**Help for people experiencing domestic abuse in Bedfordshire.**

**What is Domestic Abuse?**

Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people aged 16 or over with a personal connection; such as intimate partners, ex-partners or family members.

This abuse can include everything from psychological, physical, sexual, financial, economic and emotional abuse to coercive & controlling behaviours (such as stalking), so called ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and other harmful practices.

It doesn’t just happen to other people, anyone can experience this type of harmful control in their relationship but it can be hard for a victim to recognise or acknowledge that what they are experiencing in their relationship is a type of domestic abuse.

**If someone is worried or frightened of someone else’s behaviour in their relationship then they could be experiencing domestic abuse and they are not alone; support is available.**

How can our service help?

**We support any victims of domestic abuse who are over the age of 16 years old; regardless of their sexuality, gender, ability, status, language, any culture pressures or their background.**

**Our Independent Domestic Violence Advisory (IDVA) Service provides a SafeLives Leading Lights accredited service reflecting good and safe practice in the support of high risk victims and for victims at reduced risk of harm, we also provide a range of Outreach IDVA services, this includes specialised support for male victims and victims of stalking.**

We have IDVAs working in our local Hospitals, at Magistrates Court, within our Local Authorities, with ELFT Mental Health services and elsewhere across the Bedfordshire community.

**Our service is free, inclusive, independent & confidential and we will:**

* Listen to a victim’s concerns, assess their current risks and develop a safety & support plan to ensure that they receive the most appropriate support and can explore their options.
* Explore the possibility of them having a home security survey and look at target hardening.
* Discuss their housing rights and the options available to them including homelessness & refuge.
* Explain the criminal justice process and the effectiveness of criminal & civil remedies and protection orders.
* Liaise or advocate with other agencies such as Housing, the CPS, Police, Solicitors, Social Care and other relevant organisations; enabling their voice to be heard.
* Support and signpost them to access other specialist agencies or ongoing support networks such as Counselling etc.
* Advocate for high risk victims at the MARAC (the multi-agency risk assessment conference).

**How do I contact or refer to the IDVA Service?**

If you would like to speak with a member of our team, our service hours are 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

**Luton IDVA: 01582 488777**

**Bedford & Central IDVA: 01234 763785**

For queries or to request a referral form:

idva.bedfordshire@victimsupport.org.uk

Victim Support National 24 hr SupportLine:

**0808 16 89 111**



 [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)