

## ANOTHER BOXING DAY?

Domestic violence affects one in four women and one in six men in their lifetime. At its extreme, domestic violence can result in murder with one woman every three days and thirty men a year being killed by a current or former partner. In Bracknell Forest, Police are called to an average of 130 domestic related incidents every month. Christmas should be a time of festivities and joy, however for many families it can be a particularly difficult time, but in an abusive family it can be particularly worse with the added stresses of debt increase, stress and alcohol.

Nationally it is estimated that approximately 45% of perpetrators who assault their partners do so under the influence of alcohol<sup>1</sup>. Even though alcohol does not directly cause domestic violence, there is a definite relationship between the two. Alcohol can trigger arguments between partners and since arguments can trigger further drinking, a cycle of violence and alcohol misuse frequently characterises intimate partner violence.

Both the perpetrator and the survivor of domestic violence may use alcohol and drugs, however the reasons for using substances will vary. The perpetrator often uses alcohol as an excuse for their violence, however many perpetrators are sober when they are violent or do not drink at all. For survivors, substance use is often a way of surviving, or they may turn to alcohol as a symptom of post-traumatic stress and associated psychiatric disorders. Women experiencing domestic violence are 15 times more likely to misuse alcohol and 9 times more likely to misuse drugs.

Domestic violence is a serious crime. It is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. If you are suffering domestic violence or abuse, do not live in fear this Christmas. You have the right to feel safe. You always have a choice and an alternative.

To report domestic violence to the Police call 999 in an emergency or 0845 8 505 505 in a non emergency. Thames Valley Police operate a positive intervention policy holding offenders accountable for their actions.

To speak with someone in confidence or for outreach support, call Berkshire Women's Aid 01189 504003.

If you are worried about your abusive behaviour, you can choose to stop. Call the Changing Ways East Berkshire & Wokingham Perpetrator Programme.

For support with any substance misuse, New Hope, based in Bracknell town centre, is able to offer a range of services under one roof, including advice, drop in, relapse prevention, housing advice, counselling and dual diagnosis. Self referrals can be made by calling 01344 312 360 or attending New Hope which is open from 10 - 4.30 Monday to Friday. There are also two drop ins: Monday 1.30pm - 3.30pm and Thursday 10.00am - 12.00pm. There is no need to make an appointment for a drop-in session. You will be seen by a worker who can provide advice, information, further appointments and referrals to specialist services. Those with alcohol misuse issues will need to make an appointment with their GP.

For more information and support details please visit the domestic violence pages on the Bracknell Forest Council website: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/domesticviolence>

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<sup>1</sup> British Crime Survey 2001/02, Flood, Page and Taylor, 2003