

Recognising domestic abuse

Although every situation is unique, there are common factors that link the experience of an abusive relationship. Acknowledging these factors is an important step in preventing and stopping the abuse. This list can help you to recognise if you, or someone you know, are in an abusive relationship.

They include :

- **Destructive criticism and verbal abuse:** shouting; mocking; accusing; name calling; verbally threatening.
- **Pressure tactics:** sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnecting the phone and internet, taking away or destroying your mobile, tablet or laptop, taking the car away, taking the children away; threatening to report you to the police, social services or the mental health team unless you comply with his demands; threatening or attempting self-harm and suicide; withholding or pressuring you to use drugs or other substances; lying to your friends and family about you; telling you that you have no choice in any decisions.
- **Disrespect:** persistently putting you down in front of other people; not listening or responding when you talk; interrupting your telephone calls; taking money from your purse without asking; refusing to help with childcare or housework.
- **Breaking trust:** lying to you; withholding information from you; being jealous; having other relationships; breaking promises and shared agreements.
- **Isolation:** monitoring or blocking your phone calls, e-mails and social media accounts, telling you where you can and cannot go; preventing you from seeing friends and relatives; shutting you in the house.
- **Harassment:** following you; checking up on you; not allowing you any privacy (for example, opening your mail, going through your laptop, tablet or mobile), repeatedly checking to see who has phoned you; embarrassing you in public; accompanying you everywhere you go.
- **Threats:** making angry gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting you down; destroying your possessions; breaking things; punching walls; wielding a knife or a gun; threatening to kill or harm you and the children; threatening to kill or harm family pets; threats of suicide.
- **Sexual violence:** using force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts; having sex with you when you don't want it; forcing you to look at pornographic material; constant pressure and harassment into having sex when you don't want to, forcing you to have sex with other people; any degrading treatment related to your sexuality or to whether you are lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.
- **Physical violence:** punching; slapping; hitting; biting; pinching; kicking; pulling hair out; pushing; shoving; burning; strangling, pinning you down, holding you by the neck, restraining you.
- **Denial:** saying the abuse doesn't happen; saying you caused the abuse; saying you wind him up; saying he can't control his anger; being publicly gentle and patient; crying and begging for forgiveness; saying it will never happen again.