



Dating violence - handout

Dating violence

Dating violence is a pattern of violent behaviour that someone uses against a girlfriend or boyfriend. It can cause injuries but it doesn't have to be physical. This includes both current and former relationships. Abuse usually happens outside the home, such as in schools or online.

Dating violence can include:

- Physical abuse (hitting, pushing, restraining)
- Emotional abuse (insults, humiliation, threats)
- Coercive control (isolation, monitoring, jealousy)
- Sexual pressure or coercion
- Digital abuse (constant messaging, checking phones, controlling social media)

Common signs of coercive control in young people's relationships:

Isolation

- Discouraging or preventing them from seeing friends or family
- Making them feel guilty for spending time with other people
- Creating arguments whenever they try to socialise

Monitoring & Surveillance

- Constant messaging and demanding instant replies
- Checking their phone, location or social media
- Pressuring them to share passwords

Emotional Manipulation

- Demands to prove their love
- Blaming them for the partner's anger or behaviour
- Making them feel responsible for the partner's wellbeing

Controlling Appearance or Behaviour

- Telling them what to wear
- Criticising their friends
- Dictating how they spend their time

Gaslighting

- Denying things that happened
- Making them doubt their memory or judgement
- Telling them they're "overreacting" or "too sensitive"

Sexual Pressure

- Pushing boundaries
- Using guilt or threats to obtain sexual activity
- Sharing or threatening to share intimate images

Harms

Harms can include:

- Mental health (anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, self-harm)
- Academic performance (absences, lower grades, difficulty concentrating)
- Friendships and social life (isolation, withdrawal)
- Physical safety (injuries, escalation of harm)

- Constant fear due to surveillance and monitoring through social media

Recognition

In dating relationships, coercive control can be especially hard for young people to recognise because it can be disguised as “love,” “protection” or “just caring.”

- They may think intense attention equals love
- They may lack experience to compare healthy vs. unhealthy behaviours
- Social media normalises constant contact
- They may fear losing the relationship or being embarrassed
- Coercive control often escalates slowly

Safeguarding

If someone is in immediate danger, call **999**.

If you are concerned that a child may be at risk of /experiencing abuse, then you need to make a **report** to the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)/ Children’s Social Care if the child is under 18.

Offer to call specialist support if the child is over 16.

If you talk to a child about dating violence, please bear in mind the following:

- Find a private space
- Avoid judgemental language
- Maintain a record of your conversation
- Don’t promise not to share information

***NB:** Believe the victim and the disclosures!

Tips for professionals

Remember the one chance rule

Use a private space

Listen to and believe survivors

Use the same terminology as the victim and avoid judgmental language

Maintain a record of what is disclosed

Minimise who the information is shared with

Don’t promise not to share information with under 18s

Keep an open door policy

Keep a safety plan with the victim

Share information regarding support agencies or offer to call specialist support

Link with your Designated Safeguarding Lead

Always follow up a safeguarding referral

Helpline numbers

Police: 999

Childline: 0800 1111

[Childline | Free counselling service for kids and young people | Childline](#)

National DA Helpline 24/7 : 0800 2000 247

[Homepage - National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#)

Galop: 0800 999 5428

[Galop - the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity](#)

Respect: 0808 8024040

[Charity to Help Domestic Abuse Perpetrators | Respect Phonenumber UK](#)

Youth Access

[Welcome to Youth Access | Youth Access](#)

The Mix

[The Mix](#)

Respect Remove

[Report Remove | Childline](#)

Resources

Young's People DASH:

[Dash risk checklist: young people - SafeLives](#)

A teen's guide to safety planning:

[Layout 2](#)