

# Working in partnership to listen, believe and support women experiencing domestic abuse

## RECOGNISE

### What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is a **pattern** of abusive behaviour by someone who is, has been, or wishes to be in an intimate relationship with another person, in order to **control** that person. Abusers can use a wide range of different abusive behaviours.

This may include emotional or psychological abuse, coercion, destruction of property, isolation from friends & family, threats to others including children, stalking, cyber harassment, control over access to personal items, money, food, transport or telecommunications, sexual or physical violence or threats of violence.

Domestic abuse isn't always physical and in most cases it will include a number of types of abuse which can escalate over a period of time.

It can happen to any woman, at any age and from any class or ethnicity. The majority of victims are women but some men may be affected. Domestic abuse can also happen in LGBTI+ relationships.

For more, read the 10 Common Signs of Domestic Abuse poster displayed in your salon.

## RESPOND

With the right information you can make a difference in someone's journey to safety.

### **Consider these six tips to help you know how to respond:**

1. Remember that you don't have to have the answers! In fact, just creating a safe space to ask someone what is going on and letting them share, without directing them or telling them what to do, is a powerful act of solidarity and support.

2. Use open questions like *'you don't seem yourself, how are you?'*
3. Allow the person to speak, without evaluating their choices, and create a safe space for them to confide in you, if they want to. Don't ask too much if you are in a public place, as this can be exposing for a person.
4. Believe them and listen without judgement. Try to stay neutral and not make dramatic statements. Express empathy (e.g. *'that sounds very difficult for you'* or *'that seems to be really upsetting you'*.)
5. Don't blame them, or pressure them to leave. There are many reasons a person may not choose to change their situation right now – from fear to hope or even love. The only person who can decide what's right is them.
6. Remind them that abuse is not their fault. Abusers often make victims /survivors feel isolated, frightened, ashamed and even responsible for what is being done to them. Remind them that they are not responsible and everyone deserves respect in their relationships.

## REFER

It is important that victims of domestic abuse know that they are not alone and that help is available. If it is safe to do so, offer the Women's Aid 24hr National Helpline **1800 341 900** or the Instant Message Support Service on **womensaid.ie**.

**Remember:** You don't need to have all the answers. The right response and the right information will help someone who has trusted you with their experience. Mind your own well-being and safety as you respond to the issue in your salon. Talk to a colleague to debrief or you can also call Women's Aid for support.

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