

Talkback gather the views and real-life experiences of autistic people, people with learning disabilities, and their parents and carers, and provide these to Councils, Statutory Authorities, and other organisations, with the sole aim of improving lives. All the time, promoting respect, choice, and opportunity.

Talkback

Supporting safe relationships

Training for those working in learning disability services



Brent Martin, Francesca Hardwick, Raymond Atherton and Steven Hoskin are **just a few of the people abused and killed** by people in the UK as a result of hate crime against people with a learning disability.



They are a sickening reminder of **attitudes and behaviour that blights the lives of so many disabled people**. And why today is so important.

Thank you for joining us to try and make a difference.

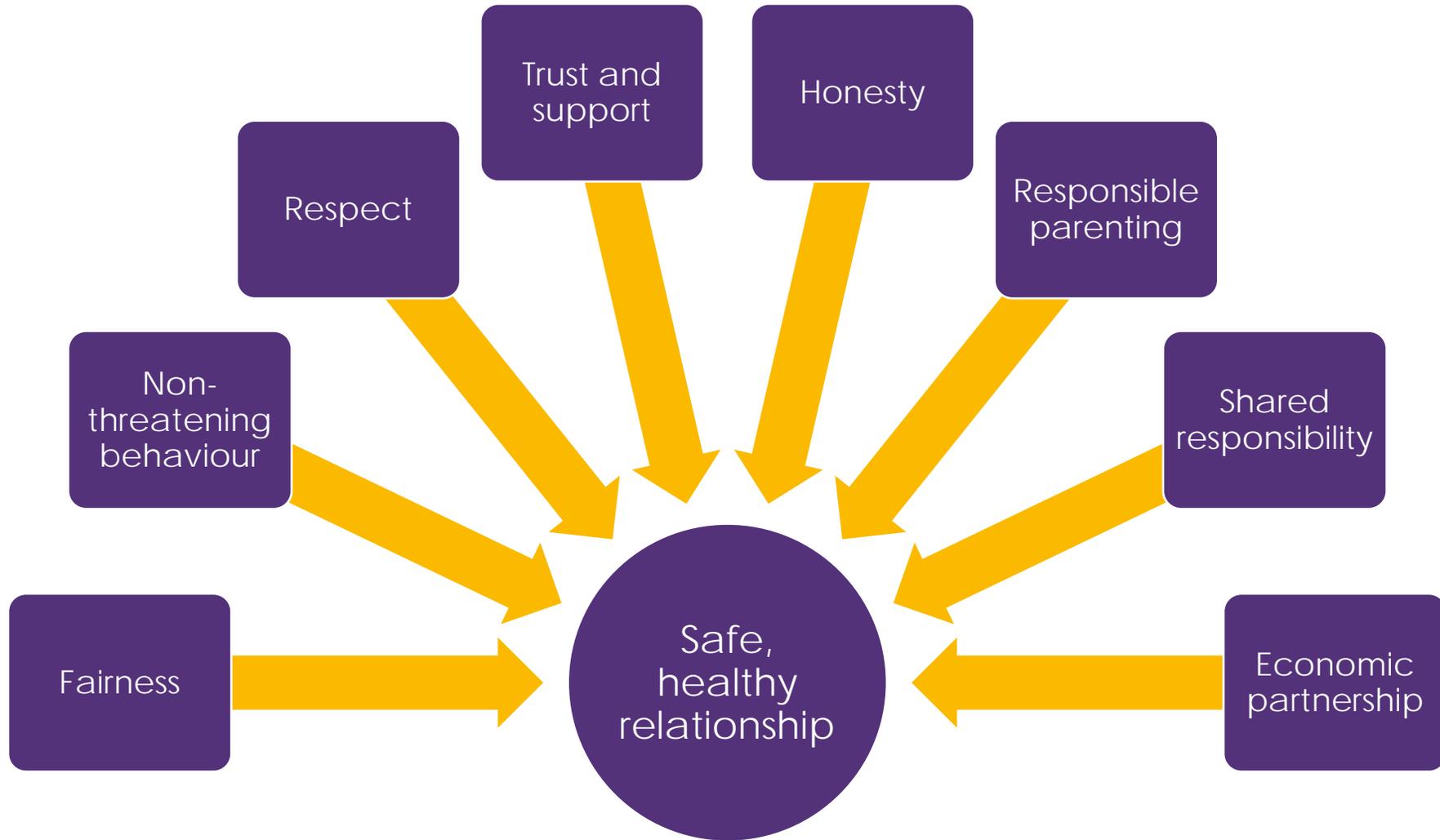


Let's talk about relationships!

What is a
safe
relationship?

What is an
unsafe
relationship?

Components of a Safe Relationship



Domestic abuse: Formal definition

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- Behaviour of a person towards another person where they are each aged 16 or over and personally connected, and the behaviour is abusive
- Abusive behaviour includes abuse which is:
 - Physical or sexual
 - Violent or threatening
 - Controlling or coercive
 - Economic
 - Psychological or emotional
- Behaviour can be a single incident or a course of conduct

Note: Any child living in a home with domestic abuse is now to be recorded as a victim in their own right



People are personally connected if

..... they are, or have been, **married** to each other;

..... they are, or have been, **civil partners** of each other;

..... they have **agreed to marry** one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

..... they have entered into a **civil partnership agreement** (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

..... they are, or have been, in an **intimate personal relationship** with each other;

..... they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, **a parental relationship** in relation to the same child

..... they are **relatives**.

Coercive and controlling behaviour

Controlling behaviour

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

An act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats and humiliation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.



Which of these are true?

Domestic abuse happens to men as well as women

Some women like violence

Abusers have a mental illness or an addiction – they can't help it

It can't be that bad or she wouldn't put up with it

Abuse only happens in poor families

What is sexual abuse?

- Sexual abuse is **any unwanted sexual act or activity**. There are many different kinds of abuse including rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape within marriage/relationships, “honour” based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking, sex play, sexual exploitation and ritual abuse. (Rape Crisis)
- Sexual abuse can be carried out by strangers, someone known or even someone trusted such as a friend, colleague, family members or partners/ex partners.

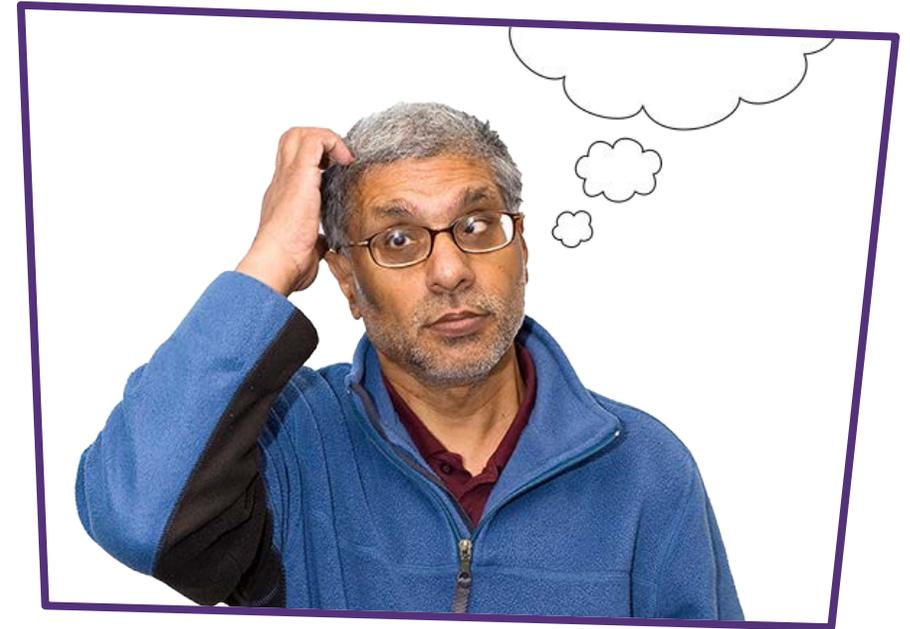
What is sexual exploitation?

- Sexual exploitation is when people use the power they have over someone else to sexually abuse them.
- It could be because they are older, stronger, in a position of authority (like a doctor or a police officer), have more money, or different abilities.
- Sexual exploitation often involves **grooming**:
 - Where someone gives a vulnerable person money or gifts or something they really need (like a place to stay or something they are addicted to) in order to get that person to trust them.
 - After a while, they may start demanding sex in exchange for the gifts.

Sexual abuse takes place when sexual activity takes place **without consent**.

What do we mean by consent?

Any ideas?



consent

● **n.** permission. ● **v.** give permission.
 ► agree to do something. – PHRASES
informed consent permission granted in the knowledge of the possible consequences.
 – ORIGIN ME: from OFr. *consente* (n.), *consentir* (v.), from L. *consentire*, from *con-* 'together' + *sentire* 'feel'.

Consent has to be sought as well as given

- Consent for one act **doesn't mean consent for a different act** e.g. agreeing to kiss someone doesn't give that person permission to remove your clothes.
- Consent has to be sought **every time**, so having sex with someone in the past doesn't give permission for the same person to have sex with you in the future.
- Consent **can be withdrawn** at any time, even right in the middle of sexual activity
- Consent can be **non-verbal**

CONSENT



Freely Given
 Reversible
 Informed
 Enthusiastic
 Specific

Planned Parenthood®

Which of these are true?

If a woman wears revealing clothes, she's asking for it

If the victim gets aroused or has an orgasm, they've enjoyed it

Rapists are always strangers in the dark

It's not rape or assault if they've consented to sex with me before

It's not rape if the couple are married or in a relationship

Anybody can be raped, even sex workers

Women say they have been raped to get revenge

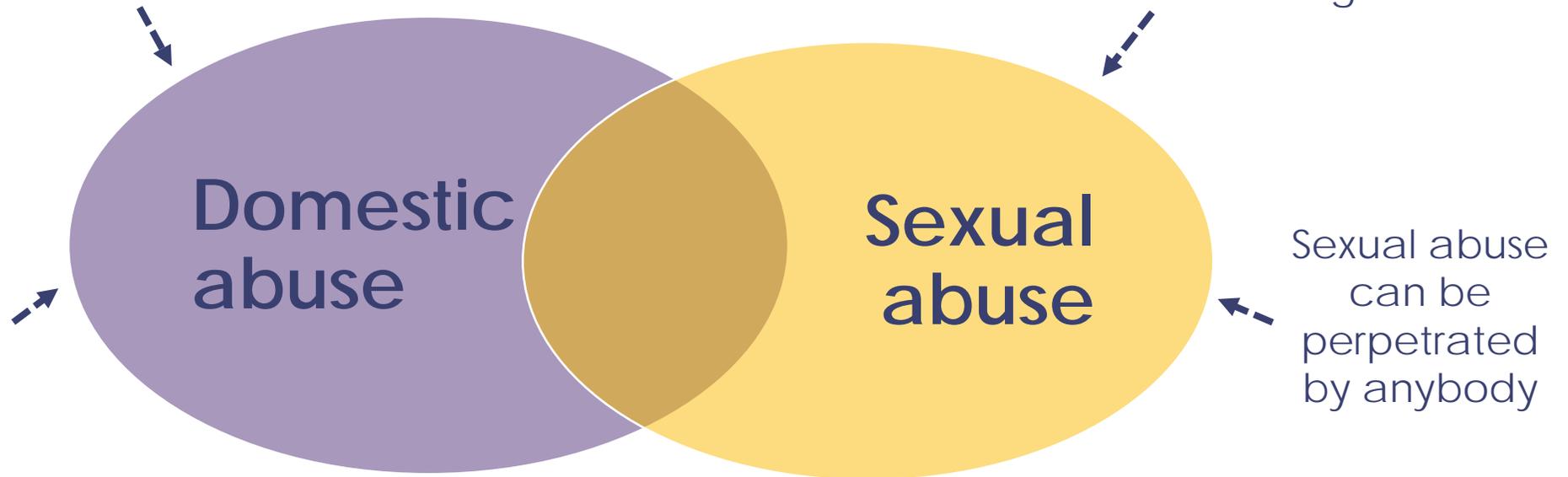
Once a man is sexually excited, he cannot stop.

Distinguishing between domestic and sexual abuse

Domestic abuse is abuse that happens in the domestic setting. It may or may not involve sexual abuse

Sexual happens in and outside the domestic setting.

Domestic abuse is abuse perpetrated within couple relationships or between family members



Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by anybody

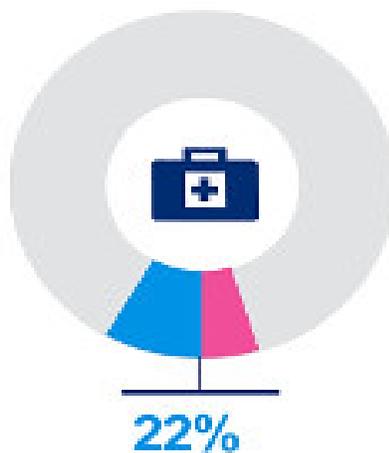
Both are on the increase – particularly high levels during the pandemic

Spotlight #2 Disabled people and domestic abuse

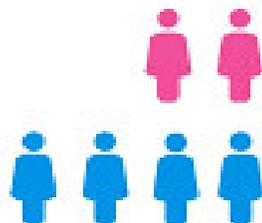


Sources: Crime Survey England & Wales (2010), SafeLives Insights 2015-16

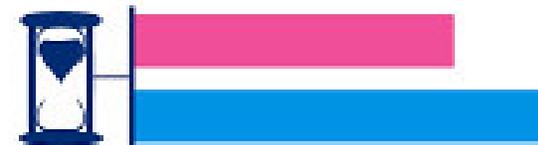
Disabled clients who are experiencing domestic abuse are **twice as likely** to have previously planned or attempted suicide. (**22%** vs **11%**)



Disabled women are **twice as likely** to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled women.



Disabled clients typically experience abuse for a **longer period of time** before accessing support. (**3.3 years'** average length of abuse vs **2.3 years**)



Disabled clients are much more likely to be suffering **abuse from a current partner**. (**37%**) than non-disabled people (**28%**)



Disabled clients are more likely to be experiencing **abuse from an adult family member** (**14%**) compared to non-disabled people (**6%**)



Disabled women and domestic abuse

He takes me shopping
then takes my money

He takes me to the doctor
then denies me medication

He helps me to bed
then rapes me

He tells me he loves me
and that no-one else would



Disabled women and domestic violence – it's time to take action

Leaving an abusive relationship is difficult enough – it's even harder if you are a disabled woman – especially if your abuser is also your carer.

There is help and support available: Go to www.womensaid.org.uk for the Women's Aid Survivor's Handbook, available in 11 languages and audio version, as well as the UK Domestic Abuse Directory.

www.womensaid.org.uk/disability

women's aid
until women & children are safe
www.womensaid.org.uk

Published by Women's Aid Federation of England (2019) Registered Charity No. 104 04 107 Registered No. 810 1177 11

Emergency 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline 0800 3000 247

NB Men (particularly men with learning disabilities) can also experience domestic abuse, and the perpetrator is not always male.

4.3% of men and 10% of women with a long-term illness or disability were victims of partner abuse in 2018/19 (Source: ManKind)

People with learning disabilities are more at risk: Data

People with a learning disability are **1.6 times** more likely to have been a victim of a domestic abuse incident in the last 12 months (Public Health England 2015)

(DA is) **2.71 times** more likely for individuals with learning disabilities (Emerson and Roulstone 2014)

9% of Forced Marriage cases involved someone with a learning disability (Forced Marriage Unit 2017-19)

Women who screened positive for autism had nearly **three times** the odds of having experienced sexual abuse (*Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 2018)

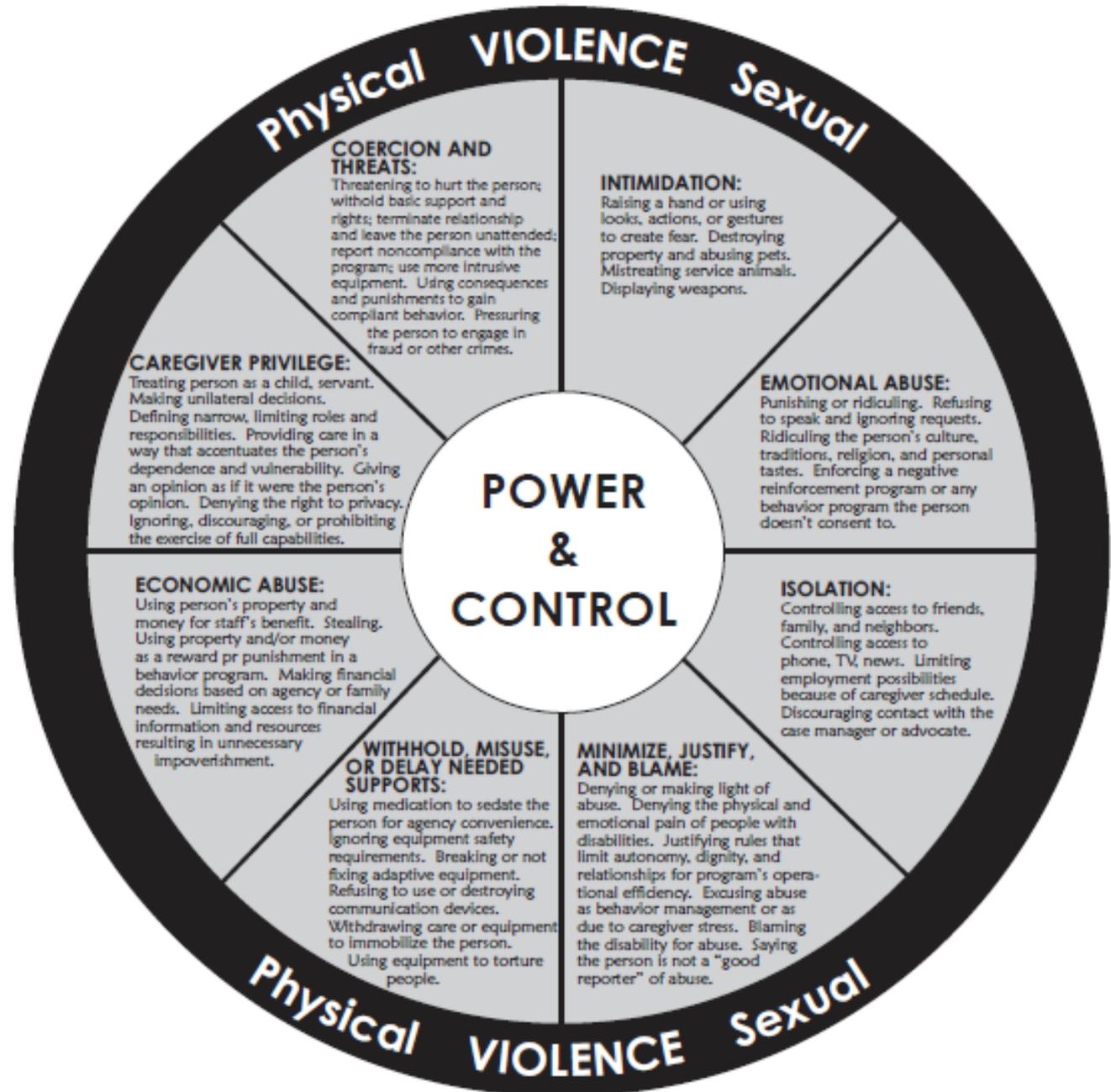
In Buckinghamshire, 'only' 1.6% of Women's Aid cases involved someone with a learning disability (in 2019) but 7% of AVMKSAASS cases involved someone with a learning disability (early 2021)

People with learning disabilities and domestic abuse: One person's story



Power and Control Wheel for People with Disabilities and their Carers

(Source: DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS, Duluth, Minnesota)



Power and Control Wheel: Easy Read version

(Source: ARC)



Why are people with learning disabilities more at risk of being a victim?

Work in pairs to discuss why



People with learning disabilities are more at risk: Reasons

- Reliant on perpetrators for care and/or money
- Regard controlling behaviour as normal
- Many have 'learned compliance'
- Want a relationship but:
 - May lack understanding of what is a safe relationship
 - May misunderstand social signals
 - May put up with a bad relationship
- Lack sex education

People with learning disabilities are less likely to report: Reasons

Lack understanding that what they're experiencing is wrong

Frightened of the consequences

Frightened of not being taken seriously

Poor communication skills

Reluctant to make phone calls

Lack of internet access and/or IT skills

Reluctant to go to police

Perpetrator may prevent the victim from socialising and hence limit their opportunity to report

Perpetrator may have told the victim not to talk about it

Perpetrator may have groomed the victim to not trust external agencies

Perpetrator may have threatened them with loss of care and/or children if they tell

May not know how to seek help

Cases involving people with learning disabilities are **less likely to be reported: Reasons**

- Many professionals **lack the confidence (and training)** to discuss:
 - *A lack of confidence and understanding appears to negatively impact the willingness of health and social care professionals to even raise DVA concerns with women, and provide appropriate support (Tizard Centre - University of Kent) → rely on the 'victim' asking for time alone, but many with learning disabilities will never ask*
- Some believe people with learning disabilities:
 - Don't/can't have intimate relationships so no risk of abuse
 - Often 'cry wolf'



Avoid opening the 'can of worms'



Don't treat reveals seriously

Less likely to be reported (cont.)

- Some can become **too close to carers**:
 - 'Good people'
 - Blame any reported abuse on family stress (compounded by the need to care for someone with a learning disability)



Reluctant to report
'Caring heroes'
(Dr Ravi Thiara –
University of Warwick)

"People pity him because he is taking care of you..." people are reluctant to criticise this saint or to think he could be doing these terrible things."

Disabled survivor of domestic violence



And when they do report / are reported they are **less likely to be taken seriously**

- Professionals, including police, may blame their disclosure on their disability:
 - Classify it as a behaviour problem rather than a domestic abuse problem and/or as carer stress ... *'we're all human and lose our rag occasionally'*
 - Rarely escalated to MARAC. NB May not have the capacity to focus for the length of time needed to complete the standard DASH risk assessment – and professionals may not have time to take them carefully though it. (Note: We have recently prepared a 'Disability and domestic abuse risk assessment' to accompany the DASH)
- Often just given leaflets or told to call a helpline
- Perpetrators rarely taken to court

What might you see or hear that would suggest someone is being abused?

1. Physical or sexual
2. Violent or threatening
3. Emotional or psychological
4. Financial
5. Coercive Control



Work in pairs to discuss signs



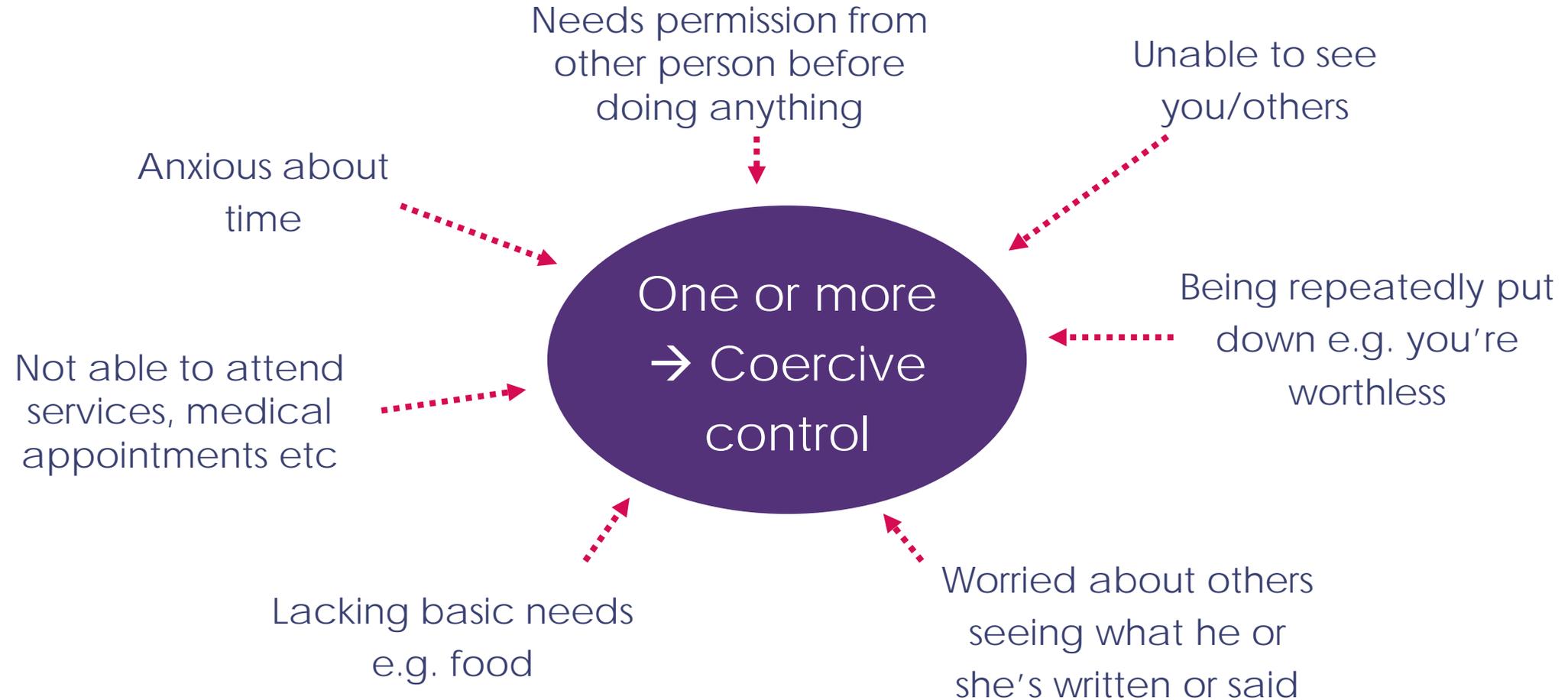
Recognising the signs of abuse

Easier to identify cases of neglect where the abuse is visible, or financial abuse when bills can't be paid, but more hidden neglect like coercive control (which was only recognised as a crime in 2015) is harder to spot.

Look out for changes

- Behaviour:
 - Eating habits
 - Social isolation
 - Flinching
 - Sexually inappropriate
- Mood:
 - Withdrawal
 - Depression/anxiety
- Finances:
 - Lack of money
 - Or, conversely, suddenly having a lot more money or gifts
- Appearance:
 - Bruising or other physical injuries
 - Baggy or other 'cover up' clothing
- Pregnancies, miscarriages, abortions

Other changes to look out for: Coercive Control



Encouraging reporting

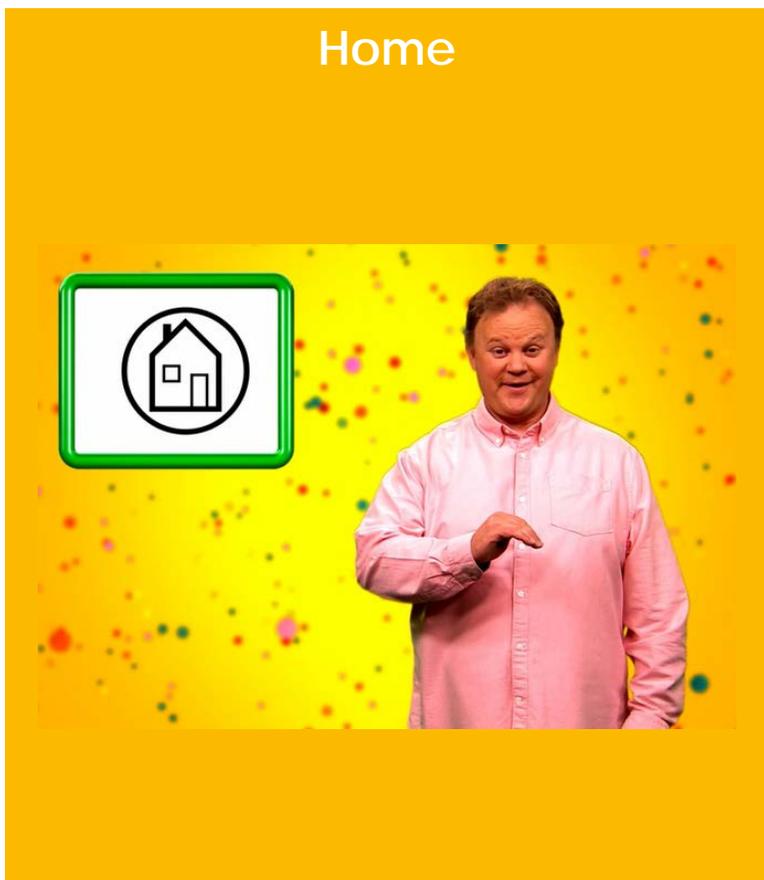
“Professionals rarely, if ever, asked the women if they were experiencing domestic violence. NB NICE 2014 said ‘this should be a routine part of good clinical practice, even where there are no indicators of such violence and abuse’” (Tizard Centre)



We need to ask

Asking may be the only way to find out about hidden abuse

Asking those who are non-verbal: Using Makaton



Asking those who are non-verbal: Using BSL

Home



Home

Feelings



Happy



Abuse

Asking those who are non-verbal: Using Photosymbols

Home



Feelings



Using Photosymbols: Images of Abuse



Encouraging reporting (cont)

- Build trust
- Be available and make time
- Provide safe and comfortable places to talk
- Regularly ask 'How you are getting on at home?' rather than 'How you are getting on here?'
- Ask direct questions if you have suspicions
- Report suspicions. Don't wait for the final piece of evidence.
- Know how to report and where to signpost
- Encourage the use of personal alarms/apps

*"They need to give you the opportunity to speak up privately so as nobody else knows your business"
(Talkback member)*

Handling a disclosure



Do?



Don't?

Any ideas?



Handling a disclosure: Do



- Stay calm. Listen.
- Tell person:
 - They were right to tell you
 - You are treating the information seriously
 - It is not their fault
- Explain that you will have to tell your Manager, and that Safeguarding and the Police may need to be involved:
 - NB Follow your own internal Safeguarding procedures
- Be aware medical evidence may be needed

Handling a disclosure: Don't



- Press for more details
- Promise confidentiality
- Tell anyone other than your Manager
- Be judgemental (e.g. "why didn't you run away?")
- Stop them telling you what they want to tell you
- Contact the alleged abuser

Quick quiz

1. When is Safeguarding relevant?
2. Does consent need to be sought before involving the police?
3. Does consent need to be sought before seeking medical evidence?

Safeguarding is relevant if person appears to have care and support needs, and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect.

Consent will need to be sought before involving the police and/or before seeking medical evidence, unless the person lacks the mental capacity to give consent.

If the person lacks capacity, direct referrals can be made in the individual's best interests

Additional 'dos' and 'don'ts for sexual abuse



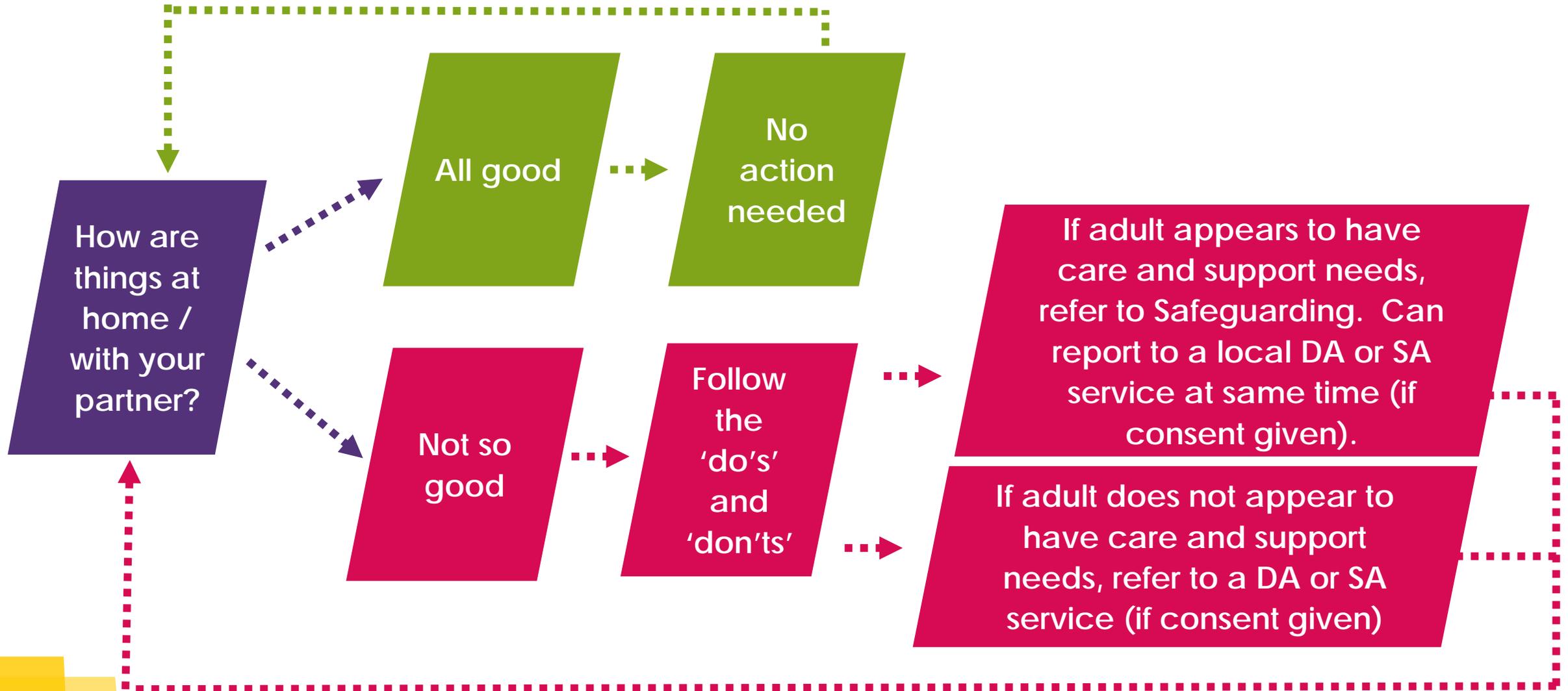
- Offer practical support, such as going with them to appointments e.g. they may need to visit a sexual assault referral centre (SARC)*
- Ask them if they would like to be referred to their nearest rape and sexual assault service



- Ask for details of the assault.
- Ask them why they didn't stop it.
- Tell them to forget about the assault
- Hug them without asking first

**Will be able to check them over medically and provide them with any treatment and support. They can also collect forensic evidence in case the police are involved.*

Simplified Action Flow Chart



Handling a disclosure: Let's practice

Case 1:

Member or service user tells you he was hit by his stepmother the previous evening. He shows you the bruises.

Case 2:

Member or service user isn't allowed to see her boyfriend. She seems anxious. She says she's scared to go home.

Case 3:

Member or service user tells you that her uncle showed her his penis and asked her to lick it.

How
would you
handle?

How
would you
support?

Developing a preventative service

Provide sex and relationships
education

Talk about domestic and sexual
abuse

Talk about the fact that if you
have a learning disability, autism,
or both, you are at particular risk

*“Every daycentre, or
support and activity
group should be telling
you about this as it is very
private and people are
too scared to speak up”
(Talkback member)*

**NB: Your members are
also at risk of being
perpetrators**

Introducing the Toolkit



Relevant Contact Details

	Service	Focus	Contact number
Local authorities	Safeguarding / MASH	Support of adults in need of care and support	0800 137 915
	Police	Crime	999 (if in immediate danger) or 101 (not an emergency)
Local DA services	Aylesbury Women's Aid	Domestic violence (women and children)	01296 437777
	Wycombe Women's Aid	Domestic violence (women and children)	01494 461367
Local SA services	Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Service (South Bucks)	Sexual abuse. Ethnic minority women (Asian)	07528 245304
	Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes Sexual Assault and Abuse Support Service	Sexual abuse	01296 392 468
National DA services	National Domestic Abuse	Domestic abuse	0333 257 4722
	ManKind	Domestic abuse (male victims)	01823 334244
	Say Something	Free 24 hour information and support helpline for young people and children under the age of 18	116 000
	Dogs Trust Freedom Project / Cats Protection Paws Protect	Fostering of pets owned by victims	0207 837 0006 / <u>03000 12 12</u> 12

Your role as a Champion

Learner



Learn everything you can about being alert for and handling cases of abuse.

Learn from the experiences of other providers.

Teacher



Ensure all understand the importance of looking out for and reporting cases of abuse.

Run internal training.

Supporter



Be there for members when they are ready to make a reveal.

Ensure you know how to signpost.

Phillip Nicholson (and too many others) thank you for listening



Phillip Nicholson had a learning disability but lived independently.

In 2015 he was murdered by Gossling and Moors, at Gossling's flat.

Gossling had previously been in an on-off relationship with Nicholson. She has atypical autism and was financially, physically and emotionally abusing Nicholson.

At the time, Gossling was in a relationship with Moors. She was also at "high risk" from domestic abuse from Moors.

And finally on a more uplifting note



With thanks to the following services for helping us develop this training



**Reducing
the Risk**
of Domestic Abuse



women's aid



Talkback

Thank you for taking part

Any questions contact Caroline Morris
on 07419 989006.