

How the police can help

TOOLS
TO
THRIVE

Building safety

SURVIVING

ECONOMIC

A B U S E

If a current or former partner has interfered with your money or other economic resources in some way to limit your choices, this information is for you. It outlines how the police can support you if you have experienced economic abuse.

The police are there to keep you safe. If you are in immediate danger, they should be your first port of call by dialling **999**.

The role of the police

“I refuse to be told that nothing can be done and I want change for other victims. I know first-hand how devastating the effects of economic abuse can be.”

Approaching the police if you are experiencing abuse can be daunting. You may wonder what the police can do to help, and may feel nervous about reporting the abuse.

There is a lot that the police can do to help, and they will prioritise the safety of you and your children. Keeping the public safe is one of the key responsibilities of the police.

Reporting abuse is the first step towards accessing justice. It may be useful to understand how economic abuse relates to the law, as the police can only act if the abuser’s behaviour is criminal.

Economic abuse and the law

Although there is no criminal offence of domestic abuse, many specific forms of abusive behaviour are criminal offences. This includes threats to kill, assault and rape.

Economic abuse is included in the definition of domestic abuse in the draft **Domestic Abuse Bill** for the first time. This would make it a legally recognised form of domestic abuse, but does not make it a crime in its own right. This is something that SEA is campaigning on.

However, some of the ways that an abuser might restrict how you acquire, use and maintain money and other economic resources¹ (such as accommodation, food and clothing) can be addressed through existing criminal offences. These include:

- blackmail
- criminal damage, e.g. destroying or damaging property
- harassment, e.g. in the workplace
- theft
- threats to destroy or damage property
- false imprisonment, e.g. preventing someone from leaving the house and going to work.

Controlling or coercive behaviour is now also a criminal offence, and was introduced by the Serious Crime Act 2015. Economic abuse is a form of controlling or coercive behaviour and often overlaps with other controlling tactics such as:

- physical assault (e.g. using physical force to take money)
- sexual assault (e.g. making a partner perform sexual acts for money)
- threats (e.g. of physical abuse if bank account details are not shared)
- humiliation (e.g. restricting money needed for essential items, such as sanitary products)
- intimidation (e.g. destroying property)

- isolation (e.g. being prevented from working, not having access to transport)

Our research shows that six in ten successful prosecution of the controlling or coercive behaviour offence include economic abuse².

Reporting a crime

If any of the above circumstances apply, you can report the abuser to the police. If you are in immediate danger, you can call **999**.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, the police should speak to you separately from the abuser. You can also ask to speak to a female police officer, if you would prefer to.

Usually, the police will investigate and if there are sufficient grounds, they may arrest the abuser. This does not necessarily mean that the abuser will be prosecuted. Usually the police pass the case on to the **Crown Prosecution Service**, who will decide whether to pursue a prosecution.

If you report the abuser to the police, seek support from a local domestic abuse or legal service. You can search for a local domestic abuse service on the [Women's Aid website](#).

If the police take action against the abuser, ask for a crime reference number, which may be helpful if you seek further support.

What else the police can do

The police can also support you with:

Specialist help and support

The police can help you to access domestic abuse support services local to you.

Transport to a safe place

If you have to flee your home, the police can help arrange transport to take you to a safe place.

Support to return to your property safely

If you are afraid of returning home to collect any items you may need, you can request a police escort to help you do so safely.

An order to protect you from abuse

The police can, in some circumstances, issue a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN). This means that a Magistrates' Court will hear the case and may decide to put a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) in place. This would remove your partner from your home for up to 28 days.

Further support

If you are experiencing economic abuse, you are not alone. We have more information that can support you to take steps towards safety and begin to regain control of your finances.

Visit www.survivingeconomicabuse.org/resources for information including:

- Organisations that can help you, including organisations that can support you with legal information and advice
- Economic abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour
- Steps you can take towards economic safety

References

1. Adams, A. E., Sullivan, C. M., Bybee D., and Greeson, M. R. (2008). Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse. *Violence Against Women*.
2. Sharp-Jeffs, N. with Learmonth, S. (2017) *Into Plain Sight: How economic abuse is reflected in successful prosecutions of controlling or coercive behavior*. London: Surviving Economic Abuse.

Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) is the only UK charity dedicated to raising awareness of economic abuse and transforming responses to it. We are determined that women are supported not only to survive, but thrive.

For more information

Visit www.survivingeconomicabuse.org