

Pregnancy and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can severely impact your pregnancy.

For many women, having a baby is a time of joy and excitement, but, unfortunately for some, it can be the trigger for domestic violence in the home. For almost one third of women who suffer from domestic violence in their lifetime, the first incidence of violence occurred during pregnancy, and for others, existing violence can escalate.

Domestic violence can have health implications on both the mother and child and can put them both at risk. It can increase the risk of miscarriage, infection, premature birth, low birth weight, foetal injury and foetal death. Domestic violence has been identified as a prime cause of miscarriage or still birth.

Often, pregnant women subject to domestic violence will miss ante-natal appointments, either because they are prevented from doing so, or they fear what will happen if the violence is identified.

Many women also disclosed that during their pregnancy their emotional and mental state is severely affected and therefore they continue to smoke and drink as a coping mechanism. This too can affect their health and the health of their child.

Women's Aid Leicestershire Limited support many pregnant women through their refuge and Outreach services. Lin Wells, head of direct services stated:

"Many women describe an escalation of violent and abusive behaviour when they fall pregnant. This can be attributed to many things including their partner becoming jealous of all the attention on them as a potential new mum"

"The effects of the violence can be long term and damaging. One woman described her pregnancy as being the most terrifying time of her life. She explained that before she fell pregnant she only had herself to protect but now she had her unborn child to think of. Some women's pregnancies resulted in premature births and complications and for another woman her newborn baby suffered serious health implications because of the abuse."

"Refuges are equipped to deal with pregnant mothers and those with new babies. Our Outreach and support services will continue to support new mums when they move on into their own accommodation and move on with their lives."

For support and advice please contact the domestic violence helpline on 0116 255 0004.

Extra notes

Interview opportunity

For further interview opportunities please contact Lin Wells at Women's Aid Leicestershire Limited on 0116 242 6440 or Lucy Hodge on 0116 305 6017

The City Women's Aid Leicestershire Refuge has supported 8 pregnant women in the last 12 months. The 8 women came to our refuge during different stages of their pregnancies and most of them went on to have their babies whilst still residing at the refuge. In reference to women with new born babies the refuge supported 5 women with babies under the ages of 5 months.

The County Women's aid Leicestershire refuge has supported three pregnant women and also a woman with a ten week old baby. The women with the baby stated that the violence escalated through out her pregnancy, after delivery and giving birth, until she fled into the refuge.