

Domestic violence and abuse

Domestic violence and abuse is defined as 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
- 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.

[Definition of Domestic Abuse Factsheet](#)

Domestic abuse knows no boundaries and affects every corner of society regardless of gender, class, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or lifestyle. It can begin at any stage of a relationship and may continue after a relationship has ended.

Forming patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour impacts on all those directly or indirectly involved – including an estimated one million children each year in the UK.

Any incident reported to the police will be investigated by specially trained officers in the police harm reduction unit, based at Hatfield police station. Reports can be made in a non-emergency by calling 101. In an emergency always dial 999.

Anyone can seek advice and support without contacting the police through the Herts Sunflower partnership and wider specialist services.

In Hertfordshire the Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP) work together to drive forward the local strategic priorities and plan through its multi-agency arrangements. Governance is led by the HDAP Executive Board and related

activity – including a number of sub-groups focussing on a number of priority areas – overseen by the operational HDAP Board.

Organisations and processes that support domestic abuse and safeguarding

Victim Support

Victim Support is a national charity which provides support for victims and witnesses of crime in England and Wales. It provides free and confidential help to family, friends and anyone else affected by crime, which includes information, emotional support and practical help. Help can be accessed either directly from local branches or through the Victim Support helpline. **0808 16 89 111**.

[Victim Support website](#) lists what support is available.

Herts Sunflower

Herts Sunflower is the local partnership for the provision of information and support services for everyone affected or concerned by domestic abuse in Hertfordshire.

[Herts Sunflower website](#) is the local ‘one stop’ shop of information about services and support available for victims, friends and families of victims, professionals and people who may have caused domestic violence and abuse. The website has a directory of services and provides an online reporting facility, so that incidents can be reported either directly to the police or to an independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA). It is also supported by the **Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline – 08 088 088 088** - a charity providing free, confidential and sensitive service to those affected by or concerned about domestic abuse. It is staffed by trained volunteers from 9am -9pm, Monday to Friday, and 9am-4pm Saturday and Sunday.

Those with additional needs and vulnerabilities can also contact [HertsHelp](#).

Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs)

IDVAs are trained support workers who provide assistance and advice to victims of domestic violence and abuse. They work closely with criminal justice and statutory partners, and are linked to other countywide services such as specialist domestic violence courts (SDVCs) and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs).

IDVAs work, independently from other agencies, with ‘high’ risk victims, to consider options and help access other support and legal services to ensure their safety.

[IDVA in Hertfordshire](#) tel: **0300 790 6772**

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)

MARACs are meetings where information is shared on the highest risk domestic violence and abuse cases between representatives from local police, probation, health, child protection, housing practitioners, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

The purpose of MARAC is:

- to share information to increase the safety, health and wellbeing of victims – adults and their children

- to determine whether the person alleged to cause harm poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community
- to construct jointly and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk and that reduces the risk of harm
- to reduce repeat victimisation
- to improve agency accountability
- improve support for staff involved in high risk cases

After all relevant information is shared; representatives identify options for increasing the safety of the adult at risk and translate these into a co-ordinated action plan. The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult at risk. The MARAC also links with other processes to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the person alleged to cause harm. At the heart of a MARAC is the principle that no single agency or individual can support and protect victims on their own, but that collectively the MARAC holds insights that are crucial to victim safety. The victim does not attend the meeting but is represented by an IDVA who speaks on their behalf. Any agency signed up to the local MARAC protocol can make a referral, and this can be without victim consent.

There are five MARACs in Hertfordshire, each held on a monthly basis, set up to cover all 10 local authority areas as follows:

- North Herts and Stevenage
- East Herts and Broxbourne
- Welwyn Hatfield and Hertsmere
- St Albans and Dacorum
- Watford and Three Rivers

All referrals must be accompanied by a full risk assessment (DASH RIC – Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Abuse Risk Identification Checklist). Please go to [Safe Lives website](#) to download the risk assessment. Further advice and guidance on completing the risk assessment can be found in the [MARAC Representatives Toolkit](#) on the Safe Lives website. The completed form should be emailed to the MARAC co-ordinator (details below) along with the completed referral form.

Cases may be referred to MARAC or to an emergency MARAC, by contacting the Hertfordshire MARAC Team by [email](#)

For further information about referring to MARAC visit [Herts Sunflower website](#)

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

SARC is a specialist centre providing centralised 24-hour professional and sensitive care and support for any victim of sexual assault and rape, including those not wishing to report the assault to the police. An independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) is available to support victims and works on the same principle as an IDVA.

For further information about the SARC, visit [Herts Sunflower website](#)

Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs)

SDVCs are specially tailored to meet the needs of victims – including installation of special measures to protect and support victims. Magistrates and prosecutors are

specially trained and cases are fast-tracked to avoid lengthy delays. There are two across Hertfordshire; St Albans and Stevenage.

To find out more about domestic violence and abuse, or how to contact services, call the Hertfordshire domestic abuse helpline on **08 088 088 088**, or visit [Herts Sunflower website](#) for further details.

Honour-Based Violence/Abuse:

Reports of honour-based Abuse (HBA), or of suspected HBA, must be referred to the police; 999 for emergencies and 101 for non-emergencies. Specialist Domestic Abuse Officers within the police Domestic Abuse Safeguarding and Investigation Unit (DAISU) will respond to these referrals.

Advice related to policy and procedure may be sought from the County Community Safety Unit.

Click on [Hertfordshire Multi-Agency 'Honour' Based Abuse and Forced Marriage Policy & Procedure](#) to read the document.

Forced Marriage:

When responding to a potential victim of forced marriage, [Hertfordshire Multi-Agency 'Honour' Based Abuse and Forced Marriage Policy & Procedure](#) must be followed. Cases may be referred to MARAC or to an emergency MARAC, by contacting The Hertfordshire MARAC Team via their [email](#)

The Forced Marriage Unit are contactable on 0207 008 0151 (0900 -1700 Monday to Friday and via their Global Response centre (in and out of hours emergency) on 0207 008 1500).

Advice related to policy and procedure may be sought from the County Community Safety Unit.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): FGM is the term used to refer to the removal of part or all of the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. Any such procedure on a woman or girl is unlawful under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. It is also an offence under the Act for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

All agencies need to be alert to the possibility of a girl or woman being at risk of FGM, or already having undergone FGM. The Government's [Multi-agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation](#) must be followed. It is now a mandatory requirement to report all disclosures of FGM having been performed on anyone aged under 18 to the police. Referrals to social care should also be considered as per local Child Protection policies. The Joint Child Protection Investigation Team and/or the DAISU will respond. Go to Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation [web page](#) to read the [Multi-agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation](#) document.

The guidelines acknowledge that there have been reports of cases where individuals have been subjected to both FGM and forced marriage.

To find out more about domestic abuse, how to contact services or make referrals, call the Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline on **08 088 088 088**, or visit [Herts Sunflower website](#) for further details.