



# campaigning toolkit

women's aid

campaign champions 



# why campaign?

The women's rights movement delivers powerful change. From winning the right to vote a hundred years ago, to the criminalisation of controlling behaviour, it is campaigners and activists who drive progress and make history.

You are part of this movement. Women's Aid strives for the change that is needed to stop domestic abuse from happening in the first place, and we need your support. This toolkit will support you to campaign and get your voice heard.

## What can we change?

We campaign alongside survivors of domestic abuse and local services to amplify their voices and use our influence to press for change.

We have secured millions of pounds of emergency government funding for life-saving refuges, made coercive and controlling behaviour a criminal offence, won changes to make family courts safer and ensured survivors can access legal aid.

But there is still more to do. Campaign Champions are vital to our work to ensure all women and children can live free from fear and abuse.

*"I can't put into words what it felt like to watch MPs from all political parties stand up in the House of Commons and speak about Jack and Paul, and the urgent need to change our family court system."*

Claire Throssell, Child First campaigner

## Claire Throssell: Child First campaigner

Claire's sons, Jack (12) and Paul (9), were killed by their father, a known perpetrator of domestic abuse, on an unsupervised contact visit in 2014.

Through her heartbreak, Claire has campaigned tirelessly to improve the safety of the family courts and is the spokeswoman for the Women's Aid Child First campaign. We work together to end avoidable child deaths as a result of unsafe child contact with perpetrators of domestic abuse.

With over 40,000 signatures, Claire delivered the Child First petition to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street. As a result new guidance has been issued to judges who make contact decisions, and survivors have better protection in family court buildings.



# how do I get started?

Starting a campaign can be daunting. Begin with clear actions, learn from what works and celebrate your successes!

## Decide what you want to campaign on

What is the issue? Identify the problem that needs to be solved. This could be a specific local issue or a something happening on a wider scale.

What needs to change? Think about a clear solution. What needs to happen to make a difference - is it awareness raising or a law change? What is the ideal outcome?

What is your evidence? Who is affected, and how? Find facts and figures showing the scale of the problem, and why your solution is needed.

## Planning your campaign

### 1. Who to target?

Who can make the change happen? Is it the government, your local MP, your local council or another organisation?

### 2. Who is on board?

Recruit your friends and allies to support your campaign. Social media and online petitions are great for reaching lots of people quickly.

### 3. Goals and deadlines

Make a realistic plan with short term goals along the way. Set deadlines, for example writing to an MP or contacting a journalist.

## Take action!

At the heart of your plan will be exciting activities working towards your campaign goals. Here are a few ideas:

**Launch a petition:** outline what needs to change, and why it matters. Take a look at various campaigning platforms such as [38degrees.org.uk](http://38degrees.org.uk), [change.org](http://change.org) and [petition.parliament.uk](http://petition.parliament.uk) for ideas.

**Contact decision makers,** write to your local MP or councillor about your campaign.

**Organise a public event or meeting** for a great way to raise public awareness.

**Coverage in the media will give your campaign a boost.** Social media (such as Twitter or Facebook) is great for spreading your message too.

**Take direct action.** You could organise a vigil outside an important building, a march or even a publicity stunt to get attention!



# who makes the decisions?

## Targeting decision makers

- Make a list of all of the relevant decision makers; they could be in government, the police or your local council.
- Identify who can influence them and how, for example, an MP might be able to press a government minister responsible for action.
- For each decision maker you identify outline why the campaign is important for them, what needs to change, and what they need to do.

## Influencing local decision makers

Contact elected representatives in your area to talk to them about your campaign and why it matters:

- Local councillors are there to represent you and your community, and can make decisions about funding for local domestic abuse services: [gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors](http://gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors)
- Police and crime commissioners (PCCs) are responsible for the strategy and budget of your police force: [apccs.police.uk/find-your-pcc/](http://apccs.police.uk/find-your-pcc/)

## Influencing MPs

- Your local MP is responsible for representing everyone living in their constituency. Find your MP here: [parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/](http://parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/)
- An MP supporting your campaign can be really beneficial. They can meet with government ministers, hold a debate in Parliament and raise public awareness.
- Write a letter or email to your MP, asking them to meet or take action to support your campaign.
- MPs hold local 'drop-in surgeries' so you can request an appointment.
- Our monthly Campaign Champion newsletter provides template letters for writing to MPs. You can find other good examples on [writetothem.com](http://writetothem.com)
- Remember your MP is very busy, so be specific and targeted about what you want them to do.
- Be aware of any additional role your MP has, are they a government minister, a shadow minister (in the opposition party), or the chair of a Select Committee? This might restrict what they can do for your campaign, or they might have even more influence! Find out more: [parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/](http://parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/)

## TOP TIPS:

- You can write, email or contact decision makers on social media.
- You can meet in person, local councillors hold 'surgeries' and meetings, and PCCs hold community consultation events.
- Ask them if they can support your campaign at a public event, or if they can write to other decision makers on your behalf.
- Focus on why your campaign is important to your local area, and to local residents.
- Remember to note any actions they agree to take and follow up!

# how do I talk about domestic abuse?

## Key messages

- Domestic abuse can happen to anyone.
- It is not always physical.
- Perpetrators are always responsible for the abuse.
- Domestic abuse is about power and control, and inequality between men and women.
- There are many reasons why women often can't just leave an abusive partner, from lack of access to money, to language barriers, or fear of the consequences of trying to leave.
- Survivors need to be listened to, believed, supported and not judged.

## what is domestic abuse?

We use the term 'survivors' to talk about women who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can include: emotional abuse, physical and sexual abuse, economic abuse, harassment and stalking, online or digital abuse, and coercive control.

It can affect anyone regardless of gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, lifestyle or religion. It can have a long-lasting and harmful impact on survivors and their children.

Domestic abuse is a crime that is deeply rooted in the inequality between women and men in society. In the vast majority of cases, women are the victims and men are the perpetrators.

## Your local community

When you are talking about domestic abuse within your community, some survivors may talk to you about their experiences.

Remember to put your safety first. If you feel unsafe or have concerns about your own or someone else's relationship, seek advice from:

- The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247 (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) is available for help and support for a victim, friend or family member all day, every day.
- Specialist domestic abuse services: find the local service providing support - such as refuge accommodation, counselling and legal help - in your area:  
[womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-abuse-directory)
- In an emergency situation always call the police - 999.

The most important things you can do for a survivor is to listen to what she tells you, believe her and let her know that help is out there.

You may hear lots of myths and stereotypes about domestic abuse. Find out how to challenge them here: [womensaid.org.uk/myths](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/myths)



# how do I talk to the media?

## Local media

Local media is a great way to spread the word about your campaign to people in your area. You can send a press release to local media to ask them to cover your campaign. Journalists receive hundreds of these every day, so remember to:

- Grab their attention with an interesting headline.
- Get straight to the point, why is your campaign important and why will it make a difference?
- Personal stories and quotes are really powerful, so include these if you can.
- Include all the information they need to understand your campaign, and your contact details.
- Invite them to an event, protest or petition hand-in; the media love a photo to go with a story.
- Keep it as short as possible, and check for errors.
- Follow it up with a phone call.

## Interview tips

- Don't feel pressured to do an interview, you can always say no to any interview request if you do not want to do it.
- Ask the journalist or producer if anyone else will be interviewed, and what topics they want to cover.
- Have three key messages and practice them.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- If the interview is on TV, wear something you feel comfortable in and avoid patterns or stripes!
- Have faith in yourself - you know your campaign better than anyone, and you are the expert.

## Social media and blogging

- Free websites like WordPress enable you to share your story through blog posts.
- Build relationships with online communities (such as Facebook groups) so when you post petitions or articles, they'll share them too.
- Social media influencers can reach a huge audience. Identify relevant people with a strong following, and ask them to support your campaign.
- Think about how your campaign links to wider movements such as #MeToo, to build momentum and support.

**Remember your safety is the number one priority. If you share something online, it can be there forever.**

**If you're unsure about speaking out publicly, you can use a pseudonym to help keep you safe online.**

# how do I stay safe?



## Looking after yourself

- Raising awareness about a difficult issue like domestic abuse can be tough, so taking care of yourself is vital. The **Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline**, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, is always there for support if you are a domestic abuse survivor – you can call us on **0808 2000 247**.
- Our Survivors' Forum is a safe, anonymous space for women affected by domestic abuse to share experiences and support each other: [survivorsforum.womensaid.org.uk](https://survivorsforum.womensaid.org.uk)
- It is important to take breaks. Balance campaigning with setting aside time for yourself to reflect on what you've achieved, or switch off completely.

## Staying safe online

- Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook are great campaigning tools, but there is a possibility of experiencing negative comments about your campaign.
- Find out lots more information about how to report online abuse, block abusers and keep your account safe here: [womensaid.org.uk/onlinesafety](https://womensaid.org.uk/onlinesafety)

## Should I talk about my own experience?

If you are a survivor of domestic abuse, you are the expert in talking about your experience. Telling your story can be a powerful way to campaign, but it can be really hard.

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It is important to think about whether having your story and name in the public domain may be dangerous for you.

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You might want to remain anonymous so you cannot be identified. You can do this by using a different name in your campaigning work, or ask to be anonymous when talking to the media.

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Make sure that your personal contact details are not easily available online. You can create an alternative email address for your campaigning work if you are worried about your email being misused.

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If you decide that you are safe and comfortable discussing your experience, take your time and remember that your safety and wellbeing is more important than anything else.

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You can also volunteer to talk about your experience in the media with Women's Aid, who liaise with journalists and risk assess each opportunity - go to [womensaid.org.uk](https://womensaid.org.uk) to sign up.

# start campaigning!



It may seem daunting, but you've got everything you need to get started. Remember, practice makes perfect, and these top tips will help to get you there:

- Protect your safety and wellbeing - this is always top priority!
- Make sure you are signed up to being a Women's Aid Campaign Champion!
- Make specific recommendations for change.
- Facts and figures demonstrate why action is needed. Find some here: [womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/)
- There is nothing more powerful than your voice.
- Petitions are a great way to gain traction and support. Websites such as [38degrees.org.uk](https://www.38degrees.org.uk) and [change.org](https://www.change.org) provide lots of great advice on getting started.
- Change takes time - start small and grow your campaign.
- Learn and reflect from every action or activity you undertake.
- Celebrate your successes, big or small!

Thank you for your support and good luck with your campaigns!

- For more information, or to get in touch, visit [womensaid.org.uk/campaign-champions](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/campaign-champions)
- For help and support, call the Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247 (run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) or visit [womensaid.org.uk/information-support](https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support)

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 @womensaid

 facebook.com/womensaid

Women's Aid is a registered charity in England and Wales (1054154)

## Mehala Osborne: Right to Vote campaigner

When survivor Mehala escaped to a refuge, she lost her right to vote because it was unsafe for her to be on the Electoral Register and she didn't meet the strict criteria for 'anonymous voter registration'.

Mehala and Women's Aid have worked together on the Right to Vote campaign. In March 2018 the law was changed so that all women living in refuges can register safely – a huge campaign success!



*"I am so proud of what we have achieved, but I am mostly grateful for being given a chance to escape abuse and find myself again"*