

### Nationally

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Disabled is defined in the [Equality Act 2010](#) as someone with a physical or mental impairment that has substantial or long-term negative effects on the ability to do any normal daily activities.

- **13%** of disabled adults experienced domestic abuse in the last year
- **1 in 5** reported abuse from multiple perpetrators
- 3.3 years is the average period of abuse experienced by those with a disability before seeking support
- 31% were living with the perpetrator of abuse
- 22% had previously planned/attempted suicide

### Who are victims?

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**Worldwide systematic reviews** have highlighted the greater risk of violence generally for disabled people showing they are substantially more likely to experience threats of violence, physical abuse and sexual assault.

They are more likely to experience physical, sexual, emotional and financial domestic abuse than non-disabled people.

The abuse is usually directly linked to their impairments; perpetrated by the very people who they depend on for care; the adult acting as Carer.

A power imbalance can develop due to care dependency, leading to isolation.

### What can happen?

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People with disabilities can experience all forms of domestic abuse, but their vulnerabilities may mean they also experience:

- Withholding or destroying medical equipment
- Care or medication being withheld from them
- Prevent access to transport, meals, medical appointments, personal care and isolating from society
- Control of finances
- Taunted or degraded about their disability
- Disabled women report sexual demands made in return for care giving.

Research also highlights that the abuse can be more severe, and the frequency of the abuse is over longer periods (when compared to non-disabled victims).

### Barriers to reporting

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Disabled victims may be socially isolated, opportunities to disclose are difficult particularly if they have a Carer.

Housing may be specially adapted for the disability, leaving their home may impact their level of independence.

If the abuser is their Carer or family member, they may be reluctant to report if it means they may end up living in a care setting.

Learning disabilities can affect access to support and understanding of their own abuse. The Us Too Project (section 7) highlights that education, language and socialisation is central to reporting.

### What can professionals do?

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Professionals must be educated on the heightened risks of DA for those living with a disability, removing physical and social barriers that may exist to access support services. See section 7 for training and resources available.

Be familiar with the SafeLives [guidance](#) on planning multi-agency meetings and how to effectively safeguard disabled survivors.

Create safe spaces to talk, away from any potential abuser. Be **professionally curious** to presentation, language, consider their **mental capacity** understanding and **share information/concerns with partner agencies**.

Complete a DASH/DARA Assessment, using professional judgement (even where the victim does not consent) and consider a **Care Act Assessment** where concerns of care are identified in the home.

### Prevention

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The need for **early intervention** and increased awareness of domestic abuse perpetrated towards those with a disability.

Professionals need to understand the power dynamics often experienced and be able to develop effective prevention strategies to respond appropriately.

**Education, socialisation, support, empowerment and reporting** are some of the words used by those with lived experience to describe how best to support and reduce the likelihood of domestic abuse occurring.

#### Safety Planning

Complete a **safeguarding referral**, risk assessment and safety plan with the victim, remembering to use appropriate language. This ensures their voice is heard to facilitate accessible support and understanding.

### Further information

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#### SafeLives

- [Disabled Survivors Too](#) – 2017
- [Blogs, Webinars, Survivor Stories and Podcast Series](#)
- [The Unseen Report](#)

#### Ann Craft Trust

- [We Matter Too](#) – 2019
- [Us Too Project](#) – information and training resources for professionals

- [Supported Loving Toolkit](#) - choice support
- [Controlling or Coercive Behaviour](#) - Home Office Guidance
- [NIDAS](#) – Specialist IDVA Support
- [Disability and Domestic Abuse](#) - Public Health England
- [British Sign Language support](#)
- [Hearing or speech impairment support](#)