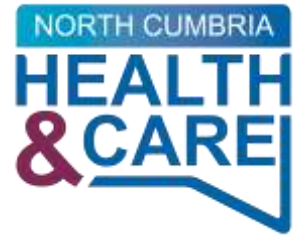


Starting Well in North Cumbria

"Making Every Conversation Count"

Domestic Abuse / Violence and Pregnancy



Before pregnancy	<p>The best advice we can give you is to be honest with yourself. Domestic Violence is a crime.</p> <p>No one knows your relationship better than you. Consider if your relationship is stable enough to handle both a pregnancy and a child. If you currently feel you are in an abusive relationship and are considering getting pregnant, start by asking yourself your reasons for wanting a child.</p> <p>You can speak to any health professional or social worker in confidence about your relationship; they can make referrals to other agencies to support you. If you are not planning on getting pregnant there are various different forms of contraception available that are free and can prevent unplanned pregnancy.</p>
During pregnancy	<p>The best advice we can give you is to consider if your partner is putting you and your baby at harm.</p> <p>Pregnancy can increase incidents of domestic violence and sometimes can trigger domestic violence in partners who have not displayed this behaviour before. Your midwife is trained to spot signs of domestic abuse and asks every pregnant lady about their partner's treatment of them. If you are not able to speak to them at this point you can contact them at any point during your pregnancy in confidence.</p> <p>Any health professional or social worker can also provide help. They will work hard to build a relationship with you. They may need to refer you to other agencies to help you get the support you need. They will ask your permission first UNLESS the concern is for your baby. They can help if you decide to leave your partner or give you strategies both as individuals and as a couple to reduce and prevent the domestic violence.</p> <p>The priority for all professionals is the health, safety and wellbeing of you and your baby. It may also be necessary to plan what will be the safest approach once your baby is born.</p>
After pregnancy	<p>The best advice we can give you is to trust in yourself and don't make excuses for your partners behaviour.</p> <p>Having a baby changes a relationship for many reasons. Partners who have previously displayed domestic violence may continue or increase their damaging behaviour. Partners who have never displayed any signs of domestic violence may suddenly start.</p> <p>If you feel their behaviour has changed or continued violence is putting you and / or your baby under stress or in danger speak to your midwife, health visitor, social worker or any healthcare professional.</p>

"Our vision is for all families in North Cumbria to be valued, happy and healthy. We all want the very best for our families"

Further Information on: Domestic Abuse / Violence & Pregnancy

<i>What is Domestic Abuse?</i>	The term 'domestic violence and abuse' is used to mean any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling behaviour, coercive behaviour or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are family members or who are, or have been, intimate partners. This includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. It also includes 'honour'-based violence and forced marriage.
<i>How can I spot domestic abuse?</i>	Indicators of possible domestic violence or abuse are wide ranging and can include: Symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorders, suicidal tendencies or self-harming, alcohol or other substance misuse, unexplained chronic gastrointestinal symptoms, unexplained gynaecological symptoms (including pelvic pain and sexual dysfunction), adverse reproductive outcomes, including multiple unintended pregnancies or terminations, delayed pregnancy care, miscarriage, premature labour and stillbirth, genitourinary symptoms (including frequent bladder or kidney infections), vaginal bleeding or sexually transmitted infections, chronic unexplained pain, traumatic injury (particularly if repeated and with vague or implausible explanations), problems with the central nervous system (headaches, cognitive problems, hearing loss), repeated health consultations with no clear diagnosis, intrusive 'other person' in consultations (including partner or spouse, parent, grandparent).
<i>Will you tell my partner I told you?</i>	With your agreement, your partner may be contacted in order to offer them support to change their behaviour. Plans and progress all depend on discussion with you. If a health professional feels you or your child/children may be at risk from serious harm, they may need to involve other agencies without your consent.
<i>Will you take my baby off me?</i>	This is a really dangerous myth as it can stop people asking for help when they need it. If you are experiencing violence or abuse you will not be punished for that. All agencies will work with you to get the best outcome for you and your baby. A wide range of support options will be provided before considering removing a child into care. The safety of your baby is paramount. If you are unable or unwilling to secure safe relationships and living arrangements for your baby, there may be a possibility that your child will be taken into care.
<i>What about my other children?</i>	All children under the age of 16 that are identified as being vulnerable or in danger are taken into consideration. All agencies involved will consider your individual circumstances on a case by case basis.
<i>What can partners and wider family do to help?</i>	If your partner is willing to change they can work with you and any agencies involved. Families can support you emotionally and practically by, for example, providing a safe place for you to speak about what is happening and helping you make a safety plan .
<i>Links to further information and advice:</i>	Before, during and after Pregnancy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS guidance and support for people experiencing domestic abuse • NHS guidance on domestic abuse during pregnancy • Refuge • Women can call 0808 2000 247, the free 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge • Anyone who needs confidential help with their own abusive behaviour can contact Respect on their free helpline on 0808 802 4040 • In an emergency call 999