



# Raising Awareness of **Domestic Abuse**

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*A resource pack compiled by The  
National Board of Catholic Women.*

Published by: The National Board of Catholic Women (2020)

Compiled by: Social Responsibility Committee of the National Board of Catholic Women,  
Catholic Marriage Care, Caritas Social Action Network and Dame Vera Baird QC Victims Commissioner for England and Wales

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this publication.  
The contents are believed to be correct at the time of going to press, but changes may have occurred since that time.

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## Foreword

Pope Francis said "God, having created the universe and all living things, created the masterpiece that is the human being, made in his image." The Holy Father added that, "I have always been impressed that our dignity is precisely that of being children of God."

The masterpiece of creation is a human being. This great dignity is the birth right of everyone. The welfare and safety of all God's children is a something every Christian has a responsibility to act upon. No one should ever live in fear of violence, or of any kind of abuse.

At a time when the crisis around the pandemic has seen an increase in cases of domestic abuse, this timely booklet from the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) is an excellent resource for all of us.

As the Bishops' Conference Liaison to the NBCW, I recommend this booklet to all parishes and communities in England and Wales. May we remember the words of St John, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear:" (1 John 4.18). I hope this booklet will help us to help others to live without fear.

**Abbot Hugh Allan, O.Praem.**

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## Preface

As President of the National Board of Women (NBCW) England and Wales I am pleased and privileged to write the preface to this Domestic Abuse Booklet. The importance of it cannot be stressed enough as the surge of abuse continues to damage the lives of women and girls and often without redress.

My thanks and gratitude go to the Social Responsibility Committee and to the office of Dame Vera Baird QC Victims Commissioner for England and Wales, for their assistance in updating parts of this document.

This Booklet is primarily intended to raise awareness in the Church of the devastating effects of domestic abuse and violence. We hope it will help victims get the support they need through the pastoral care of parishes, organisations and individuals. Domestic abuse can take the form of a violent act, but its often a pattern of behaviour, sometimes over a period of years, which could include assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim. This coercive behaviour is designed to make a person dependent so that the abuser regulates the everyday behaviour of the victim. Abuse can often take the form of financial or economic abuse which would include a perpetrator restricting access to money, threatening to withhold financial support or taking sole control of the family's finances.

We are aware, given the constraints of space, that this booklet cannot cover this subject exhaustively, neither can it provide details of local initiatives and resources. What we hope it will do however is to encourage its readers to seek out and support such initiatives, publicising them more widely within their parishes. We believe that promoting a greater awareness of the problem will, together with the support of existing specialist support services and projects be the most effective method by which Catholics will be able to help victims of domestic abuse.

Please photocopy the information and helpline sheets found towards the back of the pack and display these on the websites and notice boards of your churches and parish centres. The sheets provide spaces for you to include the relevant local telephone numbers and contact details for example of the Parish and Diocesan Safeguarding Officers. This could be of real practical help to victims of domestic abuse in your parish.

**Margaret Clark**

*President National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW) England and Wales*

# Introduction

The aim of these guidelines is:

To raise awareness within the Catholic community, of domestic abuse and the impact upon victims and their children. This abuse may be physical, emotional and psychological, economic or spiritual.

- **To encourage Catholic parishes to become places of safety for people seeking to escape domestic abuse, especially women, and women with children.**
- **To provide a resource for those who have survived abusive situations and need time and space to recover.**
- **To provide a resource for those offering pastoral care and guidance.**

## *A theological perspective*

Domestic violence and abuse are not addressed directly in the Catechism of the Catholic Church nor in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Instead the essential nature of marriage as a commitment by the spouses to love, respect and nurture each other is emphasised in both documents, as is the evil of violence.

The Church recognises that violence does occur within marriage and relationships in the home. The wider Christian family should be prepared to support those in need and to exercise its healing ministry.

Certain scriptural texts, which refer to marriage and relationships between spouses, are open to misinterpretation. It is important to emphasise that both scripture and the teaching of the church on which it is based, proclaim that marriage is based on love, trust, mutual respect and support between spouses, and that all forms of abuse are thus excluded and constitute a violation of the essential nature of marriage. Domestic abuse is a sin. The Church needs to continue to make this clear and encourage clergy to use appropriate opportunities to counter any suggestion that scripture can be exploited to justify domestic violence or other more subtle forms of abuse.

## *Practical aspects*

There are many groups and individuals within and outside the Church who work with the survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is not only a sin but it is a crime. For this reason it should not be 'covered up' by the community. Many public bodies and voluntary organisations are trained to deal with incidents of domestic abuse, and good working relationships should be developed between the local Church and those agencies. These guidelines will help to signpost access to outside help.

# What is Domestic Abuse?

Women's Aid define domestic abuse as:

An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse but in the majority of cases it is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men.

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence)**
- **Psychological and/or emotional abuse**
- **Physical or sexual abuse**
- **Financial or economic abuse**
- **Harassment and stalking**
- **Online or digital abuse**

It should be noted that victims may be experiencing several different types of abuse, for example, psychological abuse can go alongside coercive control or physical abuse. Abuse of any kind can leave the victim traumatised and in need of long term specialist support. For this reason it is vital that victims who do not want to report to the police are still directed to specialist support services who can help them to deal with both the practical and legal problems they may be facing and provide emotional support and counselling.

## *Controlling behaviour*

Controlling behaviour is 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*

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, intimidation, degradation, isolation and control or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.

### *Physical abuse includes:*

- Violence which can lead to murder such as - smothering, strangling, stabbing, burning, starving, withholding medication, causing miscarriage
- Serious violence can include pinching, punching, kicking, biting, slapping, pulling hair, throwing objects.

### *Sexual abuse includes:*

- Rape
- Sexual assault with an object
- Forcing a partner to commit sexual acts
- Forcing a partner into prostitution or sex with other people
- Forcing a partner to see/use/perform pornography

### *Psychological or emotional*

This could include:

- Threat to harm or kill their partner
- Threat to commit suicide
- Threat to place a person with disabilities in a home or in care
- Threat to report a partner to social services or immigration
- Threat to take the children away
- Threats to harm or kill others, including family members, friends or pets
- Threats to harm or kill an unborn child
- Threats to have partner 'sectioned' under the Mental Health Act
- Never leaving a partner alone
- Locking a partner in the house or another place
- Controlling whom a partner sees and/or what a partner does
- Preventing a partner from using the telephone or receiving mail
- Stalking a partner
- Shouting, mocking and verbal abuse

### *Emotional abuse includes:*

- Calling a partner names, e.g. fat, ugly, stupid, mad, junkie
- Constantly accusing a partner of having affairs
- Humiliating a partner
- Convincing a partner they are 'mad'
- Criticising sexual performance
- Withholding sex or affection
- Criticising parenting skills
- Constantly denigrating, questioning or interrogating partner
- Making a partner feel guilty
- Undermining a partner's confidence
- Telling a partner no-one will believe them if they report the violence
- Prolonged sulking
- Persistent lying to a partner

### *Financial or economic abuse*

The means of economic abuse are varied but can include:

- Preventing a partner from getting a job
- Harassing a partner at work
- Denying a partner access to money
- Stealing a partner's or children's money
- Gambling in a way that threatens a family's standard of living
- Making major financial decisions alone
- Running up debts
- Withholding money to enforce a course of action: dictating expenditure

### *Spiritual abuse includes:*

- Refusing to allow a partner to go to church or practise their faith
- Using religion as a weapon of control
- Using religious teaching to justify abuse e.g. 'obey your husband'



# Domestic Abuse Statistics

## *Domestic abuse is VERY prevalent*

- According to the Office of National Statistics, 2.4 million adults aged 16-74 were victims of domestic abuse in the year ending March 2019. Of these, 1.6 million were women and 786,000 were men.
- The police recorded 746,219 domestic abuse-related crimes in the year ending March 2019, an increase of 24% from the previous year which may, in part, be due to an increase in reporting and improvements in police recording of these crimes. There were 32 arrests per 100 domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by 39 police forces in the year ending March 2019.
- Research shows that children living in households where there is domestic abuse are more likely to fall victim to sexual exploitation and go on to commit crimes themselves. By the time children start primary school, one child in every class of 30 will have been living with domestic abuse since birth (Safe Lives).
- On average, two women a week are murdered by their partner or ex-partner. Over a year, on average, 30 men are killed by their partner or ex-partner.
- The survivors covered by 'The Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Report 2020' had experienced abuse for an average of six years before seeking help. The length of time these survivors had been abused ranged from one month to 63 years. (<https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2020-The-Annual-Audit.pdf> )
- The same report showed that 64.1% of women in refuges had children and 8.2% were pregnant.
- The Femicide Census 2020' showed that, of the 91 women murdered by the partner or former-partner in 2018, 24 were killed in the first year after leaving (<https://femicidescensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Femicide-Census-Report-on-2018-Femicides-.pdf> )

## *Key points to remember*

- Domestic abuse is a crime that can happen to anyone regardless of their race, religion, economic or social situation.
- Both men and women can be victims of domestic abuse. While the majority of victims are women and women are more likely to be killed or seriously injured by their partner or ex-partner, men make up an increasing percentage of those reporting domestic abuse.
- A victim who seeks help may often not want to call the police but may want emotional support and advice. These victims will need to be listened to and directed to local support services or helplines rather than being encouraged to call the police.
- Many victims are afraid to leave their abuser knowing that doing so could prompt reprisals. For many, the abuser may have been controlling their social life and access to money so they do not have the resources or connections necessary to live independently.
- Misunderstandings and misconceptions about domestic abuse make it difficult for victims to talk about what is happening to them. When they do talk to others they are often met with unhelpful responses. It is important to bring domestic violence into open so that the silence of this taboo subject is broken. You can help by talking to others about the facts.

# Women's Stories and a Prayer

## Abi's story



### From Women's Aid

In early 2014, Abi was a successful, confident, independent professional. That all changed when she met her now ex-husband.

Initially, he was charming and loving towards Abi and her young son. Believing she had met 'the one', they moved in together. However, Abi soon realised her partner was abusive and had serious problems with gambling, drinking and debt. When she questioned him about his behaviour, he'd say: "Why can't you relax?" and, "If you loved me you'd give me some money."

As he became more and more abusive towards her, Abi gradually lost her self-esteem. Over the years, Abi experienced psychological and emotional abuse as well as physical violence.

Police and social workers were involved on occasion, but Abi never knew what response to expect. While the response she received from the police was supportive, Abi had a negative experience with one professional who blamed her for the abuse and empathised with her abuser, which was extremely distressing for Abi. As the abuse escalated, Abi's mother told her: "I'm worried you're going to be coming out of that house in a body bag."

Three days later, as their baby slept in the next room, Abi was attacked for the final time. Her husband left her with a fractured cheekbone, broken ribs, punctured lung and devastating spinal injuries.

As a result of this attack, Abi is now permanently disabled and unable to work. She has lost sensation in her fingertips and can't help dress her young children.

Abi's ex-husband was released after serving just six months in prison of a 40 month sentence, leaving her fearing for her and her children's safety. Such a short custodial sentence and lack of information surrounding her ex-husband's release has left Abi feeling failed by the system.

Abi has lost her self-esteem, her health, her ability to work, financial independence, her faith in the crown prosecution system, and most devastatingly for Abi, she lost the ability to care for her children the way she used to be able to. Abi is speaking out about the abuse she suffered and the failings of the justice system to help other victims and to raise awareness of domestic abuse.

## Emily's story



### From Women's Aid

Emily lost so much because of domestic abuse. When she left her abusive ex-partner she even lost her voice.

I had lived and created a great life for myself before the abuse but ended up having to leave it all behind. I lost my home, my car, my belongings, my career, my self-worth, and my dignity. I even physically lost my voice because of the trauma I'd experienced.

When I left, I had no money to support myself or my child because he had all financial control. There were days in the beginning of leaving when I stood in the housing line with my two-year-old, wondering if I was going to be able to provide a meal for us that day. My pride was on the floor and I felt like a charity case. I didn't want to be a burden to anyone.

Through abuse, I became isolated from people and withdrawn from life. I was a shadow of myself and had almost lost my faith in humanity. After reaching rock bottom, I started to rebuild my life away from my ex-partner.

I was lucky enough to have the support of Women's Aid, an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor and a few close family and friends along the way. Having these services and people around me were invaluable and helped so much.

It was only after I left that I became aware of the debt I was in due to my ex-partner's actions. He did things like putting bills in my name without me knowing and controlled all my money, so I am still subject to the repercussions of his financial abuse. But I have gained the tools that have empowered me for life, I have regained my confidence and I am now in speech therapy on the road to recovering my voice. Most importantly, I am free and I am independent.

## Nora's Story

### From 'Domestic Abuse in Church Communities'

Nora's story demonstrates the need for parishes to provide spiritual support for victims.

We used to go to a monthly prayer group. The people in our group meant a lot to me. I didn't have many other friends. My husband was very charming and popular. They had no idea what he was really like. At home he was a really scary man. When I finally left him and took the children, he went to our friends in the prayer group and told them he did not know why I had left him and he was distraught.

They gave him loads of sympathy. I called up one of them and they told me I should not come to the prayer meetings any more. I could just imagine them judging me for destroying a family and I felt the pressure to go back. I felt so alone. It was one of my worst moments.

When I tried to talk to people whom I thought were my friends, they just told me to talk to my counsellor. It felt like the only reason someone would listen to me was if I paid them. It made me feel so worthless.

## Gita's Story

### From Women's Aid

Gita experienced abuse from her male relatives, which continued even once she had moved out and found her own flat. She decided that she had to leave her flat and moved in with her partner and his father. However, both of them became physically and emotionally abusive towards her. Gita again fled her home and stayed on a friend's sofa.

The pressure of this, combined with the trauma of the abuse, led Gita to take an overdose and she ended up in hospital. At the hospital Gita started searching for a refuge space. Gita phoned up a lot of refuges over the following months and answered all the questions they had for her. However, she was unable to find a refuge that could support her with her mental health and substance use. During this time, Gita continued to sofa-surf with friends. Gita approached Shelter for help and received advice to call the National Domestic Violence Helpline, which in turn referred her to the No Woman Turned Away (NwTA) project.

The NwTA specialist practitioner supported Gita in her endeavour to find a safe space to live, searching Routes to Support for a refuge space for her and passing her the numbers of the refuges with suitable vacancies. Eventually, Gita was accepted into a refuge which could support her needs. Her worker from Shelter understood Gita's situation and accompanied her to a supermarket car park in the pouring rain, where a refuge worker was able to come and collect her. Gita reflected on how she felt once she had settled into the refuge, saying the following: "I was really happy, I was really excited, I felt like my future could start again. I felt like even though I'm not independent because I've got a lot of help around me, it was still that step of independence ... I was really happy."

## Michelle's Prayer

Michelle is another survivor of domestic abuse who found help in prayer. This prayer appears in Nikki Dhillon Keane's book: 'Domestic Abuse in Church Communities: a safe pastoral response' (published in 2018).

*Lord, protect me*

*Guide me*

*Keep me safe.*

*Grant me the strength, wisdom and good judgement*

*To know what to do in any situation.*

*Help me to know when and who to ask for help.*

*Help me to value myself as you value me*

*And expect the love and respect you intend for me.*

*Help me to break old patterns that have harmed me*

*And put me at risk.*

*Help me to remember that I can say no to anything*

*That is not in my best interests.*

*Help me to remember that you made me to be in your image*

*As a precious child of God.*

*With my unique gifts and contributions to this wonderful world.*

*Help me to remove or avoid anything*

*That stands between me and my path,*

*My journey and all that makes me the best that I can be.*

*Let me feel worthy of love*

*And let your love in*

*To mend this broken heart, mind and life*

*So that I can be whole and wonderful.*

*In you I place my love and trust.*

*Protect me, Lord. Amen*

# What does the church say about domestic abuse?

Recent Church documents and statements have denounced domestic abuse as a sin and advised the abused spouse to seek help and leave the abusive situation.

**The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia)** published in 2016 by Pope Francis, following the 2014 and 2015 synods of Bishops on the Family, repeatedly stresses the wrongfulness of domestic abuse and the need for sensitive and informed pastoral support for all those affected;

#54 The verbal, physical and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union.

#156 Every form of sexual submission must be clearly rejected. This includes all improper interpretations of the passage to the Ephesians where Paul tells women 'to be subject to your husbands' (Eph. 5: 22). In marriage, this reciprocal 'submission' takes on a special meaning, and is seen as a freely chosen mutual belonging marked by fidelity, respect and care.

#229 Parishes, movements, schools and other Church institutions can help in a variety of ways to support families and help them grow.....The parish office should be prepared to deal helpfully and sensitively with family needs and be able to make referrals, when necessary, to those who can help.

## *Catholic Church of England and Wales*

Bishop Sherrington of the Bishops' Conference Domestic Abuse Working Group issued the following statement in Holy Week 2020 in response to the upsurge in domestic abuse cases during the Coronavirus lockdown:

"At this time of national emergency, we are being asked to stay at home to save lives, but for those who are experiencing domestic abuse, the home is far from being a place of security, self fulfilment and health. Too often it is a place of pain, fear, degradation and isolation. There are many for whom the call to stay at home will be dangerous and potentially life threatening....."

"Last year the Day for Life appeal highlighted the scourge of domestic abuse in our society and called for Catholics in England and Wales to support existing groups and projects working to help the most vulnerable, and to assist in spreading awareness and information about domestic abuse. I reiterate this call now....."

"Every person has a right to live their life free from violence, abuse, intimidation and fear. Please join me in praying for the women, men and children who are experiencing suffering due to domestic abuse during this pandemic, asking the Lord to give them hope and courage in the knowledge that there are places of safety for them during this pandemic."

See: [www.cbcew.org.uk/domestic abuse](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/domestic%20abuse) with a link to the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) and the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC). This provides valuable Guidance for parishes and pastoral teams. It stresses that a response is always required if there is an awareness that someone is experiencing domestic abuse and that where children are involved concerns must be expressed to the statutory authorities. The role of the pastoral team or the Safeguarding Officer is to focus on the safety of the victim or victims.

# Children and Young People Witnessing Domestic Abuse

Children living in a home with domestic abuse are not just witnesses to the abuse, they experience the abuse and it harms them. Children living in a home where domestic abuse is happening are at risk of other types of abuse too and research has shown links between experience of domestic abuse and poor mental health, childhood criminality and sexual exploitation. Children can experience domestic abuse or violence in lots of different ways.

They might:

- **see the abuse**
- **hear the abuse from another room**
- **see a parent's injuries or distress afterwards**
- **be hurt by being nearby or trying to stop the abuse**
- **be used by an abusive parent to control their victim.**

It is worth noting that children may not realise that what is happening is abuse. Even if they do, they might not tell anyone about it because they are scared of what will happen, or ashamed about what people will think. They are at increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma and mental health issues.

The NSPCC say there are no official statistics on the number of children who live with domestic abuse but quote the following from their research studies:

- **Approximately 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse**
- **Domestic abuse is a factor in over half of serious case reviews**
- **A third of children witnessing domestic violence also experience another form of abuse**
- **1 in 5 teenagers have been physically abused by their boyfriends or girlfriends**
- **130,000 children live in high-risk domestic abuse households**
- **Children suffering from the effects of domestic abuse may:**
  - **become aggressive**
  - **display anti-social behaviour**
  - **suffer from depression or anxiety**
  - **not do as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges.**

For further information visit the NSPCC website: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk> If you have specific concerns about a child or young person contact: <http://www.help@nspcc.org.uk> or call 0808 800 5000 Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS)

CSAS has been set up to support children, young people and vulnerable adults who may be experiencing domestic violence or abuse. Each diocese and parish has a named Safeguarding Officer whose name and contact details are displayed on the church noticeboard, in the newsletter and on the website.

For more information: [www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk](http://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)  
NSPCC (<http://www.nspcc.org.uk>) online 2018

# Elder Abuse

'A single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person'.

This definition has been subsequently adopted by the World Health Organisation, is promoted by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and has been variously adopted by countries throughout the World.

The abuse can include, but is not limited to, physical, emotional, psychological, economic, sexual, neglect and spiritual abuse. These can be perpetrated both institutionally and in the family home and in places they visit. It can be any knowing, intentional or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. It is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to a older person. This type of violence constitutes a violation of human rights and includes physical and emotional abuse; financial and material abuse; abandonment and neglect; and serious loss of dignity and respect.

## Types of Elder Abuse

Physical abuse against a senior citizen entails any use of force: slapping, hitting, beating, shoving, pushing, kicking, pinching, burning, biting, inappropriate restraint.

Emotional/Psychological Abuse is typically defined as an act inflicting mental pain, anguish, e.g. name calling or 'silent treatment', intimidating or threatening the individual, invoking fear or emotional distress through verbal or non verbal acts.

Sexual Abuse is any non consensual contact with an elderly person from, for example, sexual exhibition to rape or sodomy; inappropriate touching, photographing in suggestive poses, forcing to view pornography; forcing sexual contact, or coerced nudity.

Neglect generally refers to a caregiver's failure to give appropriate attention and intentionally failing to meet the older person's needs both physical and emotional. It includes failure to provide basic necessities including food, medication and assisting with daily living or personal hygiene.

Financial abuse includes misuse of older family member's funds, embezzlement, fraud, forgery, taking money under false pretences and forced property transfers.

Elder abuse can affect people of all ethnic backgrounds, social status and gender.

Further help and resources can be obtained from:

- Action on Elder Abuse Tel: 080 8808 8141 web: <http://www.elderabuse.org.uk>
- Age UK Tel: 0800 055 6112 web: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk>
- Carers UK Tel: 0808 808 7777 web: <http://www.carersuk.org>
- Counsel and Care (advice on care homes) Tel: 0845 300 7585  
web: <http://www.advice@counselandcare.org.uk>

Action on Elder abuse (1995) 'New Definition of Abuse', London: Action on Elder Abuse Bulletin (May-June 1995, issue no. 11)

## Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

Domestic abuse affects people from all ethnic groups, and there is no evidence to suggest that women or men from some communities are any more at risk than others. However, the form the abuse takes may vary; in some communities, for example, domestic abuse may be perpetrated by extended family members, or it may include forced marriage, or female genital mutilation (FGM).

People from Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities are likely to face additional barriers to receiving the help that they need. Victims may face racism or may be unwilling to seek help from statutory agencies because they are worried about receiving a racist response. Sometimes service providers will base their response on cultural or religious stereotypes for fear of being thought of as racist, which can exacerbate victims' sense of isolation.

Some victims may be worried about being excluded from their community if they report domestic abuse or may face pressure to stay with their partner from extended family

First generation migrants may face particular barriers in getting support if they are being abused. For example, if English is not their first language then it may be much harder for them to understand the systems of support available or to access appropriate sources of help. They may be unaware of support services and not know where to go. People who do not speak English should be offered an interpreter or be given the chance to use a trusted friend or relative to interpret if nobody else is available.

Some victims, whose status is insecure, or is dependent on their staying with their partner, may feel trapped and believe there is nothing they can do. However, whatever their immigration status, they have a right to health care and to protection from the police. They also have the right to apply for a court order (injunction) to protect them from their abuser.

There are some specialist organisations which offer services for women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. However, some victims may be concerned that, if workers at a local service are from their community then they will know their family, so victims should be given the opportunity to choose either a specific service from their community or to use a general service.

Help and resources can be obtained from:

Catholic Association for Racial Justice [www.carj.org.uk](http://www.carj.org.uk) Tel: 0208 802 8080

Southall Black Sisters <https://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/> Tel: 0208 571 9595 Helpline: 0208 571 0800

Forced Marriage Unit This is a government unit providing advice and assistance for those at risk of being forced into marriage overseas. Tel: 020 7008 0151 <https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>

Contact details for local Women's Centres are available in your local telephone directories or websites. See also the resource list later in this pack.

## Abuse in LGBTQ relationships

Whilst recognising the teaching of the Catholic Church on same sex relationships, there will be parishioners who identify as LGBTQ+. As a matter of pastoral compassion, it is important that our priests and parishioners are aware of domestic abuse issues within these relationships. Figures from Stonewall show that one in four lesbian and bisexual women have experienced domestic abuse in a relationship. Almost half (49%) of all gay and bi men have experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse from a family member or partner from the age of 16.

There is limited research on how many trans people experience domestic abuse in the UK. However, a report by the Scottish Transgender Alliance indicates that 80% of trans people had experienced emotional, sexual, or physical abuse from a partner or ex-partner.

Galop, the specialist LGBTQ anti violence charity, makes clear that although heterosexual and LGBT people may experience similar patterns of domestic abuse, there are some specific issues that are unique to the experiences of LGBTQ people, which may include:

- **Threat of disclosure of sexual orientation and gender identity to family, friends, or work colleagues.**
- **Undermining someone's sense of gender or sexual identity.**
- **Limiting or controlling access to spaces and networks relevant to coming out and coming to terms with gender and sexual identity.**
- **The abused may believe they 'deserve' the abuse because of internalised negative beliefs about themselves.**

With specific reference to LGBT partner abuse:

- **Abusers may convince their partner that no one will believe the abuse is real because they are not in a heterosexual relationship.**
- **The abusive partner may manipulate their partners into believing that abuse is a 'normal' part of same-sex relationships.**
- **Abusive partners can give the idea that the violence is mutual or that the abused partner consents to the abuse.**
- **The abusive partner may pressure their partner to minimise abuse to protect the image of the LGBT community.**
- **If the abused partner is living in the UK on a spousal visa, abuser might take advantage of their lack of awareness about immigration law, and threaten to deport them back to their country of origin, which might be unsafe due to e.g. anti-gay legislation.**

With specific reference to trans persons, the following abuse may take place:

- **Withholding medication or preventing treatment needed to express victim's gender identity (e.g. hormones, surgery).**
- **The abuser might use pejorative names and ridiculing persons' body image (body shaming).**
- **The abuser might convince their partner that nobody would believe that they're being abused because they're transgender.**

Useful resources can be found on page 27 of this booklet.



# Domestic Abuse of People with Disabilities

Figures show that women with disabilities are much more likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled women. They are also likely to experience abuse over a longer period of time and to suffer more severe injuries as a result of violence.

Victims who are disabled may be abused by their carer or personal assistant and may be reliant on them for support. Victims with disabilities may suffer abuse in any or all of the ways that non-disabled women are abused, but in addition may experience the following forms of abusive behaviour:

- **The abuser may withhold care or undertake it neglectfully or abusively.**
- **The abuser may remove mobility or sensory devices needed for independence.**
- **The abuser may be claiming state benefits in order to care for the victim, enabling them to control the victim's finances.**
- **The abuser may use the disability to taunt or degrade the victim.**

In addition, victims with disabilities may be more physically vulnerable and less able to remove themselves from an abusive situation. Disabled victims may find it harder to disclose abuse because their abuser is always present when they see health or social care professionals.

Disabled victims are also likely to have particular concerns about moving out of their home which may have been specially adapted for them or a care package has been organised with the local authority so the victim may be concerned that they will lose this support if they are forced to move elsewhere.

Many domestic abuse services are able to support disabled women and have outreach services or independent advocacy services which can help. In addition, many refuges now have full wheelchair access, and workers who can assist women and children who have special needs such as hearing or visual impairments.

Useful resources, helplines and advice can be found on page 26 of this booklet.

# The Legal Situation

The following is adapted from the Victim Support website:  
<http://www.victimsupport.org.uk>

There is an increasing range of legal orders that can be used to protect survivors of domestic abuse.

## Police Orders

The police now have powers to serve a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) on an abusive partner who presents an ongoing risk of violence. This will be provided in writing and served to the abusive partner by a police officer. The order lasts for 48 hours and requires the abusive partner to leave the premises and not contact the victim. This can be extended further (up to 28 days) by a magistrate at court, who can grant a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO).

## Criminal Law

Domestic abuse can include other criminal behaviours such as assault, stalking, coercive control, criminal damage and sexual crimes. The victim has the right to be protected under criminal law if their partner has demonstrated any of these behaviours.

In a criminal law case, when a person is sentenced they may also have a restraining order imposed on them. Different restrictions will be placed on the offender, depending on the severity of the case.

## Civil Law

Survivors of domestic violence can apply to civil courts (family proceedings courts or county courts) for an injunction or court order to help protect them. The most common types of court orders are:

- **non-molestation orders**
- **occupation orders**
- **prohibited steps order**

## Non Molestation Orders

This type of court order is used to stop someone from pestering, attacking, threatening or harassing the victim and any children. Each order is unique and will take the individuals circumstances into consideration.

Civil courts need less proof than a criminal court, but they still need evidence of a deliberate incident before imposing a court order. This is where photographs of injuries or property damage can help, as they can form part of the case for an injunction, along with the statement, to show that there has been violence.

An emergency non-molestation order can be applied for 'without notice'. This is helpful if immediate protection is required. Emergency orders can be granted for 28 days – they then go back to court to give the abuser the opportunity to defend the allegations.

It is now a criminal offence if a non-molestation order is broken and the police should be called to report this.

## Occupation Orders

Occupation orders state who can live in a property. Similar to non-molestation orders, they are tailored to individual circumstances. The orders could say that the abuser must leave the shared property. Injunctions will state how long this applies for – some orders may be given until further notice if the court feels it's necessary.

Any of the following can apply for an occupation order:

- **co-habitants or former co-habitants (does not include tenants, lodgers or boarders)**
- **married or formerly married people**
- **civil partners or former civil partners**
- **relatives – father, mother (includes step-parents), son, daughter, (includes step-children), grandparent and grandchildren, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, or first cousin**
- **people who have agreed to be married or enter into a civil partnership (whether or not the agreement continues)**
- **both parents of the same child or people who have or had a parental responsibility for a child.**

This includes people who have stayed in an intimate personal relationship.

## Prohibited Steps Order

A prohibited steps order is granted by a court when threats have been made by a partner to take the children away. While it does not necessarily stop all contact with the children it will determine how contact can be safely maintained.

## How to Apply for a Court Order

Most survivors of domestic abuse would have a solicitor who would apply on their behalf for one of these orders. Most solicitors offer a free initial consultation to help in understanding the legal process. These cases are heard at a family proceedings court, and the judges and magistrates are specially trained in family law. It is also possible for someone to apply directly to the court.

## Enforcing Orders

If the court grants an order, it needs to be 'served' on the abuser if they're not at court (i.e. delivered to them in person). The order can only be enforced if there is proof that it has been served on the abuser.

A copy of the order also needs to be given to the local police station so that they are aware that it exists. It may also be useful to provide copies of any prohibited steps orders to children's schools to ensure that they cannot be removed without permission.

## Housing and homelessness

According to the website 'Rights of Women' domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women. The law around property is complex and it is advisable to get legal advice as soon as possible.

<http://rightsofwomen.org.uk>

In brief, someone leaving their home through fear of domestic violence may have a right to support from their local authority under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (HA 1996) and the Homelessness Act 2002. The duty of the local authority may vary from providing accommodation to giving advice and may depend on whether the person is:

- **unintentionally homeless**
- **a priority need**
- **eligible**
- **has a local connection**

Under HA 1996 domestic violence is defined as 'violence from another person or threats from another person that are likely to be carried out'. There is no need for violence to have already taken place. The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 makes it clear that domestic violence is not just physical and states it should be understood to include threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional). Local authorities have to take the code into consideration before making a decision and should not ever ask for proof of domestic violence before acting.

A person will be considered 'unintentionally homeless' if they have left their home due to threatened or ongoing abuse. In these cases priority is given to those:

- **who are pregnant**
- **who have dependent children who live with them or might be reasonably expected to live with them**
- **who are vulnerable as a result of mental illness or disability**

For further advice contact:

Web: <http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk>

Family Law Advice Line: 020 7251 6577

Other useful Contacts:

Citizen's Advice:

<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk> or 03444 111 444

Gingerbread:

0808 802 0925

<http://www.gingerbread.org.uk>

Shelter:

0808 800 4444

<http://www.shelter.org.uk>

## Immigration Issues and Domestic Abuse

There are a number of issues facing abused women with insecure immigration status, who may have entered the UK to join their settled partner or have restrictions due to their status i.e. seeking asylum, or have other types of visa. Some immigration laws and regulations make it extremely difficult for women experiencing domestic abuse to seek protection and safety. They can suffer from a lack of emotional and family support to a lack of financial resources.

Some basic suggestions for those finding themselves in these situations include:

- **Keep all personal papers about the situation and that of any children in a safe place**
- **Keep passports with them at all times**
- **List the incidents that have happened and encourage seeking support from a trusted source.**

Further help and advice is available from the following:

## Rights of Women

The Rights of Women provide an Immigration and asylum law advice line for advice on issues including:

- **The rights of European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and their family members**
- **Claiming asylum in the UK**
- **Trafficking**
- **Domestic violence and immigration law**
- **No recourse to public funds**

Tel: 020 7490 7689 (telephone) or 020 7490 2562 (textphone) or 020 7490 2562 (textphone) on Mondays between 2pm-4pm and Wednesdays between 11am-1pm

web: <http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk>

## Citizen's Advice

A good point of contact and can provide advice on potential eligibility for legal aid which may be available for those:

- **experiencing domestic violence**
- **a victim of trafficking**
- **applying for asylum support**

web: <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/get-help/get-immigration-advice>

## What can everyone do to help tackle domestic abuse?

- Find out what your local Council, Member of Parliament, Police etc. are doing to tackle domestic abuse.
- Raise money for local and national domestic abuse charities so that they can help more victims and survivors.
- If you witness a woman being harassed or attacked, and if it is safe, try to do something to help her.
- If you do not feel you are able to, or it is not appropriate, then phone the police.
- If you overhear a woman being attacked in her home, do something. If you do not feel able to intervene yourself, then phone the police.
- Ensure that advice leaflets are available and posters on display in parish facilities, schools, retreat houses, pastoral centres etc.
- If you see violence against women trivialised or sensationalised on TV, in advertising, at the cinema or in video games, complain.
- Talk about domestic abuse and help to make it easier for others to talk about it.
- Discuss abuse in peer relationships with teenagers and point out that violence and abuse of any kind is unacceptable.

## What can priests and parishes do?

- The initial response should be to ensure the safety of the victim. If there are children involved this is a safeguarding issue and you should contact the police.
- The parish is in a unique position to provide love, care and an ethos of safety for victims of domestic abuse.
- If possible, a member of the parish or of the pastoral team should be designated and trained to support victims of domestic abuse. This could be the Safeguarding Officer. (See Bishop Sherrington's statement, see page 12.)
- Listen to the victim. Never take any action which might put the victim or the victim's children in more danger.
- A victim should never be encouraged to remain in the same house as the perpetrator in the hope of saving the marriage or for the sake of the family. (See Canon Law 1153). Abuse of any kind is totally unacceptable.
- Ensure that Marriage Preparation courses address problems of domestic violence in marriage, its effects and sources of help.
- Make links with groups and organisations which support victims of abuse such as Refuge, Women's Aid, Respect, local Police Domestic Violence Unit and local refuges.
- Consider raising the issue of domestic violence or abuse during a homily, in bidding prayers or at a service of reconciliation. It is likely that there will be survivors, victims and perpetrators in the congregation.
- Where there are groups in the parish, for example mother and toddler groups, St Vincent de Paul (SVP), parish school, there is the possibility that they may have contact with potential victims or survivors of domestic abuse. Volunteers and workers should be aware that they may come into contact with victims and survivors and ensure they know how to respond appropriately if asked for help.
- Display information about support agencies and organisations for domestic abuse and other forms of abuse - both national and local - which are provided in this booklet.
- Ensure that policies for child protection and the care of vulnerable adults are displayed or are readily available. Procedures should be followed at all times. Have particular care for confidentiality of both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Review the materials available online at [www.cedar.uk.net](http://www.cedar.uk.net) This Resource was developed to support catholics experiencing domestic abuse. It contains policies, and simple ideas and materials for an awareness raising workshop within the parish.

## Useful Resources - Domestic Abuse

### Freefone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline

0800 2000 247

### Emergency Services

999 55 – this will alert the call handler to the fact that the caller cannot speak openly but needs immediate assistance.

### National Sexual Violence Helpline

0808 802 9999

### Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline:

0808 80 10 800

### Samaritans:

0845 7909 090

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### Shelter

0808 800 4444

[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

### Domestic Abuse in Church Communities a safe pastoral response

By Nikki Dhillon Keane.  
Published by Redemptorist Press 2018.

### Crimestoppers:

0800 555 111

[www.crimestoppers-uk.org.uk](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org.uk)

### Women's Aid

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

The Women's Aid Survivor's Handbook may be particularly useful and is translated into other languages: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook>

### Refuge

[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

### Surviving Economic Abuse

[www.survivingeconomicabuse.org/](http://www.survivingeconomicabuse.org/)

### CEDAR Catholics Experiencing Domestic Abuse Resources

A useful website providing practical and spiritual support. [www.cedar.uk.net](http://www.cedar.uk.net)



## Legal Support

Community Legal Service Direct:

0845 345 4 345

[www.clsdirect.org.uk](http://www.clsdirect.org.uk)

Rights of Women:

020 7251 6577

[www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)

National Centre for Domestic Violence:

0800 970 2070

[www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)

Coram Children's Legal Centre

<https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/get-legal-advice>

## Support for Children and Young People

Childline:

0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

NSPCC:

0808 800 5000

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

The Mix

Free information and support for under 25s in the UK

0808 808 4994

## Support For Male Victims and Perpetrators

Men's Advice Line (for men experiencing domestic violence):

0808 801 0327

[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

Respect (for perpetrators and male victims of Domestic Abuse):

[www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)

## Support for victims with Disabilities

### Dial UK

There are around 120 local Disability Information and Advice Line services (DIALs) throughout Great Britain run by and for disabled people. To find out if there is a DIAL that covers your area call: 0808 800 3333

You can also find out online at [www.scope.org.uk/support/disabled-people/local-advice](http://www.scope.org.uk/support/disabled-people/local-advice)

### Disability Alliance

Disability Alliance has had to close their helpline due to lack of funding. However, it is the leading authority on social security benefits for disabled people, and the website contains regularly updated information about benefits, tax credits and community care.

See [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

### Stay Safe East

[www.staysafe-east.org.uk/](http://www.staysafe-east.org.uk/)

0208 519 7241

### RNIB helpline

Information and support for anyone with visual impairment and sight problems. RNIB helpline is on 0303 123 9999

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

### Deaf Hope

DeafHope is the only sign-language based service designed to help Deaf women and children who suffer domestic violence. They have a text service on 07970 350366.

<http://www.deaf-hope.org/>

### Action on Hearing Loss (formerly the RNID)

Information service for deaf and hard of hearing people, their carers, families and professionals. Telephone: 0808 808 0123 (freephone) Textphone: 0808 808 9000 (freephone) SMS: 0780 0000 360

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

## Support For LGBTQ+ Victims

### National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

Galop: [www.galop.org.uk/galop-to-run-national-lgbt-domestic-violence-helpline/](http://www.galop.org.uk/galop-to-run-national-lgbt-domestic-violence-helpline/)

0800 999 5428

### Terrence Higgins Trust

0808 802 1221

### Stonewall

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/criminal-law/domestic-violence>

# Support For Women From Black & Minority Ethnic Communities

## Imkaan's

Imkaan's website lists numerous organisations across the UK who provide specialist local support:  
[www.imkaan.org.uk/get-help](http://www.imkaan.org.uk/get-help)

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit:

020 7008 0151

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage>

## Refugee Council:

020 7346 6777

[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

## Immigration Advice Service:

020 7357 6917

[www.iasuk.org](http://www.iasuk.org)

## Asylum Aid:

020 7247 8741

## Southall Black Sisters:

020 8571 9595

## Somali Women's Centre:

020 8752 1787

## Kiran: Asian Women's Aid:

020 8558 1986

[www.rdlogo.com/cwp/kawa](http://www.rdlogo.com/cwp/kawa)

## Chinese Information and Advice Centre:

020 7692 3697

[www.ciac.co.uk](http://www.ciac.co.uk)

## Latin American Women's Aid:

020 7275 0321

[www.lawadv.org.uk](http://www.lawadv.org.uk)

## Latin American Women's Rights Service

020 7336 0888

## Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation

020 7920 6460

## Jewish Women's Aid

020 8445 8060

## Stalking & Harassment

National Stalking Helpline

0808 802 0300

[www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)

Paladin

National stalking advocacy service

[www.paladinservice.co.uk](http://www.paladinservice.co.uk)

## Other Useful Resources

Revenge Porn Helpline

[www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk](http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk)

0345 6000 459

National Association for People Abused in  
Childhood:

[www.napac.org.uk](http://www.napac.org.uk)

One Parent Families

[www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk](http://www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk)

Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Violence (for  
bereaved family and friends):

[www.aafda.org.uk](http://www.aafda.org.uk)

Women and Girls Network:

[www.wgn.org.uk](http://www.wgn.org.uk)

Mothers Apart for Their Children:

[www.matchmothers.org](http://www.matchmothers.org)

# DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINES UK

You will find most local numbers in your local community telephone book or from the websites – insert for your own convenience

ORGANISATION	TELEPHONE NO.
POLICE (EMERGENCY CALLS)	999 (55)
FREEPHONE 24-hour NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE	0800 2000 247
LOCAL POLICE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT	
LOCAL VICTIM SUPPORT GROUP	
LOCAL CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU	
LOCAL LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE	
LOCAL COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE	
SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT	
HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT	
WOMENS AID Local	
LOCAL WOMENS REFUGE	
RAPE CRISIS HELPLINE (12-12:30, 19:00 – 21:30)	0808 802 9999
RAPE CRISIS for local Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)	NHS 111
RAPE and SEXUAL ABUSE Counselling (RASAC)	01962 868688
MARRIAGE CARE – relationship counselling	0800 389 3801
RELATE – relationship advice	0300 100 1234
SAMARITANS	116 123
NHS SEXUAL HEALTH NATIONAL HELPLINE	0800 567123
CHILDLINE (FREE PHONE)	0800 1111
CHILD LAW ADVICE	0300 330 5480
SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (parish or diocesan)	

## Acknowledgments

The NBCW is grateful to the following who have contributed or have given permission for their material to be used in the booklet:

- Women's Aid
- Redemptorist Press
- Dame Vera Baird QC Victims Commissioner for England and Wales

## THE NATIONAL BOARD OF CATHOLIC WOMEN

The National Board of Catholic Women was established in 1939. It provides a forum for Catholic women of England and Wales to come together to share their views and concerns at diocesan and national level.

The National Board of Catholic Women initiated and established Family Fast Day, from which CAFOD developed.

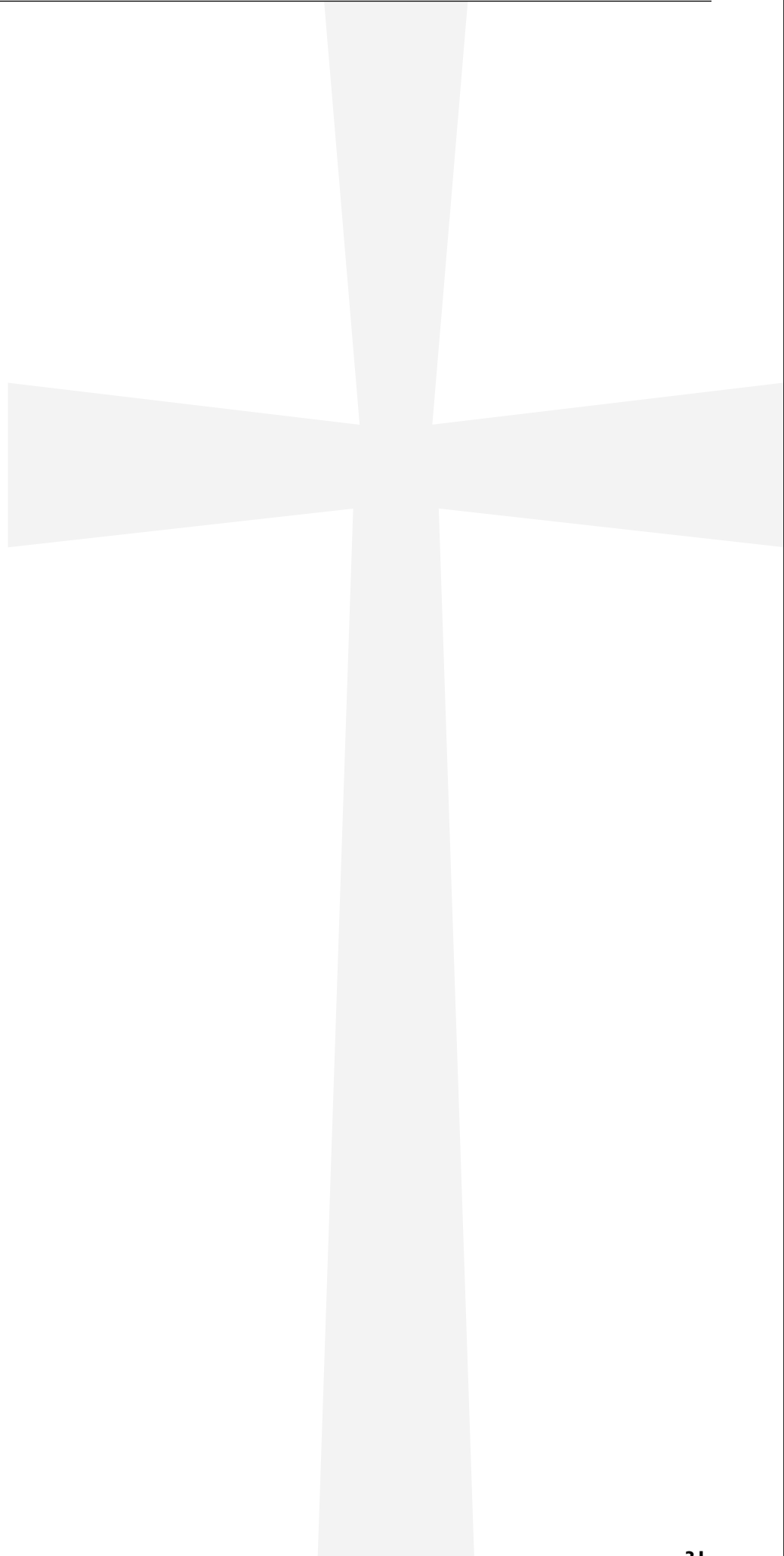
It is a member of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations and a founder member of Andante - a European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations. It is a consultative body to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

For more information please contact:

The National Board of Catholic Women

**Email:** [margaretclark123@gmail.com](mailto:margaretclark123@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.nbcw.co.uk](http://www.nbcw.co.uk)





Consultative body to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales  
and consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC).