

Working with Victims of Domestic Abuse /Learning Disabilities



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Three year accreditation by SafeLives



What is Domestic Abuse?



Domestic abuse involves a pattern of behaviour that often includes:

- Emotional/Psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Isolation
- Intimidation and threats/coercion
- Minimizing/Denying/Blaming
- Use of Children

*not all
wounds
are
visible*

Coercive Control



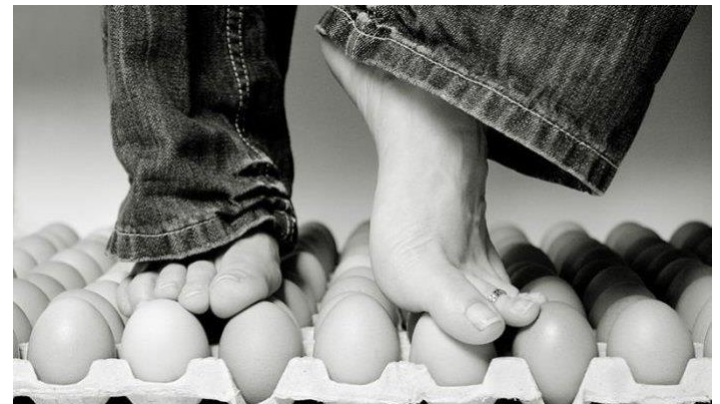
Coercion:

A pattern of acts – assaults, threats, humiliation or intimidation that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim

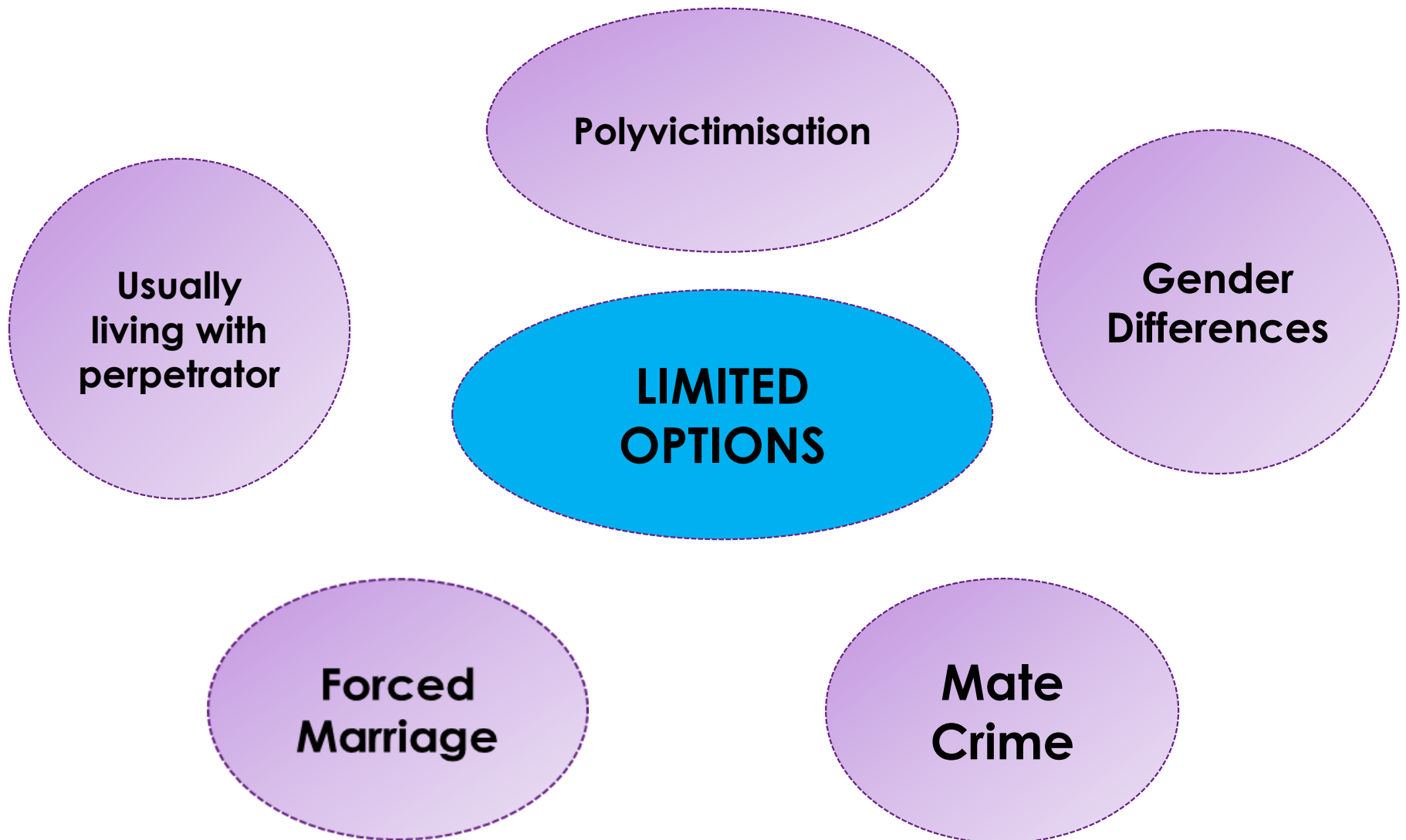
Controlling Behaviour:

A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them - depriving them of their independence, resistance and escape and regulating their behaviour.

Serious Crime Act 2015



The Facts About DA and LD



Jessica Watkins Aged 21 Years



- **'Mild Learning Disability'**
- **Jessica was stabbed 27 times**
- **Attempted strangulation disclosed weeks earlier**
- **No action following safeguarding referral**
- **Serial perpetrator of domestic abuse**
- **Missed opportunities**

The Dash Charity Clients



**I just want to
be left alone**

**I have spoken to
so many people
I don't want to
talk to you too**

Barriers To Support



- People with learning disabilities may not know where or how to seek help
- Fear of not being believed
- More vulnerable, fewer support options
- Less likely to report to police
- Less likely to recognise risks
- Confusing picture



Is it abuse?

A pink speech bubble graphic with a tail pointing towards the bottom right, containing the text "Is it abuse?".

Case Studies



“People pity him because he is taking care of you... people are reluctant to criticise this saint or to think he could be doing these terrible things.”

Disabled survivor of domestic violence



Disabled women and domestic violence – it’s time to take action

Leaving an abusive relationship is difficult enough – it’s even harder if you are a disabled woman – especially if your abuser is also your carer.

There is help and support available: Go to www.womensaid.org.uk for the Women’s Aid Survivor’s Handbook, available in 11 languages and audio version, as well as the UK Domestic Abuse Directory.

www.womensaid.org.uk/disability

Published by Women’s Aid Federation of England 2009. Registered Charity No: 1084154/VOL Registration No: 850 5437 31.

women’s aid
until women & children are safe
www.womensaid.org.uk

- **Social Worker supporting**
- **Started a relationship with John**
- **Concerns re financial abuse and coercive control**
- **Bruises visible during a home visit**
- **Isolation**
- **Multiple perpetrators**

PROJECT PEER

*Power and Control Wheel
for Women with Developmental Disabilities
and/or Mental Health Issues*



Washington DC's Project Peer, c/o DC Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities, can be reached at 202-448-1450.

This diagram is based on the Power and Control wheel developed by the Domestic Violence Intervention Project, Duluth, MN, and the Abuse of People with Developmental Disabilities by a Caregiver wheel developed by the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Madison, WI.

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What We Have Learnt



- **Importance of history**
- **How to enable disclosure**
- **Responding with empathy and understanding**
- **No blanket approach**
- **Flexible case length and meeting times**
- **Direct work using specialist tools**
- **Importance of links with local specialist statutory/voluntary organisations**
- **Evidence gathering**
- **Multi-Agency working**
- **Voice of the Victim**

Recommendations for Professionals



- **Training and Awareness**
- **Single point of contact**
- **Ask leading questions to ascertain client's insight into abuse**
- **Use professional judgement**
- **Seek support from multiagency partners**
- **Be proactive**
- **Recognise, Respond, Refer**
- **Prioritise safety**
- **Focus on building up resilience**
- **Complete direct work sessions**
- **Be patient**



The Dash Charity



- Diversity IDVA with specialist knowledge
- Provide training to professionals on all aspects of domestic abuse including diversity & disability
- We can provide support to organisations implementing policies on domestic abuse and disability
- Access to specialist CBT/ counselling for Dash refuge & outreach clients
- No blanket approach
- Proactive and persistent to seek out and engage complex clients.
- Disclosure of risks taken seriously

#MakingADifference





YOU CAN
MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE!!