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THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes every year. Less than 20 percent of battered women sought medical treatment following an injury.

Domestic abuse includes any attempt by one person in an intimate relationship or marriage to dominate and control the other. Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over victim. An abuser doesn't "play fair." An abuser uses fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear victim down and keep under their thumb.

Domestic violence and abuse can happen to anyone; it does not discriminate. Abuse happens within heterosexual relationships and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and economic levels. And while women are more often victimized, men also experience abuse – especially verbal and emotional. The bottom line is that abusive behavior is never acceptable, whether from a man, woman, teenager, or an older adult. A person deserves to feel valued, respected, and safe. Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal assault to violence. While physical injury may pose the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe. Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy self-worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make you feel helpless and alone. No one should have to endure this kind of pain – and first step to breaking free is recognizing that relationship is abusive.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. FIGHTING AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is violence or other abuse in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Domestic violence may be used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, which is committed by a spouse or partner in an

intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner, and can take place in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, or between former spouses or partners. In the broadest sense, domestic violence can also involve violence against children, parents, or the elderly. Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence. It can include repeated patterns of abusive behaviour to maintain power and control in a relationship. It can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.

Over recent years there has been little change in the prevalence of domestic abuse estimated by the crime survey, while the number of cases recorded by the police has increased. However, the majority of cases do not come to the attention of the police, and many of those that do, do not result in a conviction for the perpetrator of the abuse. The role of the police in cases of domestic violence and abuse is crucial. But victims might not always get the police response they require and there are still gaps in whether some victims get justice or not. Despite criticisms, the police remain one of the key frontline services which victims can use to prevent and stop incidents of violence and abuse. The most recent legal change was the introduction, in 2015, of the crime of 'Forced Control'. This, for the first time, recognizes that domestic violence, rather than being a series of incidents, is a pattern of controlling behaviours.

Helpful responses from police. Police offered practical support like setting up a rapid response system, providing mobile phones, personal attack alarms, security locks on doors as well as helping women to get an injunction such as a non-molestation order, and putting a 'marker' on the house so an officer can get there as quickly as possible, when called out. In a few cases, women were supported by police specialist domestic abuse liaison workers. Police also acted as referral agents to other professionals, such as a domestic violence and abuse agency, a women's refuge, a sexual assault unit, family justice centre.

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