affection from you?
- make you do things you are uncomfortable with?
- stop you from going to work or college?
- threaten you by telling you that you could be deported because of your immigration status?
- threaten to take your children away?

If you feel scared of your partner or someone at home because of things that they say and do, or are forced to change your behaviour because you are frightened of their reaction, you might be experiencing domestic abuse.

*We know it is difficult to talk about  
what has happened, but telling  
someone can really help.*

Contact Black Country Women's Aid, and our Independent Domestic Violence Advice Service will help you to get the support that you need.

**We will believe you.** We will listen to you, support you and give you time and space to decide what you want to do. We won't judge you because of what you say or force you to make a decision you do not want to make. We can also offer support if you decide to report to the police

*It is important to remember that  
the abuse you have experienced  
is not your fault.*

## Independent Domestic Violence Advice (IDVA) Service

IDVAs are trained specialists who provide a service to people who are at risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members, with the aim of securing their safety and the safety of their children. Although IDVAs work closely with other organisations to ensure you get the best support, they are independent of all statutory agencies including the Police, Local Authority and Social Services.

### How can an IDVA support you?

An IDVA will work with you over the short to medium term to enable you to make choices and plans towards your long term safety. The support IDVAs can provide includes:

- Listening to you and being there for you;
- Advice and support planning tailored to your needs, discussing a range of options with you and enabling you to make choices;
- Assessing your risk level and developing safety plans with you including practical steps for protection to keep you and your children safe;
- Support and advice through the Criminal Justice System including support at court;
- Information about Non Molestation Orders, Restraining Orders, Residence Orders and Occupation Orders;
- Signposting and assisting access to other agencies who can help e.g. refuge, housing, immigration, counselling and legal services;
- Maximising your safety by working closely with other agencies to reduce the risk of harm that you face, and representing you at MARAC;
- Group work and activities
- Access to interpreting services if you need them.

### Finding an IDVA

If you are experiencing domestic abuse you may be referred to an IDVA by a professional (eg police, health or refuge workers), or you can self-refer by calling the numbers opposite. The IDVA service supports women and men over the age of 16 in Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall.

## What is a MARAC?

**MARAC** stands for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. It is a regular meeting where workers from different agencies (include IDVAs, police, probation services, NHS, schools, and social services) discuss the wellbeing of women and their children identified as at high risk of serious harm from domestic violence. MARACs co-operate on safety and support planning to reduce the risk of people becoming repeat victims.

If you are referred to a MARAC, you will usually be consulted and your confidentiality is respected. You will not need to attend meetings, your IDVA will be your representative ensuring that your voice is heard and feeding back to you about the support other agencies are offering.

Following intervention by a MARAC and an IDVA service, up to 60% of domestic abuse victims report no further violence.

## Group work

As well as one-to-one support, Black Country Women's Aid offer group programmes which provide a powerful space for survivors to reduce their isolation and support each other. Groups in your area might include:

### The Freedom Programme

Exploring domestic abuse, challenging the beliefs held by abusers and helping you to recognise warning signs.

### You and Me, Mum

Helping you understand how domestic violence may have affected your children and your parenting, and supporting you to address your children's needs.

### The Power to Change

A programme to help you build your self-esteem, understand your needs and desires, know your rights, set boundaries, and learn about positive, nurturing relationships.

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“Black Country Women's Aid has given us our lives back and the belief that we are in control of our own futures. We are three women of different ages and backgrounds who have met through accessing various services with BCWA. We have always felt listened to, believed, supported, guided, not judged and been allowed to make decisions about our own lives in our own time. We have been inspired to believe in and respect who we are as individuals”

**BLACK COUNTRY WOMEN'S AID'S CLIENT FORUM**

### WHAT ELSE DO PEOPLE SAY ABOUT OUR SUPPORT SERVICES?

“She (IDVA) has been exceptionally supportive and there for me at any point when I needed her. She reassured me on many occasions that the choice had to be mine. She was not judgmental and understood why my decision was so hard”

“When I met my support worker for the first time, that was the day that I felt I couldn't go on. Meeting her gave me hope... When I came [here] I learned how to live”

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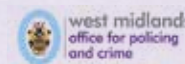
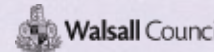
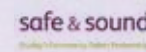
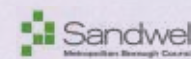
Black Country Women's Aid (formerly known as Sandwell Women's Aid) is an independent charity which has supported survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence in the West Midlands for 30 years.

We offer sensitive and holistic support services which help victims of abuse to escape from violence, cope with trauma and rebuild their lives.

**We believe that no-one should have to live in fear of violence and abuse. We listen, we support, we care.**  
[blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk](http://blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk)



The Cedar Centres are our centres in Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall which bring together a range of support services for survivors. They are based on values of protection and healing: a safe space to enable survivors to rebuild their lives.



Company Limited by Guarantee  
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Registered Address: Landchard House, Victoria Street,  
West Bromwich, B70 8HY

## Contact numbers

### Black Country Women's Aid

Black Country Women's Aid offer services for women living with domestic abuse in Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall. Our IDVA services are based in new specialist abuse centres called Cedar Centres.

To access support:

**in Sandwell call 0121 553 0090**  
**in Walsall call 01922 649 569**  
**in Dudley call 01384 455 411**

### Other useful numbers

**Freefone 24hr National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247**

**Citizen's Advice Bureau 03444 111 444**

Advice on a range of issues including benefits, work, debt, housing and the law

**NCDV (National Centre for Domestic Violence) 0800 970 2070**

Free, fast emergency injunction service to survivors of domestic violence

**IN AN EMERGENCY CONTACT THE POLICE - DIAL 999**