

K. MENTAL HEALTH AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse can have an enormous effect on mental health. According to [Mental Health Foundation](#), domestic violence has an estimated overall cost to mental healthcare of £176 million. Research suggests that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to experience a mental health problem, while women with mental health problems are more likely to be domestically abused, with 30-60% of women with a mental health problem having experienced domestic violence.

It is now well accepted that abuse (both in childhood and in adult life) is often a significant factor in the development of depression, anxiety and other mental health disorders, and may lead to sleep disturbances, self-harm, suicide and attempted suicide, eating disorders and substance misuse. Victims of abuse who suffer with a mental health disorder, are particularly vulnerable and are likely to find it even harder to report domestic violence than other victims. This is compounded by a sense of shame because of the stigma attached in society to having mental health diagnosis of any kind, which may make victims feel even more powerless.

It is important that support for victims of abuse who have mental health issues are assisted with access to counselling support services. (See [Appendices](#) for organisations that provide counselling support)

Mental health issues are also a factor in the perpetration of domestic abuse. However, while mental health issues may reduce inhibitions that lead to abusive behaviour, research indicates that abusers are no more likely to be mentally ill than others.