



# Domestic Abuse Bill introduced to Parliament

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The government's landmark [Domestic Abuse Bill](#) was introduced to Parliament on 16 July 2019, signposting a key development in how local agencies and services respond to allegations of domestic abuse.

The aims of the Bill are to:

- Provide protection and support for victims and their families;
- Pursue and deter offenders; and
- Improve the performance of local agencies and services in instances of domestic abuse.

The introduction of the Bill is a welcome development for family and criminal practitioners, but more importantly to the victims and their families.

## The main changes you need to know:

1. The Bill creates the first statutory definition of “domestic abuse”.

*“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexual orientation. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, economic and emotional forms of abuse.”*

2. Whilst the Bill does not create any new criminal offences, it does provide additional powers to the police and courts to administer notices/orders designed to protect those who are victims of domestic abuse. Most significantly, a legal duty will be placed on councils to provide victims and their children with a secure home.

3. The Bill bans the cross examination of victims by the abuser in the family court.

Before the introduction of the Bill, if an abuser had not instructed a solicitor or barrister to represent them in court, they would be able to ask the victim questions directly and challenge allegations and evidence.

The ban on the cross examination of victims by the abuser, is a welcomed change given the risks and emotional hardship a victim faces when being cross examined by the alleged abuser.

4. All victims will become automatically eligible for special measures in the criminal courts.

This means that victims will have the option to give evidence behind a screen or via a video-link to avoid either having to see the alleged abuser or be in the same room as them.

We hope this development will see an increase in help and support for victims and provide protection for those who bring abusers to justice.

## Need help?

If you are experiencing domestic violence or abuse, or are concerned about your or your children's safety, our [Family](#) team can take fast and effective legal steps to protect you. Please get in touch with us today so we can help protect you.