

# NEWSLETTER

## MENTAL HEALTH DOESN'T TAKE A HOLIDAY



### “DON'T GET SNOWED UNDER”

Christmas can affect our mental health in many ways. This could be if Christmas is a key part of your life, or if it's happening around you. It's a time of year that often puts extra pressure on us.

Christmas could affect your mental health if you:

- Wish you didn't have to deal with Christmas, or find it stressful because of other events in your life
- Feel alone or left out because everyone else seems happy when you're not
- Feel frustrated by other people's views of a 'perfect' Christmas, if these feel different to your experiences
- Have ideas about what Christmas should be like and feel as if you need to enjoy it
- Feeling under pressure to spend more than we can afford leading to credit cards/loans and maybe debt
- Look back at difficult memories, regret things about the past, or worry about the coming new year
- Feel like Christmas gives you something to focus on and look forward to, and find it difficult when it's over
- Feel overlooked, for example if you celebrate other religious festivals or holidays that get less attention
- Want to celebrate with someone who's struggling

*“Listening to other people's exciting plans makes me feel like an alien as I don't have all those wonderful relationships in my life”*

### Do you need some urgent coping tools?

Please explore some crisis resources that you can use right away, by yourself, wherever you are.

### MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS SUPPORT

#### Key Facts:

- 1.76 million people were in contact with mental health services, at the end of August 2023. The majority of these (1,153,225) were in contact with adult services
- 414,550 people were in contact with children and young people's mental health services, at the end of August 2023
- 252,361 people were in contact with learning disabilities and autism services, at the end of August 2023
- 386,157 new referrals were received, and 1.97 million care contacts were attended, during August 2023
- 21,620 people were subject to the Mental Health Act, including 16,450 people detained in hospital, at the end of August 2023

Reference: Mental Health Team, NHS England 2023



# 16% OF PEOPLE ARE IN FEAR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE OVER THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD



The Christmas period often brings with it a reported increase in police callouts for incidents of domestic abuse. Financial pressures, alcohol on tap, trying to create the 'perfect' Christmas and being cooped up together for long periods all contribute to a regular rise in domestic abuse.

A survey by the UK's largest family law firm Stowe Family Law found that:

- 1 in 6 respondents believed they were more likely to experience emotional or physical abuse from their partner over the Christmas period
- 4 in 10 were scared that the Christmas period would lead to the end of their marriage
- 1/3 said that money was the chief cause of strain on their relationship
- 2 in 10 said that "spending time with the wider family" was likely to trigger tension with their partner.

Many perpetrators will use Christmas and other factors, such as alcohol, finances or mental ill-health, to excuse their abusive behaviours or, more often than not, blame their victim for the abuse. The Christmas period causes

further difficulties for victims with fewer opportunities to report abuse and routes to safety shut down. School closures for the holidays also mean that opportunities for children to report abuse and access support are restricted.

### Domestic abuse is:

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 sexuality.

The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional and/or
- Economical.

### Controlling behaviour is:

A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

### Coercive behaviour is:

An act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparents, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew or first cousin, whether directly related, in-laws or stepfamily.

Domestic abuse occurs mostly towards women from men, but men can also be victims. It can occur in any relationship regardless of age, sex, class, race or disability.

## Resources:

Refuge reports further increase in demand for its National Domestic Abuse Helpline services during lockdown - [Click here](#)

Women's charities fear an increase in domestic abuse this Christmas - [Click here](#)

NSPCC Child abuse and neglect in the UK today - [Click here](#)

Zero tolerance for domestic abuse this Christmas - [Click here](#)

If you dial 999 and are unable to speak press 55 and

follow the instructions from the operator, find out more [Click here](#)

National **Domestic Violence** Helpline – **0808 2000 247**

The **Men's Advice Line**, for male domestic abuse survivors – **0808 801 0327**

National **LGBT+ Domestic Abuse** Helpline – **0800 999 5428**

**Action on Elder Abuse** helpline: **0808 808 8141**

**Galop** - If you're LGBT+ and experiencing abuse or violence [contact Galop](#) for support – **0800 999 5428**



# TIS THE SEASON TO GET HELP



## Financial Difficulties at Christmas

Overspending can be an issue all year round, but can be particularly challenging to manage this time of the year. With all the stresses and pressures, people can be more prone to 'crisis spending' which is widely defined as:

- Happens during a period of poor mental health
- Is motivated by emotional or psychological, rather than material need
- Causes some form of financial detriment

Post-Christmas bills can be hard for anyone, but sorting problems can be particularly difficult if you have a decline in mental health. For example, some people may find it terrifying to use the telephone, whereas others may find the clunk of the letterbox triggers intense anxiety and letters can become unbearable to open.

## Ten top tips to avoid a Christmas debt hangover!

1. **Plan early for Christmas** Be realistic and budget accordingly. Work out how much you are going to spend on each person – and stick to it. Manage expectations as to what you or Santa can give!
2. **Don't forget the everyday bills** Remember that rent, the mortgage, utility bills, food bills and other existing debts still have to be paid – and the consequences can be severe if they're not. Even though it's Christmas, get your priorities right
3. **Don't bank on an overdraft** If you do need more money, don't just run up an overdraft without talking to your bank first – it will work out much more expensive
4. **Keep things simple** If you can afford to pay for your goods outright by cash, cheque, or debit card, don't be persuaded to take out extended credit agreements unless they really do work out cheaper
5. **Shop around** Try as many different places as possible to find the best price. Buy what you want and not what other people say you need. Be wary of extended warranties; the cost of a repair could be less than the cost of the warranty
6. **Buy safe to be safe** Whatever the deal, whatever the temptation, don't buy from unauthorised traders and don't borrow from unauthorised lenders. The initial

savings and convenience may prove to be a false economy

7. **Read the small print** Check for hidden extras in any credit agreement. Work out the total amount payable. Ensure that the monthly instalments are within your budget before signing. Interest free credit can seem attractive, but if you don't pay on time, or miss a payment, you could have to pay a lot more.
8. **Do your own credit checks** If you are going to use a credit card, shop around and compare terms. Some cards charge high interest rates, but provide interest free periods or discounts. Budget for all these costs and put the payment dates in your diary

9. **Be organised** There's a lot to remember at Christmas. If you've borrowed money don't forget that it won't be long before you have to make a payment. Make sure you pay on time, even if it is only the minimum, or you will be faced with additional charges
10. **Start planning and saving for next Christmas** Once Christmas is over, it's worth looking at what you did well and what you didn't. Learn from your mistakes and start planning how you will do things differently next year. This might also be a good time to start saving for next Christmas.

## Resources:

Citizens Advice - [Click here](#)

StepChange Debt Support - [Click here](#)

Cost of living support - [Click here](#)

CAP – Christmas against poverty – [Click here](#)

**Samaritans** - Call the Samaritans to talk to a trained volunteer anonymously for free, confidential support 24 hours a day:

Telephone: 116 123

**Shout** - You can text a trained Shout volunteer anonymously for free, confidential support 24 hours a day:

TEXT 'SHOUT' to 85258

