

#WHATICANDO

The role of friends and family in tackling domestic abuse

Briefing Paper



Forward

Domestic abuse is a silent killer - we don't always see it and we don't talk about it.

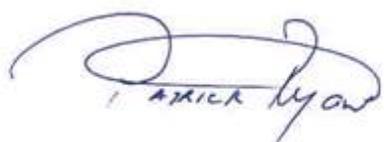
This survey shows that 1 in 3 of us does not know what to do when we suspect that domestic abuse is happening in the life of a friend or family member.

Hestia is a London based charity working with adults and children in crisis - supporting them to recover and live the lives we all take for granted. Each year we work with thousands of survivors and provide over 30 safe houses across the city. The scale of domestic abuse makes it a public health crisis which affects all of us.

Maybe it is your sister who seems a bit unsure and puts you off when you suggest popping in to see her or your friend who always needs to check with a partner before agreeing to anything, or the kids who have just moved into the school and seem very frightened, or the friend who loses one job after another or seems to have many GP appointments and tests which do find any underlying medical problem.

We all know victims and survivors - we don't always recognize them.

Bright sky is an important development which can reach many more victims than our service can provide for. It is the first tool of its kind and I am immensely proud that Hestia has played such a vital part in its development

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick Ryan". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'P'.

Patrick Ryan
Chief Executive, Hestia

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About Hestia

We deliver services across London and the surrounding regions, as well as campaign and advocate nationally on the issues that affect the people we work with. Last year we supported more than 9,000 men, women and children. This includes victims of modern slavery, women and children who have experienced domestic abuse, young care leavers and older people. From giving someone a home, to helping them to get the right mental health support, we support people at the moment of crisis and enable them to build a life beyond a crisis. We are supported by more than 460 volunteers across London who provide specialist skills such as art therapy, yoga, IT, gardening and cooking, as well as befriending and fundraising.

We are proud to be the home of UK SAYS NO MORE, bringing together a diverse coalition of individuals, charities, businesses and public sector organisations to campaign for an end to domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Methodology

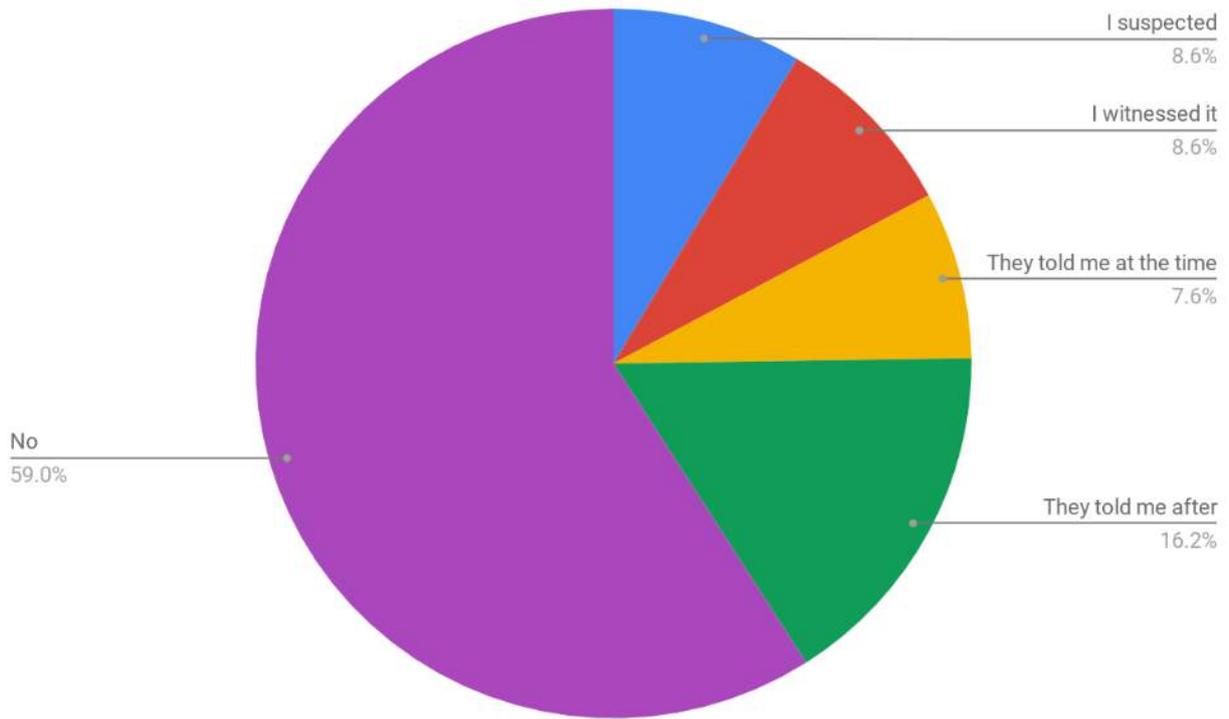
Hestia commissioned leading market research company Opinium to undertake a survey of 2,003 nationally representative UK adults (aged 18+). This report is based on the results of an online survey. Our results have been weighted to nationally representative criteria.

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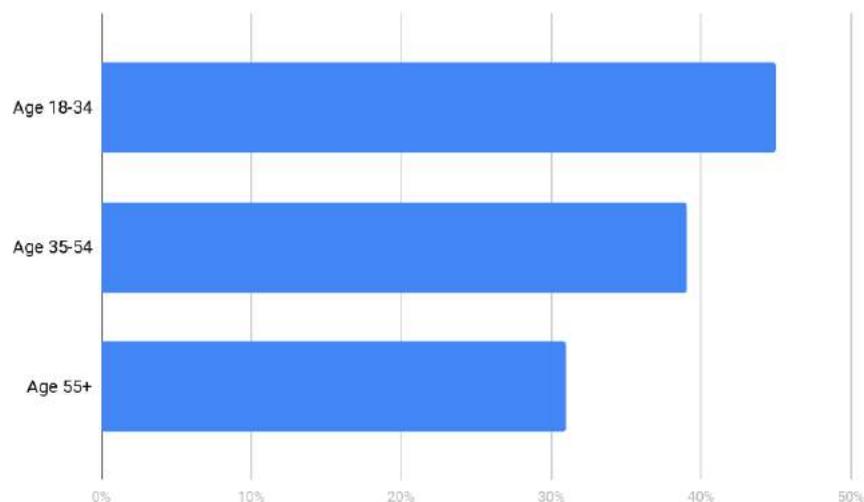
Key Findings

Almost 2 in 5 Brits (38%) have either suspected or been made aware that someone they knew had been a victim of domestic abuse

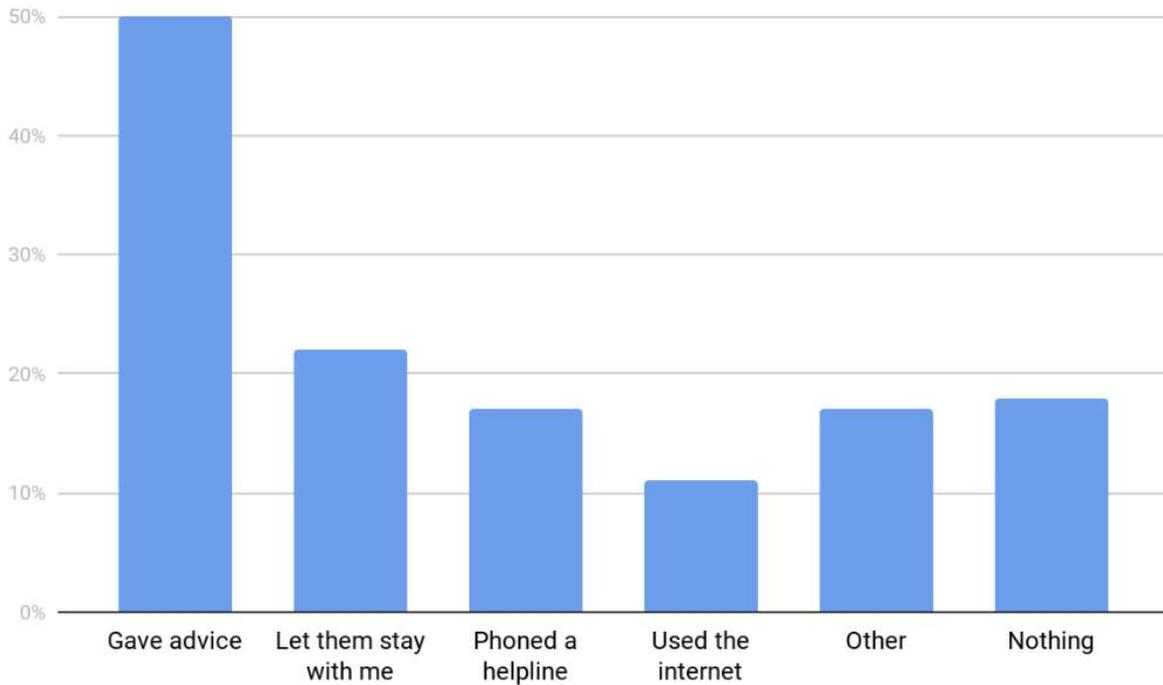
Have you ever been aware of someone you know (such as a friend or family member) being a victim of domestic abuse?



More women (45%) were aware of the abuse taking place than men (30%). Younger people were also far more likely to be aware of domestic abuse among their friends and family.

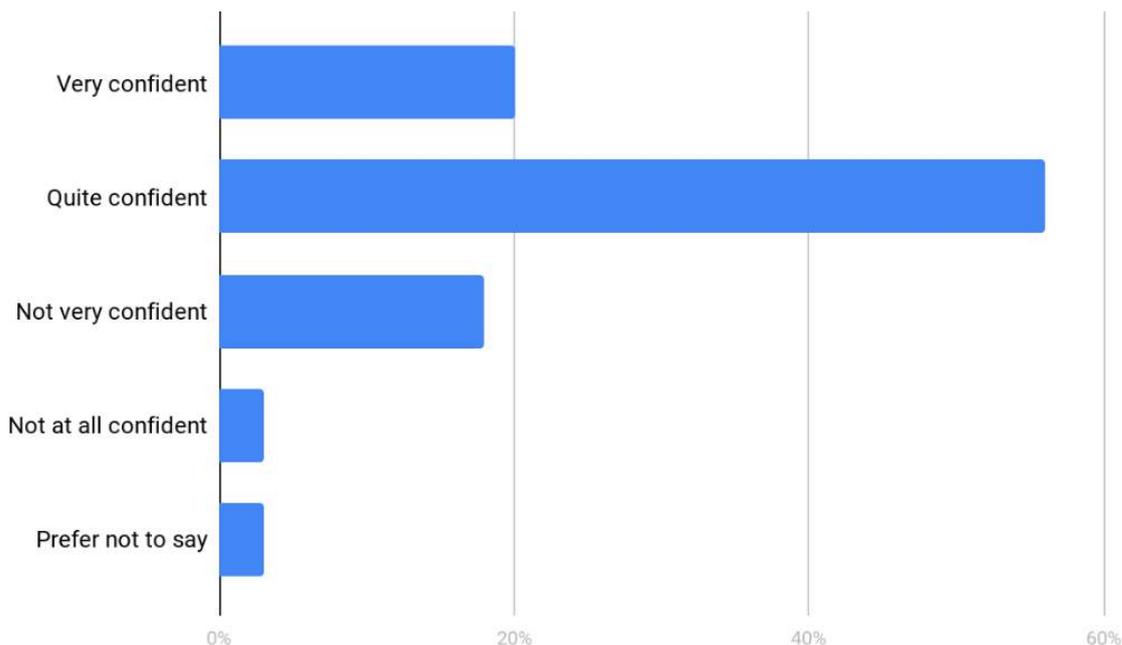


1 in 5 people didn't do anything at all as a result, whereas half gave them advice and 1 in 4 let the victim stay in their home.



Of those who gave the person they knew advice once they heard of the domestic abuse they suffered, three quarters (75%) were confident in the advice they gave.

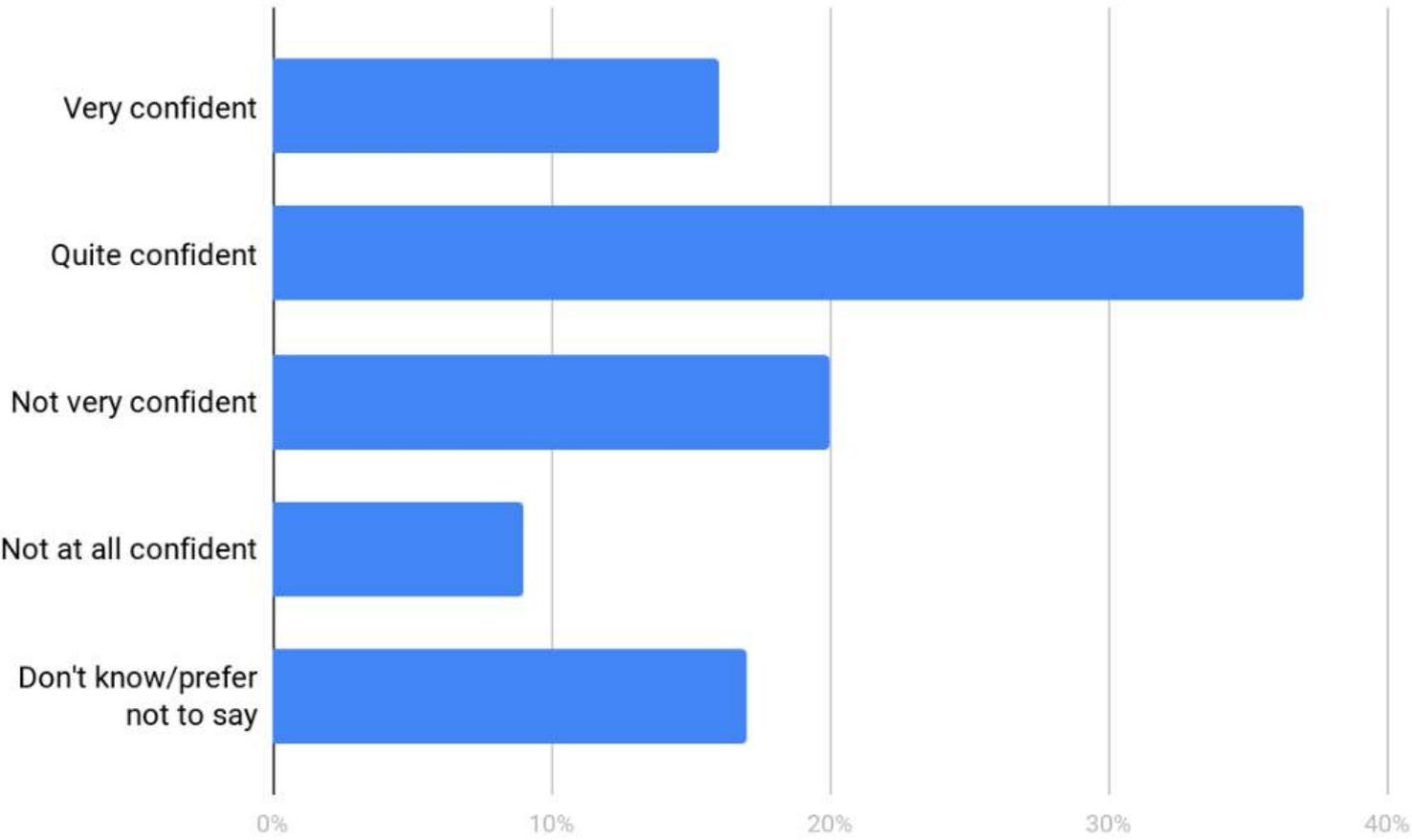
When you gave that person who was experiencing domestic abuse advice on how to improve their situation, how confident were you that you were giving the right advice/pointing them in the right direction to seek help?



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Looking into the future 29% of Brits would not feel confident giving advice to those who've suffered/ were suffering with domestic abuse and 14% of Brits don't know how confident they'd feel. For those who've never been aware of domestic abuse in other relationships, this rises to a third.

In the future, if you were in a situation where someone you knew (such as a friend or family member) was experiencing domestic abuse, how confident are you that you'd be able to give them the right advice/ point them in the right direction to seek help?



When friends step in....Francesca's story

It was the day before the four day Easter weekend. Our six-year-old daughter was at a friend's house for the night, I was packing for a weekend away with the folks and looking forward to a quiet night in with the hubbie and a takeaway. Just after our curry arrived at 7:30pm I received a call from my daughter's school friend's mum. We're not particularly close – our interaction until then had been hellos in the school playground and the occasional drop off at parties and playdates. I almost let the phone go to voicemail so I could tuck in to my dinner, but I decided to answer the phone. I'm glad I did. She was really upset and it took a while to understand what she was saying.

June said that she was phoning me because she had remembered me mentioning, when she came to pick up Mary last month, that I volunteered with a domestic abuse charity and she was hoping I might be able to connect her with the charity. June told me she had been physically assaulted by her husband in front of the kids on Monday. She said that she had left him and her home straight away in order to keep Mary, her brother and herself safe. June went to a friend's house to stay, but when the friend's husband had returned from his trip she could no longer stay with them. June told me that she had spent the whole day, with her children and their suitcase in the local council office. First they had been in the housing department, where she was told they couldn't help. Then she spent 4 hours at social services, where again she was told that they could not help her.

When she phoned, she asked if I could give her any advice. The police were with her but couldn't get through to the Domestic Abuse helpline and didn't have any specialist training – they had no idea what to do with her. I was so angry. Surely there was someone who would take responsibility for supporting her rather than putting her and her children out on the street? I told them to come over to stay and I would help her work things out in the morning – 8pm is no time for her to be left alone with the children and no support. She told me when she arrived that I was the last person she could think to call. It makes my blood run cold to think of them sleeping on the floor of the police station if I had let that call go to voicemail.

That evening I tried to find out more information to help her out, but I didn't know where to start. It was obviously very upsetting thinking about what she had gone through. I was worried about how to explain it to my daughter. And on top of everything we were due to go away on our family holiday the next day. A friend told me about Bright Sky and I used that to try and help her understand a bit more and find the right numbers to call. In the end we worked out that because she was still waiting for her indefinite leave to remain, she wasn't entitled to any emergency housing support. I wouldn't put them out on the streets so I cancelled our weekend away so they could stay. June was so grateful to us and the kids had a great weekend playing together.

I feel so furious when I think of all of the Junes out there who couldn't get through to anyone on the phone. They are sleeping in their cars, or fleabag hostels or returning to abusive partners, because they have no other choice. They are unable to protect themselves or their children and will carry the psychological damage of that for longer than it could ever take to fix their practical problems.

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The role of Bright Sky

Francesca's experience is not an isolated experience. On average 1 in 3 people Brits will know a friend, family member or colleague who is experiencing domestic abuse. Many will be asked to help – just like Francesca.

Leaving an abusive relationship is incredibly difficult and at the point of separation the risk of significant harm increases drastically. Survivors have told us that the support that they needed changed throughout their journey. In the first instance, many victims will turn to those they trust to talk about what they are experiencing within their relationships and to seek reassurance that this behavior is unacceptable. Bright Sky's relationship assessment tools are useful in understanding what risks are posed and will recommend the type of support a victim may benefit from.

Each victim's experience is different. Survivors have told us that their ability to access support and assistance at the right time was hindered by not knowing what support was available. Bright Sky's find your nearest support service links the user with over 600 specialist domestic abuse and sexual violence services and helplines. Bright Sky's videos explain what to expect if you contact the police, enter a refuge or work with a specialist domestic abuse or sexual violence service.

Bright Sky's myth buster interactive questionnaire, sexual violence case studies and our links to online resources such as the UK SAYS NO MORE website allow the user to understand and explore their legal options.





Bright Sky is a free to download mobile app providing support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship; their families, friends and colleagues.

The app is also designed to be used by specialist and non-specialist practitioners and other employers, and for anyone looking for information about issues around domestic abuse such as online safety, stalking and harassment and sexual consent.

The Bright Sky app is available on Android devices from the Google Play Store, and on iOS phones from the Apple App Store.

The app features:

- The FIND HELP tool – a unique UK-wide directory of specialist domestic abuse.
- support services, whereby users can contact their nearest service by phone from the app, searching by area name, postcode or their current location.
- A secure My Journal tool, where incidents of abuse can be logged in text, audio, video or photo form, without any of the content being saved on the device itself.
- Questionnaires to assess the safety of a relationship, plus a section on dispelling myths around domestic and sexual abuse.
- Information for anyone wishing to learn more about domestic abuse, including the different types of support available, steps to consider if leaving an abusive relationship, and how to help a friend affected by domestic abuse.

Contact details and the ability to call national helplines providing support for those affected by domestic and sexual abuse across the UK.

In partnership with