



## **Victims of Domestic Violence Need More Help Says Citizens Advice Bureau Report**

The Citizens Advice Bureau published a report today about victims of domestic violence, showing that many are still struggling to get help and support despite successive governments' assurances of their commitment to addressing this nationwide problem.

The report is based on a survey of frontline CAB staff and although national data shows that approximately 13,000 people contact CABs because of domestic abuse each year, it is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg.

Despite official commitments to the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda, increased scrutiny of the treatment of domestic abuse cases by police and the justice system and a rise in its prominence as an issue, the report exposes the reality of many victims of abuse struggling to access the support they need. The key details include:

- Improving recognition and disclosure of domestic abuse. Many victims don't recognise that they are being abused and minorities such as male victims, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) individuals, those with mental health problems or language barriers have more pronounced barriers to reporting
- Legal aid restrictions involve having to be means tested, with high evidential burdens and complicated applications. Many victims give up before even getting started for this reason. The alternative is to attend court in person and have to face their perpetrator in court which can be an intimidating experience.
- Housing or financial security – victims' refuges are not always accessible and the Local Authority's responsibility to house victims doesn't always materialise. Clients feel trapped without finance or accommodation and often don't qualify for state support due to their assets. In addition, the assets can be jointly owned and so they can't do anything with them quickly unless their partner consents, which is going to be unlikely in an abusive relationship.

[Amy Chesterfield](#), a Family Law specialist at leading regional law firm Pictons says "It is very clear from this report that a lot more needs to be done to help victims of domestic abuse. We know from our experience that early intervention can enable a victim to leave an abusive relationship, while a lack of support can prohibit it.

“Speaking up about domestic abuse can be difficult. Many victims face substantial barriers to seeking help, or even acknowledging to themselves that they are in an abusive relationship. Victims can face emotional barriers – like low self-esteem, self-blame, fear, guilt, love and commitment – as well as practical, financial or physical issues. While some support can be provided by friends and family, others have to rely on specialist services and state structures.

“We can assist victims of domestic violence by providing immediate access to a solicitor who can advise on all options and clearly explain the pros and cons of each so that every person can make an informed decision about what to do next. We can support them all the way.”

If you need urgent help or advice regarding any of the above information and more please contact us on 0845 263 7505, email us [info@pictons.co.uk](mailto:info@pictons.co.uk) or click [here](#) to read about Pictons Solicitors [Domestic Violence](#) services