

# Domestic Abuse and the Cost of living crisis



Three year accreditation by SafeLives



The Dash Charity Tel: 01753 549865

# Barriers to leaving

- ▶ Housing challenges - rising rent/property prices, difficulties getting mortgages
- ▶ Economic and financial abuse - DA Act 2021. Average debt of 20k and less than £100 left at the end of each month
- ▶ Lack of Legal Aid for Civil Court proceedings
- ▶ Lack of faith in police and civil/criminal justice
- ▶ Lack of knowledge about how to recognise abuse and get help
- ▶ Postcode lottery of DA services
- ▶ Cost of living crisis is becoming 2nd national emergency for domestic abuse victims after Covid

# Cost of Living Crisis

## Survey by Women's Aid

- ▶ 96% respondents had seen less money made available to them
- ▶ 24% of them were resorting to Foodbank help
- ▶ 74% were worried about paying bills and 61% were worried about being able to afford food
- ▶ 66% said abusers were using the cost of living as another tool to abuse
- ▶ 73% said their financial links to their abuser coupled with the cost of living crisis made it harder for them to leave

... all while going through trauma of domestic abuse

Nicole Jacobs, DA Commissioner has written to Chancellor of Exchequer calling for immediate action.

# What we are hearing...

- ▶ “I can’t afford to put my heating on”
- ▶ Previous clients calling back in for referral to foodbanks
- ▶ Clients staying longer in refuge as can’t afford to move out
- ▶ Clients using their children’s savings and inheritances to pay for legal costs
- ▶ Victims not being able to flee to friends/family due to worries about money
- ▶ Cancellations of private appointments due to financial constraints
- ▶ Frustration as abusers aren’t held accountable for non-payments
- ▶ Our teams struggling with fuel costs and wondering if they can afford to do their role
- ▶ Increase in demand versus escalating cost of running refuge services

# Threats and behaviours

- ▶ Trying to persuade the victim to move in sooner to save money
- ▶ Threats that the victim won't be able to afford to live without them
- ▶ Punishing the victim by turning off utilities, wifi or running up large bills
- ▶ Scrutinising spending for basic items
- ▶ Refusing to contribute to the household
- ▶ Victims having to work longer hours means less capacity to exit plan
- ▶ Refusing to repair heating, water systems, white goods, etc
- ▶ Limiting fuel to isolate the victim further
- ▶ Withholding child maintenance payments
- ▶ Withholding money for 'extras' so the victim is forced to remain at home more
- ▶ Criticising the victim's budgeting skills

# How we can help

- ▶ Access to refuge accommodation across the UK
- ▶ Rail to Refuge scheme for free train travel
- ▶ Advocacy for clients at risk of homelessness due to DA
- ▶ Supporting letters for Legal Aid related to DA
- ▶ Access to NatWest/Circle Fund - rent and heating payments, passports, clothing
- ▶ Donations of food, clothing, supermarket vouchers, items for children
- ▶ Grants for white goods, furniture
- ▶ Referrals to DEAP, Payplan UK, Stepchange
- ▶ Vouchers and activities for holiday times



# Resources

- ▶ Surviving Economic Abuse Org.
- ▶ Jobcentre/CAB
- ▶ Energy Bill Support Scheme and Energy Supplier Hardship Scheme
- ▶ Single person's Council Tax rebate
- ▶ School breakfast clubs and after-school clubs, free activities, Freecycle
- ▶ Babybank Windsor
- ▶ Schools hardship funds, free sanitary products
- ▶ Slough Foodbank/Windsor Foodshare/Free Cakes for Kids
- ▶ Driven Forward community fridge Windsor
- ▶ Windsor Community Hub Dedworth church
- ▶ Windsor Homeless Project
- ▶ The Dash Charity - RBWM, South Bucks tel: 01753 549865
- ▶ Hestia Org - Slough - tel: 01753 875620