



## What would you do?

Brief for April 2017 theme for the localisation of the National Awareness Campaign 'What Would You Do?'

**SPEAK OUT!**  
DON'T JUST BE A BYSTANDER

The National Awareness Campaign as part of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021



## WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU WITNESSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

In research recently carried out on behalf of Cosc it was found that one of the main reasons people would not intervene if they witnessed domestic violence, was that they would not know what to do.

We may think that domestic violence happens to other people but research also tells us that 2 out of every 5 people in Ireland know someone who has experienced domestic violence. Someone you care about may be suffering from domestic abuse but is too afraid or ashamed to tell you. Would you know what to do? Would you know how to help?

Domestic violence in the past was seen as a private issue within the home and none of anyone else's business. Turning a blind eye is no longer acceptable. We all have a responsibility to open our eyes and tackle the problem of domestic violence.

Witnessing domestic violence can be terrifying. It is easier to turn away or tell ourselves we shouldn't get involved. If you suspect a friend or family member is experiencing violence at home, finding a supportive way to get involved may seem overwhelming. It is ok to be scared, repulsed or afraid that we misinterpreted the situation. But it is not ok to do nothing. If we do nothing, we leave another victim behind.

We all have a responsibility to tackle domestic violence and we all have questions we need to ask of ourselves:

- If I came across an incidence of domestic violence, would I know the best way to intervene?
- Should I get involved?
- Should I talk to the person I suspect to be a victim of domestic violence?
- Do I know the signs to look out for if I suspect someone is a victim of domestic violence?

The 'What would you do?' campaign provides an opportunity for each of us, whether in our professional or personal lives, to start a conversation about what we would do if we came across domestic violence, a question that is not easy to answer but one we have a duty to prepare for.

**BEFORE YOU GET INVOLVED, YOU MUST ALWAYS ASK YOURSELF IF IT'S SAFE AND LEGAL TO INTERVENE. IF THE SITUATION IS ALREADY VIOLENT OR LOOKS LIKE ITS ESCALATING QUICKLY, DO NOT DIRECTLY INTERVENE. CALL THE GARDAÍ ON 999. THE ONLY EFFECTIVE BYSTANDER INTERVENTION IS A NON-VIOLENT ONE. IF YOU TRY TO "RESCUE" A VICTIM OR FIGHT OFF AN ABUSER, YOU'LL NOT ONLY BE ENDANGERING YOURSELF, BUT THE ABUSER MIGHT TAKE OUT THEIR ANGER ON THE VICTIM LATER. THE VICTIM COULD END UP MORE ISOLATED AND LESS LIKELY TO SEEK HELP LATER ON.**



## WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU WITNESSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

**Q** IF I CAME ACROSS AN INCIDENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, WOULD I KNOW THE BEST WAY TO INTERVENE?

### How to intervene if it is someone you know

Don't wait for them to approach you. Look for a private moment where you can express concern and let them know you're there to support them. A simple question like "are you ok?" could give you both an opportunity to talk.

#### **Express concern**

Tell your friend that you've been concerned for them or that you're worried. This is a non-judgmental approach that might make them feel comfortable in opening up. If they deny that anything is wrong, don't push, but communicate that you'll be there for them if they ever want to talk.

#### **Assure them that the violence is not their fault.**

This can be such an important thing for a victim of violence to hear. Some useful things to say might be, "No one deserves to be treated this way," "You are not to blame," or simply, "What's happening is not your fault."

#### **Support, but don't give advice**

This can be so hard to do, especially if the victim is someone close to you. But remember that you cannot make someone leave a relationship if they are not ready to do so. **Be aware that leaving an abusive relationship is the most dangerous time for a victim. The victim is best placed to assess the danger to themselves.** Give them options and offer to help and support them along the way, but pressuring a victim to leave a relationship who does not want to may only isolate them further by making them feel they can't confide in you. Remember that abusive behaviour is a pattern of getting power and control over someone else. Validating a victim's choices and encouraging them to make their own decisions about their life can help to empower them to take their own action.

#### **Give information on resources**

There are plenty of services in Ireland which can offer help and support to the person you are concerned about. Check out [www.whatwouldyoudo.ie](http://www.whatwouldyoudo.ie) for a list of services in your area.



## WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU WITNESSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

### How to intervene if it is a stranger

If you've come across an incident that appears to be domestic violence and you have decided that the situation requires an intervention and you are happy that it is safe to do so, try following one or more of the three D's.

#### **Distract**

Creating a distraction is an indirect and non-confrontational way to intervene, and it can help keep a dangerous situation from escalating. You can try distracting either the person about to commit violence, or the potential victim. Either way, your goal is to prevent a situation from getting worse, or better yet, buy enough time to check in with the potential victim.

Examples: Ask for directions, the time, help looking for a lost item, or anything else that you think might keep them from leaving quickly. Better still, if you can use a distraction that will get you a moment alone with the victim, to ask is there a problem.

#### **Delegate**

Even if you don't know the victim and the abuser, someone else in the room might. Friends of the people involved might be in a better position to get involved, and they might have a better opportunity for a sustained intervention than you. You could say to them, "Look, I'm concerned about that person. Their partner seems really angry. Would you be able to check in on the situation now or later?"

Or, if you don't feel comfortable intervening but it doesn't seem like the situation calls for Garda involvement, look for someone else who might be in a better position to get involved. If you're at a bar, look for the bouncer or someone in a similar role and point out what's happening.

#### **Direct**

In a direct approach you either approach the potential victim or potential abuser and intervene. The problem with directly approaching an abuser is that they may attack you and they might end up taking it out on their partner later. If you're going to have any direct contact with a possible abuser it's probably best to be subtle, like using body language to communicate disapproval and make your presence and concern known. You could do this just by watching what is happening and making it obvious that you're keeping an eye on the situation.

If you're going to try a direct approach, your best bet will probably be to approach the victim. You can simply say, "I'm concerned about what just happened. Is anything wrong?" Or, if you only have an instant and there's no opportunity for even a brief conversation, you could say, "No one deserves to be treated like that," or, "That wasn't your fault." Don't try to give advice or judge or blame the victim for what's just happened. Use the opportunity to say that you're concerned, that you want to help, and that it's not their fault.



## WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU WITNESSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

### Q SHOULD I GET INVOLVED?

A bystander approach to ending domestic violence is about enabling people in the community to intervene if it is safe and legal to do so. In this approach whole communities are part of the solution to end abuse so looking up [whatwouldyoudo.ie](http://whatwouldyoudo.ie) and discussing it with friends, family and colleagues is a useful action to take. Though it sounds intimidating, bystander intervention is not always as direct or as confrontational as it sounds.

A bystander may see or be told of behaviour experienced by a family member or close friend. The truth is that all of us have probably been bystanders to conversations or behaviours that can contribute to domestic violence, and more than likely, we have been unsure about how to speak up, or we have felt afraid or anxious and done nothing. Learning to recognise these behaviours and how to respond appropriately, however, can help to alleviate this anxiety and can enable you to be an active bystander in a way that feels right for you.

While anyone can be a bystander, an active bystander is one who recognises a problem and decides to intervene in a way that feels safe and appropriate for him or her at the time. No two interventions will look the same, because there is no 'right way' to be an active bystander. Being an active bystander may mean intervening in violence that is already occurring, whether it's physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse. The abuse could be between people you don't know, or you may find out about a friend or acquaintance who is experiencing violence. But speaking up against abuse that is already occurring is only a small part of bystander intervention.

Most of the opportunities we have to be active bystanders to prevent violence occur before it starts. Leading up to every incident of abuse are all kinds of behaviours, words and actions that can normalise and condone violence in a community.

### Q SHOULD I TALK TO THE PERSON I SUSPECT TO BE A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Recent research carried out on behalf of Cosc found that 8 in 10 people stated that if they suspected someone they knew was a victim of domestic violence, they would ask if they are ok without mentioning the abuse. However, of those surveyed, who had witnessed domestic violence in the past, only 3 in 10 had spoken to the person involved.

Just asking someone if they are ok could be the intervention that could save their life. They may not be ready to talk to you but you can let them know you are there for them. You don't have to mention the suspected abuse, just let them know that you care. Find out the services that are available in your area by going to [www.whatwouldyoudo.ie](http://www.whatwouldyoudo.ie) so you have them at hand and ready if the victim does open up to you.



## WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU WITNESSED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

### Q DO I KNOW THE SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IF I SUSPECT SOMEONE I KNOW IS A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

These are some of the warning signs to look out for if you are concerned about someone you know. They may seem:

- Anxious to please their partner
- Afraid of their partner, talking about their temper, possessiveness, or jealousy
- Restricted from seeing family and friends
- Limited in access to money or a car
- Depressed, anxious, or suicidal

Follow your instincts. If you've noticed these warning signs and suspect that someone you know is being abused, then it is likely that they are.

### Q DO I KNOW THE SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IF I SUSPECT A STRANGER IS A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Bystanders to abuse between strangers have a limited amount of time to assess the situation and decide how to best intervene.

There are some warning signs that a situation might be abusive:

If the person suspected of being an abuser is:

- Acting excessively jealous of their partner
- Insulting or embarrassing their partner in public
- Yelling at or trying to intimidate their partner

Or, if the person suspected of being a victim is:

- Acting afraid of their partner
- Acting submissive
- Showing physical injuries, or wearing unusual clothing as if to hide an injury (ie, sunglasses indoors or long sleeves in summer).

If these signs are apparent, then the behaviour being witnessed could well be abuse.



# THE FACTS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IRELAND

## THE FACTS ABOUT

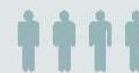
# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IRELAND

People in Ireland who have been **severely abused by a partner** at some point in their lives.



213,000

women



88,000

men

## OUR EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

only

**3 in 10**

people surveyed, who knew a victim of domestic violence, **spoke to the person involved**

**15% & 6%**

have experienced **severely abusive behaviour from a partner**

**3 in 10**

women have experienced **psychological violence** by a partner since the age of 15



**Over half** of those severely abused by a partner have been physically injured



The most severe abuse by a partner **first happened** when the abused person was **under the age of 25**



## THE FACTS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IRELAND

### JUST HOW AWARE ARE WE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?



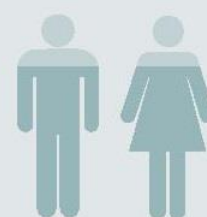
**4 in 10** people in Ireland **know someone** who has experienced domestic violence



**8 in 10** believe that domestic violence is **common against women**



**6 in 10** believe domestic violence is **common against men**



# 75%

agree domestic violence is a **serious issue** in Ireland

### WOULD YOU INTERVENE?



**8 in 10** people reported that if they suspected **someone they knew** was a victim of domestic violence, they would **ask if they are ok** without mentioning the abuse



**8 in 10** people reported that if they suspected someone they knew was a victim of domestic violence they would **encourage them to contact a helpline**



**Not knowing what to do** is one of the main reasons people would not intervene if they witnessed domestic violence

Find out what you can do at [whatwouldyoudo.ie](https://www.whatwouldyoudo.ie) or in an emergency **call 999**