



**Aide Memoir – Reception & Switchboard staff**  
**Domestic Abuse Enquiries**

**What is Domestic Abuse?**

Domestic violence is defined as “Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality”. (*National Domestic Violence Plan, March 2005*).

A victim of domestic abuse may have been suffering for many years before making a call that you may receive and it will have been the hardest thing that they will have chosen to do. This briefing document is being sent to all statutory and voluntary agencies in Bedfordshire who may receive calls from victims of domestic abuse in order to ensure that all front line staff are able to assist callers in the best way possible and to sign post onto the right agencies so that specialist help can be given.

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take all callers seriously and believe what you are being told.</li> <li>• Ask if they are in immediate danger and whether there are children in the household. If they are, the police must be called.</li> <li>• If the caller is in immediate and obvious danger, call 999 i.e. if they are being attacked while on the phone.</li> <li>• Respond positively and give support.</li> <li>• Take their fears seriously; their life may be in danger.</li> <li>• If the caller says that they provoked or 'deserved' the violence, tell them that it is not their fault.</li> <li>• Respect their views but take responsibility for the person's safety</li> <li>• Give them details of other agencies if you are unable to advise them appropriately.</li> <li>• Be prepared for the caller to be very distressed due to the abuse they have suffered e.g. name-calling, racism, physical abuse, emotional abuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them what they should do next.</li> <li>• Try solving all of their problems.</li> <li>• Pressurise them into agreeing to action which they are uncomfortable with except where safety is paramount.</li> <li>• Make choices for them or be sceptical.</li> <li>• Be judgemental of their actions and choices.</li> <li>• Ask them what they did to provoke the violence.</li> <li>• Push them to give a phone number or address (unless they are a tenant and you are a Housing Association) unless there are safety concerns for any children in the household.</li> <li>• Give advice if you are unsure of what to tell them.</li> </ul>

**All calls should be taken seriously - anyone who is not in immediate danger can be signposted to any of the agencies listed overleaf**

**Further Information**

For further information about any of the local services in Bedfordshire, please see [www.bedsdv.org.uk](http://www.bedsdv.org.uk)  
There is a range of Domestic Abuse publicity materials that can be ordered from the website both for professionals and for members of the public.

## Scenarios

1. You have received a phone call from a member of the public who has said that they are suffering from violence and that they want some information about what they can do.

*Q/ Are you safe? Do you have any children and are they safe?*

*A/ Yes he is not in the house at the moment, he has gone to work and the children are safe.*

Response: See below for agencies which you can signpost the caller to.

2 . You have received a phone call from a member of the public who has said that they are suffering from violence and that they want some information about what they can do.

*Q/ Are you safe? Do you have any children and are they safe?*

*A/ No I am not safe, he will be back any minute and I am very afraid.*

Response: Do you want me to call the police for you? I will need your name and address and some brief details of yourself and family. If you are not able to leave the house and go to a neighbour where you can safely call the police then you must lock the doors and call the police now. **If the caller is being attacked, call the police immediately.**

In cases where the caller is a tenant of your organisation, they may want to speak to a Housing Officer to talk about their housing options.

### Agencies that can help

#### **Reporting Incidents**

- Police Domestic Violence Unit: 01234 275292, 01582 473122

#### **Advice & Emergency Refuge Accommodation**

- National DV Help line: free phone 0808 2000 2472 24 hrs
- Bedford Refuge (9am-5pm) 01234 353592
- Asian Women's Foundation: 07764791100 24 hrs

#### **Support & Advice**

- Bedford Victim Support: 01234 840300

#### **Housing**

- Bedford Borough Council daytime only 01234 221785/6
- Mid Beds District Council daytime only 01525 840505 (Aragon Housing)
- South Beds District Council daytime only 01582 472222

3. A friend or family member is concerned about children who are living in a house where domestic violence is taking place.

**A/ Child protection and safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and all calls about the welfare of children must be taken seriously. Ask if you can take the details and you will make a referral to Children's Services Social Care, or ask if they would prefer to do this. If the concern is of a criminal nature i.e. child hurt/ assaulted, then you must ring the police. Children are in danger if they are living in a household where domestic violence is taking place.**

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| • Out of hours Emergency Duty Team (Social Services) | 08702385465   |
| • North Bedfordshire Social Services                 | 01234 223599  |
| • South Bedfordshire Social Services                 | 01582 818499  |
| • Beds Police Child Protection Team                  | 01234 841212  |
| • NSPCC Help Line                                    | 0808 800 5000 |

All calls are treated with confidence and passed to a suitably qualified professional.