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# Shared Lives guidance for supporting survivors of domestic abuse 2020

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## Executive summary

- Shared Lives has been funded to run a pilot for people who have experienced domestic abuse between 2018-2020.
  - This pilot gives people the opportunity to recover holistically from their experiences, to focus on their wellbeing in a safe and supportive environment.
- The definition of domestic abuse varies slightly between the four nations and in the Human Rights Act.
- Shared Lives workers and carers must take a trauma-informed approach for survivors of domestic abuse.
- Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse, and people with learning disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse of all kinds: financial, physical, emotional and sexual.
- In this document we outline our top ten points to remember when working with survivors of domestic abuse.
- Additionally, the document highlights the risks of financial abuse and how to support people through financial decision making.

- Finally, the document highlights the ways in which domestic abuse can impact older people, younger people, LGBTQ+ people, and those experiencing mental ill health.

## Share our film

For people who have experienced domestic abuse and need somewhere to stay as well as a hand to get back on their feet, Shared Lives hosts can provide a home and support to people at a time they need it most, in a way that's right for them.

**Our animation which shows what life could be like for survivors of domestic abuse:** <https://youtu.be/t7yeWx9IfBs>



## Introduction: Shared Lives for survivors of domestic abuse

Shared Lives hosts share their home and family life with people who need support to help them live well. This has brought positive outcomes for survivors of domestic

abuse. Schemes individually match, train and approve Shared Lives hosts with people who need safe accommodation and support following domestic abuse. Hosts work in partnership with local domestic abuse services and other teams such as probation, health and social care, housing, learning disability teams and local charities.

- In the 2018- 2020 pilot, Shared Lives saw women benefit in every area of their wellbeing, community involvement and service engagement.

**In Shared Lives, survivors get to re-build through trusting relationships, practical and emotional support, within the context of ordinary family life. Survivors are reminded that they have unique skills, talents to contribute. They live in a culture which demonstrates that they are valued and equal.**

Survivors are supported by their Shared Lives hosts to develop independence, build autonomy and work on everyday skills. Support from their host will encourage survivors to access domestic abuse support services and recover holistically from their experiences, to focus on their wellbeing in a safe and supportive environment.

**Shared Lives is well positioned to deliver support to survivors of domestic abuse, reducing pressure on stretched refuge services and bringing expertise to support survivors who have learning disabilities and other assessed support needs.**

- For people with assessed needs, arrangements can be funded through health and social care. People without support needs may be granted funds from the local safeguarding routes, or via grant funding, such as Police and Crime Commission funding. Or they may be suited to access a KeyShare arrangement
- It is important to liaise with DWP and local housing options teams to ensure that a Shared Lives arrangement does not impact someone's housing application. In this way, it should be considered the same as refuge.



## Definition of Domestic Abuse (DA)

**To get started, it is important that we understand what is meant by the term Domestic Abuse. In England and Wales, the cross-Government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:**

*“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, 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.”*

**In Scotland, the definition of domestic abuse as set out by the Scottish Government is:**

*“Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse), can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their*

*will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family or friends).*

### **The Northern Ireland government states that:**

*Domestic violence and abuse happens in the home. When a family member, current or former partner is violent or abusive to you, you're experiencing domestic violence. It can involve physical contact, verbal or emotional abuse and threats to harm or kill you. Men and women experience domestic violence and abuse.*

### **Human Rights**

The Human Rights Act 1998 includes a right not to be subject to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment (article 3). Serious abuse can be a violation of article 3.



## **A trauma-informed approach**

***The human response to psychological trauma is one of the most important public health problems in the world" (Van Der Kolk, 2000)***



Shared Lives workers and carers must take a trauma-informed approach for survivors of domestic abuse.

## What is trauma?

Trauma typically overwhelms an individual mentally, emotionally, and physically. A generally accepted definition of *trauma* is 'an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.'

Domestic abuse is clearly a form of trauma, made more complex as it is planned yet unpredictable and takes place in the context of a relationship.

## What is a trauma-informed approach and why is it needed in Shared Lives?

***A trauma-informed approach is based on the recognition that many behaviours and responses expressed by survivors are directly related to traumatic experiences. The Center for Mental Health Services National Center for Trauma Informed Care***

A trauma-informed approach is sensitive and respectful: seeking to respond to survivors with supportive and in ways which avoid re-traumatisation.

Extreme distress is often treated as a symptom of mental illness, rather than as a coping mechanism in response to trauma. Survivors of domestic abuse need holistic, trauma-informed support which acknowledges how a person's trauma can affect their neurological, biological, psychological and social development and needs.

**It is moving away from 'What is wrong with you?' to considering 'What happened to you?'**

Past experiences of trauma can lead to conditioned behaviours, which become coping strategies for people but could be difficult for Shared Lives carers to understand unless they have a basic knowledge of trauma.

## Becoming trauma-informed in Shared Lives



**Becoming trauma-informed is an ongoing process. In the same way that we are always developing our knowledge in areas such as learning disability or mental health, we should constantly learn and develop our knowledge of trauma by accessing guidance and training. You can learn some of the basic principles here, and use the links to build this understanding.**

Trauma-informed services are not specific types of services, rather they share a set of principles that place trauma at the centre of their work with survivors of domestic abuse. Shared Lives schemes and workers can therefore become trauma-informed service providers. In doing so, they will be improving their support overall because trauma is so common.

## **Principles of a trauma informed approach**

Shared Lives workers and carers are not asked to be counsellors or therapists. Being trauma-informed will look different depending on who you are supporting, but there is clear crossover in the principles and ways of working that we should all follow:

- Listen to people and believe them
- Establish safety and trust. Make sure there is equality in the relationship
- Focus on understanding the whole individual and context of their life experience
- Be mindfully inclusive to welcome and engage survivors appropriately
- Facilitate recovery, growth, resilience and healing
- Respect people's choices and control over their own recovery
- Form a relationship based in partnership with the survivor, minimizing the power imbalance between advocate and survivor
- Emphasize and work from women's strengths
- Collaborate with non-traditional and expanded community supports (such as faith communities, friends and families, etc.)
- Provide culturally appropriate and sensitive provision

## **Resources to help Shared Lives workers and schemes become trauma informed**

**NHS Education for Scotland** produced this animation which is an excellent starting point for Shared Lives workers and carers. Watch it [here](#)



**NHS Education for Scotland** also developed a wider 'Transforming Psychological Trauma' framework. Designed to increase understanding of trauma and its impact across the broad Scottish Workforce, it's information is valuable for all practitioners in the UK and is available [here](#)

**Mental Health Foundation**, in partnership with the department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Public Health England produced a guidance and advice resource for public sector providers looking to adopt a gender-sensitive trauma-informed approach in their organisations. Find out more and download it [here](#)

**NHS Wales** has been utilising NHS Devon NHS Partnership's work to develop a trauma-informed learning disability service. You can find out more [here](#)

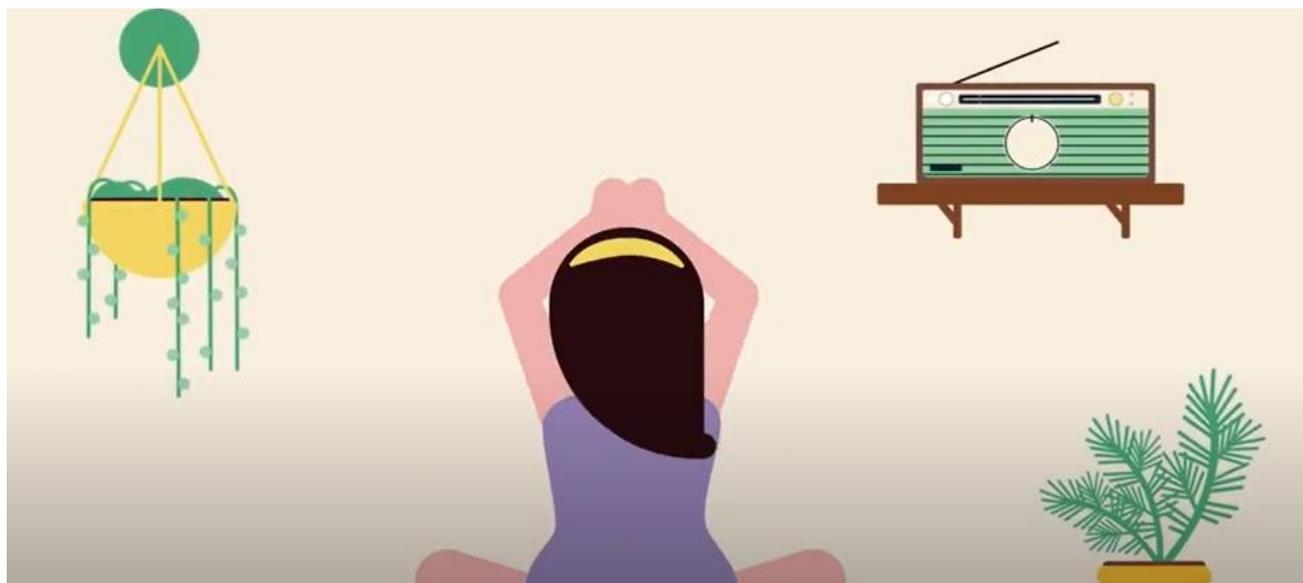
**RISE** is a Sussex-based charity that supports people affected by domestic abuse and violence. They have information on how trauma affects brains, bodies and relationships as well as how people can recover: [here](#)

## **Information for people in Shared Lives to help them understand trauma and how it might affect them**

**NHS Tees, Esk and Wear Valley** produced easy read information on trauma informed care for people accessing services and their families, carers and supporters [here](#)

**The Women's Community Health Network:** Easy-read factsheet outlining what domestic abuse is and how it can make you feel. Find it [here](#)

**Respond** works with children and adults with learning disabilities who have experienced abuse or trauma, as well as those who have abused others, through psychotherapy, advocacy, campaigning and other support. Respond also aims to prevent abuse by training, consultancy and research. Website [here](#)



## Domestic abuse and disability

Studies show that disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse and are twice as likely to suffer assault and rape. Yet nationally only 3.9% of referrals to domestic abuse services were for disabled victims.

**In 2015 Public Health England published a [report on disability and domestic violence](#).** The report reviewed the published evidence and statistical information about domestic violence affecting disabled people. It highlighted that disabled people experience disproportionately higher rates of domestic abuse. They also experience domestic abuse for longer periods of time, and more severe and frequent abuse than non-disabled people

**Dr Justin Varney is the National Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England.** He tells us that disabled people may also experience domestic abuse in wider contexts and more often from significant others, including intimate partners, family members, personal care assistants and health care professionals. Disabled people encounter differing dynamics of domestic abuse, which may include more severe coercion, control or abuse from carers. Abuse can also happen when someone withholds, destroys or manipulates medical equipment, access to communication, medication, personal care, meals and transportation.

**Dr Ravi K. Thiara is a principal research fellow at the Centre for the Study of Safety and Wellbeing, University of Warwick.** She tells us how intersectionality can



help us to understand the ways in which disabled women experience domestic abuse, and how services can help to remove barriers to access:

A study involving women with physical and sensory impairment found that they experienced multiple forms of violence across the life course from multiple perpetrators. For women, being disabled significantly worsened the abuse they were subjected to and abusers commonly used women's impairments to perpetuate particular kinds of abuse, including ridicule and insults about the woman's condition. Abuse was especially acute where the abusive partner was also the carer, and increased power and control over women as well their neglect. The representation of abusive partner-carers as 'caring heroes', combined with the dominant construction of disabled women as asexual, serves to reinforce abuse in women's lives.

### **Disabled women in the study gave the following tips for improving responses to their experiences of domestic abuse:**

- Be informed about disabled women's needs and consult disabled women.
- Provide accessible well-publicised services that disabled women know about: tell women about them!
- Do not threaten women with institutionalisation.
- Co-produce with disabled women. Write disabled women into the strategies.
- Take disabled women seriously and do not patronise us.

Given the widely reported barriers encountered by disabled women experiencing domestic abuse in accessing support, services can address this through:

- Addressing lack of knowledge and understanding about disabled women's experiences and needs to better recognise and respond.
- Training professionals on these issues
- Improving accessibility through internal scrutiny.
- Providing information in a format that is accessible for people with a range of impairments and learning disabilities.
- Integrated response- increasing opportunities for disclosure, referral and support.

## **Specialist provision**

[Sign Health](#) is currently the only specialist domestic abuse service for Deaf women and girls in the UK. They were established in 2010 in response to deaf women and girls



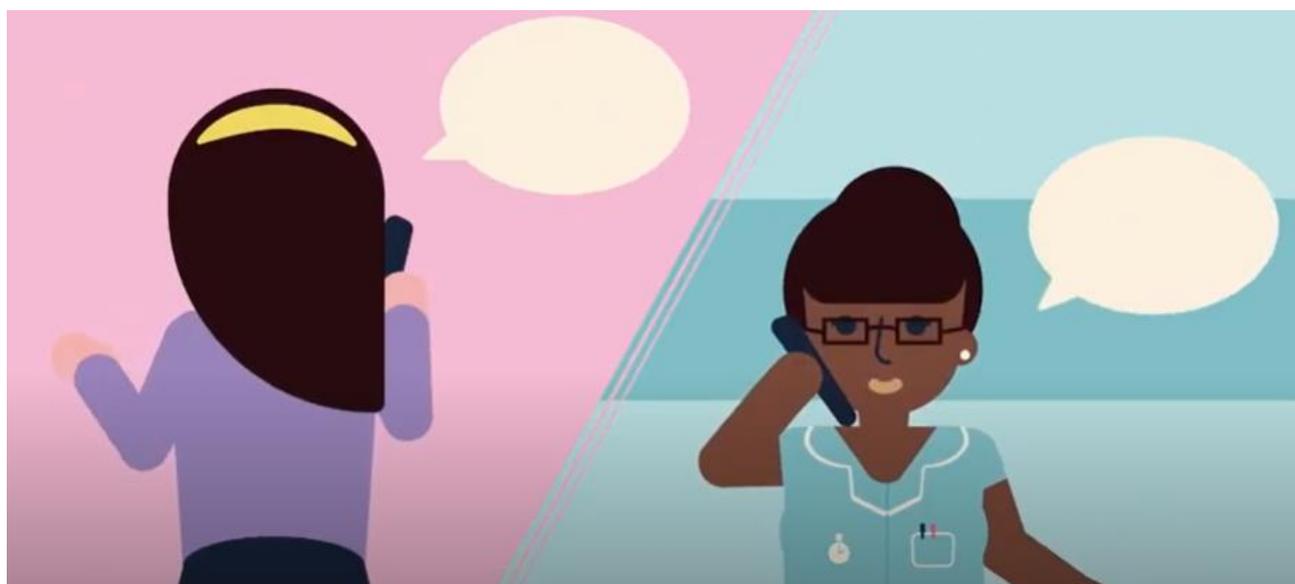
who struggle to access mainstream services, increasing the likelihood of staying with or returning to their abuser. The team have recently noted an increasing number of referrals for complex cases linked to immigration and forced marriage. DeafHope also deliver healthy relationship workshops to young Deaf people aged 11-21 to increase their understanding of domestic abuse and forced marriage.

**Beverley Lewis House** is a supported housing service that safeguards women with learning disabilities who are at risk of or are fleeing abuse. It provides temporary accommodation and specialised support to help women escape domestic violence and abuse. It is operated by L&Q Living and is the only refuge which is uniquely available to women with learning disabilities, including those who may have other support needs including mental ill health or physical impairments.

**Stay Safe East** are an organization run by disabled people which supports disabled survivors of domestic and sexual violence, hate crime and other abuse, and works for change in policy and strategies at London and national level. They provide specialist and holistic advocacy and support services to disabled people from diverse communities in London.

**Refuge** services can meet the needs of disabled women. For example, many of their refuges are accessible to wheelchair users and have rooms adapted for people with hearing or sight impairments. They also run community-based programmes that can support women if refuge accommodation is not appropriate.

**The National Domestic Abuse Helpline** is run by Refuge, Monday to Sunday, 24 hours. The Helpline also offers BT Type talk for callers with hearing difficulties. The Helpline worker contacts the Type talk operator so that the caller can communicate through them.





## **Supporting survivors of domestic abuse who have learning disabilities**

People with learning disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse of all kinds: financial, physical, emotional and sexual. Despite this, domestic abuse services rarely receive referrals for this client group.

Shared Lives' history of supporting adults with learning disabilities makes it a well-placed and accessible route for survivors of abuse who have learning disabilities. Here are our top ten key points to remember when working with survivors of domestic abuse.

### **1. Believe victims who have learning disabilities**

Research from the Tizard Centre shows that most police officers do not believe that a learning disability makes women more vulnerable to domestic violence. Leading researcher Michelle McCarthy says this is worrying given that the police are often the first point of contact in abuse cases.

### **2. Acknowledge the complexities**

Working with someone with dual needs around domestic abuse and their learning disability can add complexity to how support is planned. However, with the right knowledge, planning and partnership working, people can and do recover and thrive in Shared Lives.

### **3. Make links with Domestic Abuse services**

It is vital that Shared Lives schemes and hosts proactively reach out to their local domestic abuse services. Each area has different service provision. You can find out where your local services are by using Hestia's Bright Sky app, which shows local services [www.hestia.org/brightsky](http://www.hestia.org/brightsky)

### **4. Make Shared Lives known to Domestic Abuse services**

Domestic Abuse services may not know about Shared Lives or how to refer people. There are not always strong links between health care, social care and domestic abuse services. SafeLives figures show that only 7% of referrals into a domestic abuse service



were received from health services, and 0% were referred through adult safeguarding. By making links you can help others identify Shared Lives as an option as well as seeking their guidance on how best to support survivors of domestic abuse.

## **5. Appreciate individual needs and abilities**

Just as the individual needs and abilities of people vary hugely, so do the experiences and support needs of people with learning disabilities and survivors of domestic abuse. Treating people as individuals is key to Shared Lives and hosts can remind domestic abuse services about people's specific communication needs that may not be immediately apparent. For example, people may not understand using 'negatives' so would find it difficult to answer questions accurately depending on how they are phrased. This has implications for domestic abuse practices such as conducting a [DASH assessment](#). It's important to liaise with domestic abuse professionals to help them bridge what may be a limited understanding of client's unique support needs.

Because communication needs vary, traditional ways of domestic abuse services contacting clients e.g. by telephone or by letter may not be appropriate and could lead to clients missing out on a service. Ensure that domestic abuse services are aware of how best to contact and communicate with the people and their support networks if appropriate. Schemes should be confident to state support needs as well as approaches that can help. For example, easy read versions and formatting of materials may help some clients, whilst other clients may increase their understanding by practitioners using repetition.

Clients may find it difficult to retain complex information so remind services to remain flexible in their approach and be guided by the client. Help practitioners to gauge the client's understanding and help them recall by asking questions, summarising regularly and taking breaks when needed.

## **6. Involve people that are known and trusted**

If someone with a learning disability is moving to Shared Lives and engaging in domestic abuse services, it may be overwhelming, meeting new people and dealing with difficult personal experiences. If this is all happening it once, it may provide reassurance to involve someone known and trusted as this will help the client feel comfortable.



People with learning disabilities may answer questions in the way they think is 'right' rather than realistic. They might minimise what has happened if they are worried that they will be in trouble or they may say yes to questions, thinking that this is what you want to hear. Someone they know and trust can help manage this by preparing them for meetings where domestic abuse is discussed and supporting them before, during and following this. The supporter may also have important information relating to the client's risks and needs that can feed into domestic abuse assessments.

Shared Lives schemes and domestic abuse workers should always consider who would be a safe and appropriate person to support the client at meetings; for a number of reasons it may be that family members or friends are less suitable than a professional who has a good relationship with the client. However, if a client has developed a good relationship with the Shared Lives host, the host may be an ideal candidate to attend domestic abuse service appointments.

## **7. Use simple examples to convey complex ideas**

Coercive control is nuanced and multifaceted and whilst some behaviours are simple to identify as abusive, others are less so. This can be a challenge for someone who finds abstract concepts difficult to process. If you think the person you're supporting needs additional support to understand this, work with the learning disabilities team to develop simple relationship 'rules' that the client will be able apply in order to recognise abuse. [This film](#) by the Tizard Centre, University of Kent can help to explain this concept.

## **8. Abuse may be familiarised**

People with learning disabilities may have experienced poly-victimisation; repeat experience of being abused throughout their lifetime. Disabled clients are more likely to experience abuse from an adult family member and are more at risk of so-called honour-based violence. Figures show that one in five report abuse from multiple perpetrators, so for some clients with learning disabilities, the domestic abuse they experience may feel familiar and acceptable. They may not name what is happening as wrong. For some, their abuser is also their 'rescuer'; the person who they perceive to have helped them leave an abusive family setting or who they feel protects them from abuse from other people. This may mean that they feel a sense of gratitude towards the perpetrator.



Challenging the perception that the abuser is being kind and loving can be very difficult. This can lead to clients being reluctant to consent to referrals to domestic abuse services. Shared Lives carers can consider ways to make this prospect less daunting. For example, they could facilitate these meetings to happen at home, or at a known, trusted service. Where appropriate Shared Lives carers may jointly facilitate healthy relationship conversations and in some cases, schemes may be able to deliver relationships workshops for people with learning disabilities.

## **9. Be aware of ‘Mate crime’**

Mate crime is the term given to forms of hate crime in which perpetrator(s) exploit and abuse a person with learning disabilities by presenting themselves as a friend. Perpetrators manipulate and groom to gain access to the person’s home, benefits or in order to sexually exploit. Some cases have resulted in homicide. Whilst there may not be a relationship for such crimes to be deemed domestic abuse; there are obvious overlaps, particularly as the victim may believe that the perpetrator is their boyfriend or girlfriend.

People with learning disabilities are also more vulnerable to ‘cuckooing’ a practice where people take over a person’s home and use the property to facilitate exploitation. This can include using the property to deal, store or use drugs, for sex work, or taking over the property as a place to live or to financially abuse people.

Clients with learning disabilities have the same desires and needs for relationships, along with the same desires to feel accepted and to have what is perceived to be ‘normal’ experiences of relationships and sex. This can put people with learning disabilities at risk of being targeted and exploited. Clients may acquiesce to requests for sexual acts because they think that they need to do this to maintain the relationship. When safety planning, help domestic abuse workers to consider all the people the client may be at risk from.

## **10. Acknowledge and address disparities in education**

People with a learning disability have often received minimal education about relationships and may be unable to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Shared Lives carers can play a role in supporting individuals to understand issues such as the nature of abuse, consent and being assertive. It may



also be useful to signpost clients to local organisations, specialising in support for adults with a learning disability, some of whom provide relationships training

## Resources for people with learning disabilities

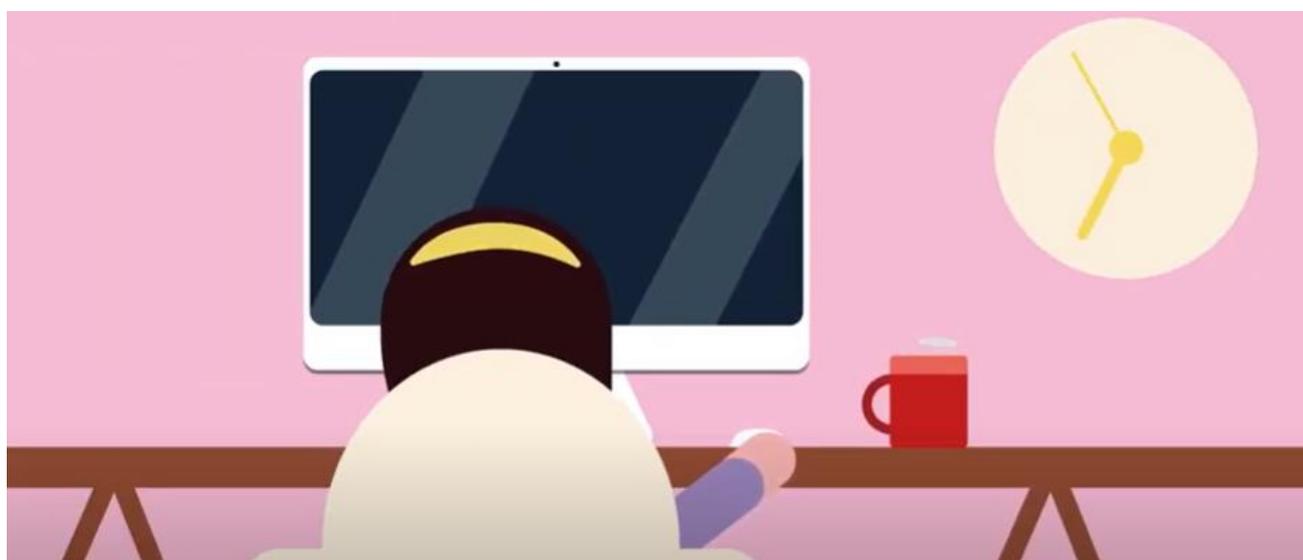
**The Tizard Centre** have produced an accessible leaflet for people with learning disabilities which raises awareness and explains routes of support for people with learning disabilities, available [here](#). Tizard Centre also produced a film for people with learning disabilities, find it [here](#)

**Arc of Spokane**, a US organisation produced a Healthy Relationships Workbook to help assist people with learning disabilities to learn about healthy relationships, to identify and recognise abuse. You can find it [here](#)

**Supported Loving** is a human rights-based campaign, with associated network meetings, hosted by Choice Support who strive for people with learning disabilities and autism to enjoy the same sexual and romantic freedoms as everyone else. Info [here](#)

**Respond**- Respond is a national charity that draws on 27 years' experience of bringing about positive change that enables people with learning disabilities, autism or both who have experienced abuse, violence or trauma to live richer, more resilient lives Find out [here](#)

**ARC UK**- the ARC safety net project and help each other project have good resources for people with learning disabilities [here](#) and [here](#). ARC also have a domestic abuse project, [here](#).





## Financial abuse and learning disability

Studies show that in some areas financial abuse is the most widespread type of abuse and statistics tell us that at least 20% of all UK cases of adult abuse are financial. Nearly 70% of financial abuse is carried out by a family member. People with learning disabilities are more vulnerable to financial abuse and it remains a hidden crime.

BILD and ACT worked in partnership in a financial abuse project funded by the Department of Health to look specifically at the links between learning disability and financial abuse. They captured the views of people with learning disabilities on these issues (report [here](#)), which demonstrated:

- Limited understanding about definition of financial abuse (often confused with other forms of abuse)
- Very little training or information received but was strongly desired
- Lack of reporting to or follow up by police

### **Organisations and information to protect individuals from financial abuse (including those who receive direct payments or individual budgets)**

**Brown, H, Burns, S and Wilson B (2002) The role of the Public Guardianship Office in safeguarding vulnerable adults against financial abuse.** A research project designed to assist the Office of the Public Guardian to better understand and respond to financial abuse in its own context, however much of what was revealed has wider implications and applicability. More info [here](#)

**Welsh Assembly (2009)** In Safe hands: the protection of vulnerable adults from financial abuse in their own homes (update 2009) More info [here](#)

**Department of Health (2010)** Practical approaches to safeguarding and personalisation. More info [here](#)

**Making Safeguarding Personal** is supported by the Local Government Association, and Association of Directors of Adult Social Care. It aims to develop an outcome focus



to safeguarding work, and a range of responses to support people to improve or resolve their circumstances. Their toolkit is available [here](#)

**Ann Craft Trust** works to ensure that organisations who support disabled people, children and vulnerable adults are aware of abuse and protection issues. They provide services to raise professional awareness and increase the knowledge and skills of professionals who can then help reduce the risk of abuse and support people who have been abused. More info [here](#)

To get in touch with the **Learning Disability Helpline**, please contact:

- England: Telephone: 0808 808 1111 Email: [help@mencap.org.uk](mailto:help@mencap.org.uk)
- Northern Ireland: 0808 808 1111 Email: [mencapni@mencap.org.uk](mailto:mencapni@mencap.org.uk)
- Wales: 0808 808 1111 Email: [information.wales@mencap.org.uk](mailto:information.wales@mencap.org.uk)

**Practitioners Alliance for Safeguarding Adults** promotes good practice in working with vulnerable adults to identify and respond to suspected abuse and neglect. Website [here](#)

**Voice UK** is a national charity supporting people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable people who have experienced crime or abuse. They also support their families, carers and professional workers. Website [here](#)

## Support for financial decision making

**DOSH** provides financial advocacy support and appointeeship to people with a learning disability. Website: <http://www.dosh.org>

**Suto I, Clare I and Holland A (2007)** Financial Decision-Making: guidance for supporting financial decision-making by people with learning disabilities. [Here](#)

**Social Care TV (2011)** Mental capacity: Roger's assessment [here](#)

**Wilner P, Bailey R, Dymond S and Parry R (2010)** Coins and Costs: A Simple and Rapid Assessment of Basic Financial Knowledge, Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities 2011, 24, 285–289 [here](#)



## Organisations that offer support or resources for adults with learning disabilities who experience financial abuse

**Citizen's Advice Bureau:** Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice. There are Citizens Advice Bureaux across England and Wales. More info [here](#)

**Court of Protection:** The Court of Protection is a specialist court for all issues relating to people who lack capacity to make specific decisions. The Court makes decisions and appoints deputies to make decisions in the best interests of those who lack capacity to do so. Website [here](#)

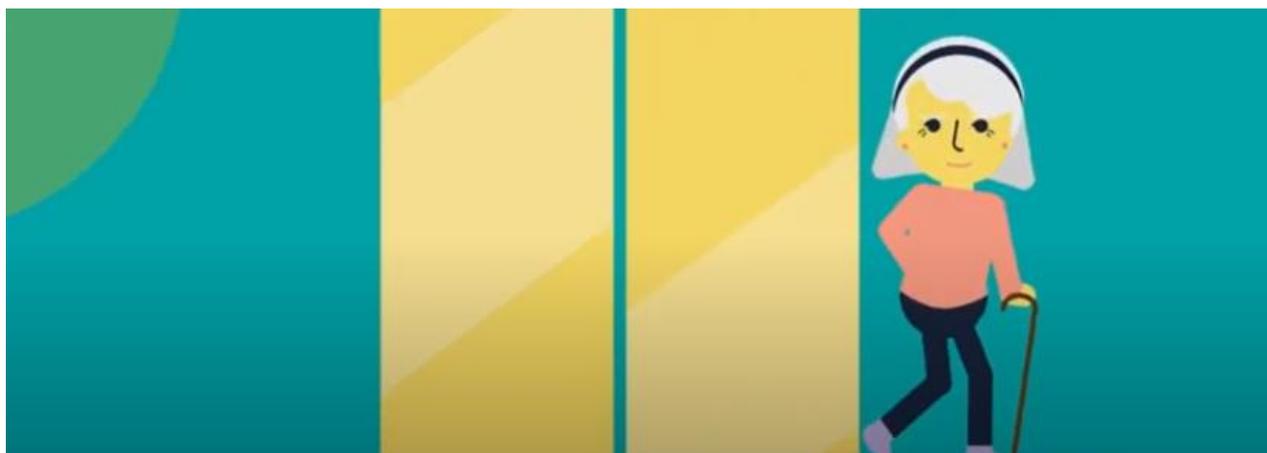
**Money Carer Foundation:** The Money Carer Foundation provides a daily money management service to safeguard vulnerable adults who are not able to manage their own financial affairs. Their daily money management and deputyship service is available across England, Scotland and Wales. They work alongside care providers, Local Authorities, charities, advocates, family members and many other organisations and individuals that provide care services. Website [here](#)

Make contact with **Local services** who may be able to give help and advice:

- Local authority safeguarding team
- Advocacy organisations
- Local law centres
- Specialist financial services for people with individual budgets (e.g. West Lancashire fund management service)

**Mencap** produce a selection of useful and relevant factsheets, including:

- **Consent and decision-making:** Financial matters for people with a learning disability aged 18 or over. [here](#)
- **Bank accounts** [here](#)
- **Mental Capacity Act** [here](#)



## Domestic abuse and older people

Domestic abuse has no age limit. People of any age can be affected by domestic abuse, but older people can be particularly vulnerable to certain forms of domestic abuse, including abuse by a carer and financial abuse. On average, older victims experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 61 and nearly half have a disability. Yet older clients are hugely underrepresented among domestic abuse services.

Older people can face barriers in leaving abusive situations, which can be severe for survivors who have been subject to years of abuse, are experiencing long term health conditions or disabilities, or those who rely on their abuser for their care or money.

The Shared Lives sector has a history of supporting older people and understands the health and social needs and risks that some older people may experience. Shared Lives already supports thousands of older people who enjoy visiting or living with Shared Lives carers, sharing interests, giving a helping hand and sharing friendship.

### Organisations that offer support or resources for older survivors of domestic abuse

**Action on Elder Abuse** works to protect, prevent abuse of vulnerable older adults.

Website: [www.elderabuse.org.uk](http://www.elderabuse.org.uk)

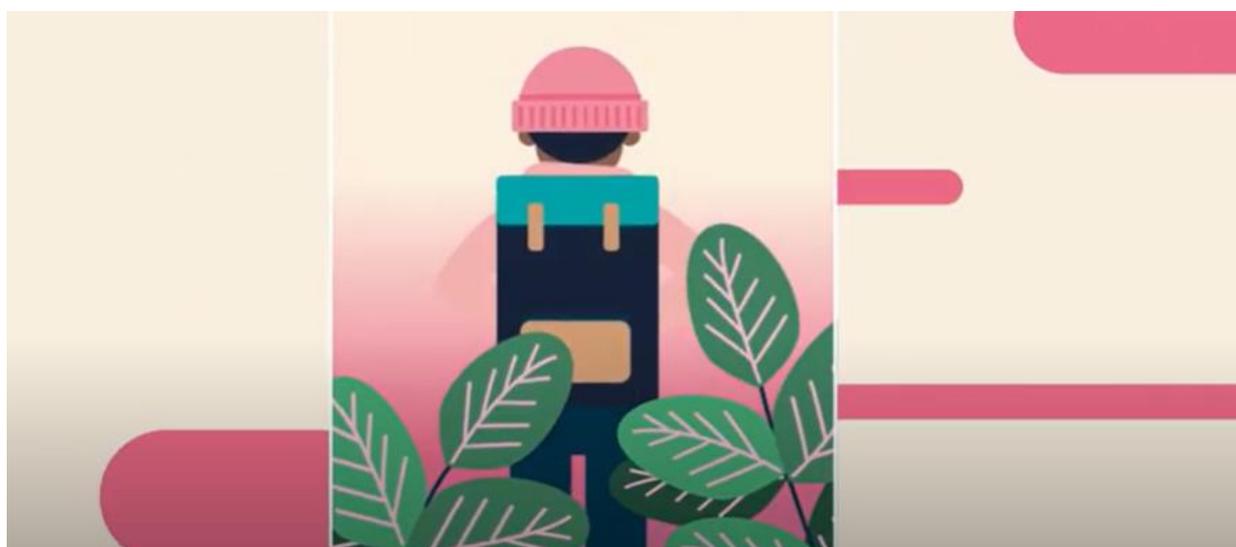
**Alzheimer's Society (December 2011) Short changed:** protecting people with dementia from financial Abuse [www.alzheimers.org.uk/shortchanged](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/shortchanged)



**Age UK** provides advice and information for people in later life through the Age UK Advice line, publications and online. Contact Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of guides and factsheets.

- **Age UK Advice** [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk) 0800 169 65 65 Lines are open seven days a week from 8.00am to 7.00pm
- In **Wales** contact Age Cymru Advice [www.agecymru.org.uk](http://www.agecymru.org.uk) 0800 022 3444
- In **Northern Ireland** contact Age NI [www.ageni.org](http://www.ageni.org) 0808 808 7575
- In **Scotland** contact Age Scotland [www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk) 0800 124 4222

You can find Age UK's report No Age Limit: The Hidden Face of Domestic Abuse, [here](#)



## Domestic abuse and young people

**Young people experience the highest rates of domestic abuse of any age group. Young people experiencing abuse do so at a vulnerable point in their lives.**

In March 2015, the Crime Survey for England and Wales identified that 6.6% of men and 12.6% of women aged 16 to 19 had experienced domestic abuse in the past year. For women this is dramatically higher (42%) than the next highest category (ages 20 – 24), and for men it is almost one third higher (32%).

Shared Lives supports people from aged 16 and many schemes have recently focussed on working with young people and care-leavers. Shared Lives gives young people safe spaces and communities where they can make mistakes, learn lessons and forge their



own characters and assets. This support may involve supporting someone to recover from domestic abuse and learn about healthy relationships and personal safety.

**Young people experience a complex transition from childhood to adulthood, which impacts on behaviour and decision making. For example, young people may**

- respond to abuse in a different way to adults
- engage with services in a different way to adults
- be less equipped to deal with practical problems e.g. moving home and finances

## **Organisations that offer support or resources for young survivors of domestic abuse**

**Hide Out by Women's Aid.** space to help young people understand domestic abuse, and how to take positive action if it's happening to them. [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

**Safe Lives**, the UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse. [Practice briefing](#) and [animation](#) on supporting young survivors of domestic abuse

**Youth Access** is a place for young people to get advice and information for young people aged 12-25 [www.theaccess.org.uk](http://www.theaccess.org.uk) as can **The Mix** [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

**Young Minds:** Adversity and Trauma informed practice, a short guide for professionals working on the frontline here





## Domestic abuse and mental health

There is a strong association between having mental ill health and being a victim of domestic abuse but despite this, domestic abuse often goes undetected within mental health services and domestic abuse services are not always equipped to adequately support survivors with mental ill health.

Survivors with mental health problems are more likely to be experiencing multiple disadvantage. A trauma-informed Shared Lives service can adapt to personalising support to survivors with mental ill health based on their needs and preferences.

Survivors with mental health needs face barriers to support, which have been particularly impacted by austerity in the UK, leading to a lack of services and long waiting times. Survivors with mental health problems also face barriers accessing many other vital services due to strict eligibility criteria or not being able to engage in the way services require. The stability and consistent support that survivors have in Shared Lives can support them to navigate pathways and access services.

### Support and resources for survivors of domestic abuse who have mental ill health

**SafeLives'** ['Safe and Well' report](#) on mental health and domestic abuse.

**IRISi** [practice blog](#) about navigating language based on the words women use to describe their mental health and hearing what they need.

Survivors with mental health needs encounter many services; it's essential that all operate in trauma-informed ways. This is in line with and can be understood by learning more about national policy recommendations. For instance, **['The NHS Long Term Plan \(2018\)](#)** promises trauma-informed care, and many elements of trauma-informed support are included within the **['Five Year Forward View for Mental Health'](#)** in England, the **['Transforming Psychological Trauma'](#)** framework in Scotland, and in **['Public Health Wales' \(2015\)](#)** with their focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).



## Domestic abuse and LGBTQ+ communities

Victims and survivors of domestic abuse who identify as LGBT+ may have different experiences of domestic abuse and have barriers in accessing appropriate support. Whilst equality for LGBTQ+ people has improved, people still face additional barriers when engaging with services, as well as experiencing discrimination in wider society.

Stonewall's research shows that one in four lesbian and bi women have experienced domestic abuse in a relationship. Almost half (49%) of all gay and bi men have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse from a family member or partner since the age of 16.

For Shared Lives schemes and carers, supporting people from any LGBTQ+ community, it is important to understand the disadvantages and misconceptions that people face in their daily lives, this will help you to support people in a person-centred way.

Stonewall is a leading LGBT organisation, championing the rights of the community.

Visit <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/> to learn more.

## Organisations that offer support or resources for LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic abuse

**Galop** provide information, advice and support through a national LGBT domestic violence helpline. The helpline is for LGBT people, their family, friends, and agencies

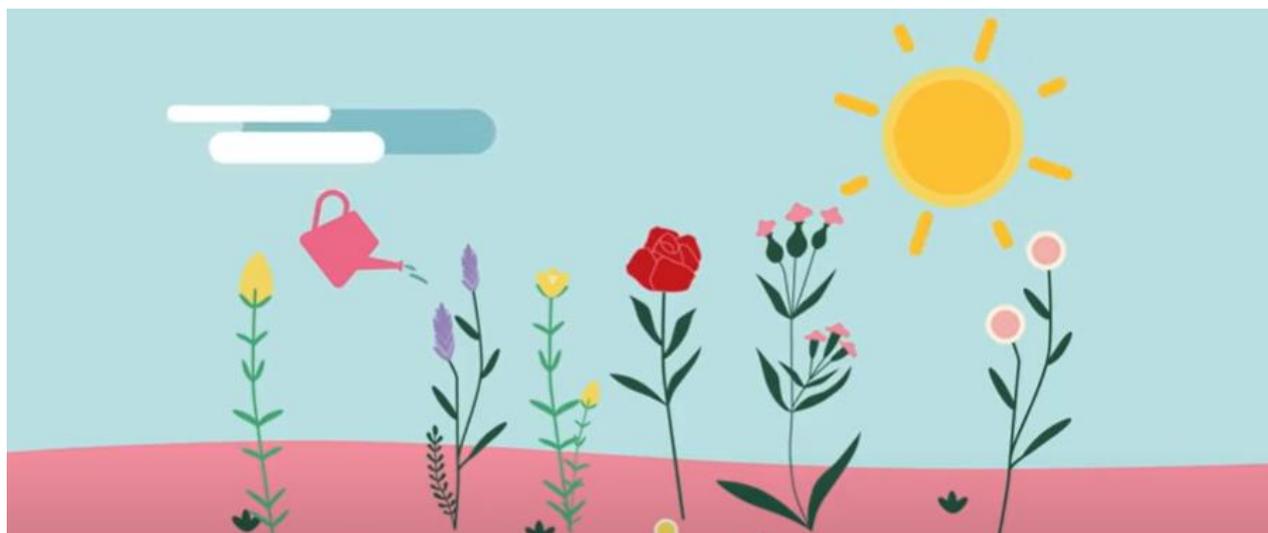


supporting them. The helpline provides a space to talk through what's going on, and to explore your options. Find out more [here](#)

**The LGBT Domestic Abuse project** works across Scotland to raise awareness of LGBT people's experiences of domestic abuse and improve service responses to LGBT people who experience domestic abuse and gender-based violence. Resources [here](#)

**Broken Rainbows** provide help for LGBTQ+ individuals and expertise for organisations. They have a helpline, online chat service and support via email, find details [here](#)

**The National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Domestic Violence Helpline** provides confidential support to all members of the LGBT communities, their family, friends, and agencies supporting them. Available on 0300 999 5428 or 0800 9995428



## Other resources and support

Signposting, information, support and resources for anyone experiencing domestic abuse and the practitioners and communities who support them

**Women's Aid** works at both local and national levels to ensure women's safety from domestic violence and promotes policies and practices to prevent domestic violence.

**Local Government Association and ADASS guidance:** Adult safeguarding and domestic abuse A guide to support practitioners and managers



**The National Domestic Abuse Helpline** is run by Refuge. There are translation facilities for people whose first language is not English. The Helpline also offers BT Type talk for callers with hearing difficulties. The Helpline worker contacts the Type talk operator so that the caller can communicate through them.

**Rights of Women** offers confidential legal advice on domestic and sexual violence. They produce free information sheets which can be downloaded.

**Respect - Men's Advice Line** is a confidential helpline for all men experiencing domestic violence by a current or ex-partner. They provide emotional support and practical advice and can give you details of specialist services that can give you advice on legal, housing, child contact, mental health and other issues.

**The ManKind Initiative** is a charity offering information and support to men who are victims of domestic abuse or violence. This can include information and support on reporting incidents, police procedures, housing, benefits and injunctions. They can refer to a refuge, local authority or other support services.

**Victim Support** is the independent charity for people affected by crime and traumatic events in England and Wales. They provide a specific service for people who have experienced domestic abuse. They are available to support men and women, for days, weeks and years afterwards.

**The National Stalking Helpline** can provide advice on how to deal with any type of harassment and stalking, including how to report the behaviour to the police.



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## **Shared Lives Plus**

G04, The Cotton Exchange,  
Old Hall Street, Liverpool, L3 9JR

0151 227 3499

[info@sharedlivesplus.org.uk](mailto:info@sharedlivesplus.org.uk)

[www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk](http://www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk)

[www.homeshareuk.org](http://www.homeshareuk.org)

Reg Charity number (England and Wales) 1095562

Company number 4511426

Reg Charity No (Scotland) SC042743

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