

Domestic abuse is not always obvious

The government defines domestic abuse as “any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.”

Around 1.9 million people in England and Wales, aged between 16 and 59 years old, experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2017. That’s about 6% of people within that age range.

Between April 2013 and March 2016, 454 people were killed in domestic homicides (approximately three people a week) - nearly a third of all murders where the victim was aged 16 and over. Of this figure, 70% of victims were women.*

In Sutton, domestic violence accounted for 38% of incidents of violence with injury in 2017.**

Hidden crime

Despite the enormity of these figures, the number of people experiencing domestic abuse is thought to be much higher. It is often a hidden crime that goes unreported.

According to research carried out among residents in Sutton, the main barrier to seeking help was the feeling that it could make the situation worse - 56% of those surveyed said this. Other reasons given include: feeling that they would not be taken seriously and feeling embarrassed or ashamed (both 42%).***

Domestic abuse isn't always obvious. It can be difficult to recognise, even for those experiencing it first-hand, which is another reason why it often goes unreported. It often develops gradually over time and can start to feel normal. People can begin to accept the way they are being treated, with some even believing they deserve it.

The consequences of domestic abuse can be severe. It can lead to substance abuse, anxiety, depression and other mental and physical health issues. It can even lead to people losing their lives.

We all need to be aware, to listen and be ready to act.

For more information, including the Sutton residents research report, visit www.notaloneinsutton.org.uk

* [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk)

** Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment 2017-18

*** Sutton Domestic Abuse Research Report 2017