

Post-Separation Abuse

A guide for survivors — when the relationship ends, but the abuse doesn't.

Many people expect abuse to stop once a relationship is over. For a lot of survivors, it doesn't. Abuse can continue, change shape, or even begin after separation, as the person causing harm looks for new ways to keep control. This is known as **post-separation abuse**, and it is a recognised pattern — not a sign that you did something wrong.

If you're in immediate danger

Call **999**. If you cannot speak, use the **Silent Solution**: call 999 from a mobile, cough or make a noise when prompted, then press **55** when instructed.

What it can look like

- **Continued coercive control** — still trying to dictate what you do, even after separating.
- **Harassment and stalking** — unwanted contact or monitoring, sometimes through others or through your children.
- **Economic and financial abuse** — withholding money or child maintenance, debts in your name, or dragging out a financial settlement to keep you dependent.
- **Abuse through the family courts** — using legal processes to maintain control, such as repeated applications or prolonging proceedings (sometimes called litigation abuse).
- **Using the children** — undermining you as a parent, or using contact and handovers to continue contact with you.
- **Technology and monitoring** — tracking your location or using shared accounts and social media to watch or intimidate you.
- **Threats and intimidation** — about money, housing, immigration status, the children or your reputation.

You're not imagining it, and you have rights

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** recognises controlling or coercive behaviour and economic abuse as forms of domestic abuse, and this behaviour can continue after a relationship ends. Protective options such as a **non-molestation order** or an **occupation order** may be available, and the family courts can put measures in place to help you feel safer. This is general information, not legal advice — a specialist can advise on your situation.

Keeping a record

If it feels safe, keeping a record can help you access support and, if you choose, take legal steps later: note dates and short descriptions of incidents, keep messages rather than deleting them, and note any witnesses. Store anything you keep somewhere the other person cannot access.

Safety around children and handovers

- Arrange handovers in a neutral, public place, or ask a trusted third person to help.
- Ask about supervised contact or contact centres if handovers don't feel safe.
- Keep communication about the children brief, factual and in writing where you can.
- Check devices and accounts for tracking or shared logins, and change passwords where it's safe.

Support with the family courts

Empowered Insights is developing **court support** for survivors, so no one has to face that process alone. If this is something you need, please get in touch.

Where to get help

- **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** (24 hrs, free): **0808 2000 247**
- **Rights of Women** — free legal advice for women on family law: rightsofwomen.org.uk
- **FLows** — help with protective court orders: flows.org.uk
- **Surviving Economic Abuse** — economic & financial abuse: survivingeconomicabuse.org
- **Mums in Need** — support for women experiencing post-separation abuse: mumsinneed.org
- **National Stalking Helpline** (Suzy Lamplugh Trust): **0808 802 0300**

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