

# Feeling unsafe at home?

*Catriona Nicholson explores what you might do if your home or relationship isn't the safe place it should be*

Experiencing domestic abuse from a partner in any form – physical, emotional, sexual or financial – can have a devastating impact on your life, health and happiness. It can create an overwhelming number of practical and emotional problems, both during the abuse and afterwards. Your mental health may especially suffer.

Escaping and surviving the aftermath of abuse requires tremendous personal strength and support from others. Reaching out to get help can be hard, but can put you on the track to a safer, happier life for you (and your children). Thankfully there is a range of support available in Hackney.

A good place to start is your GP. You may already be seeing them for health and mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), all of which are experienced in much higher numbers by people who have experienced domestic abuse. If you are not already getting help and struggling with your moods – for example feeling extremely depressed or anxious – speak to your GP for help.

Try to talk to your GP about the abuse, and how it has affected you, physically and mentally. Everything you say to your GP is strictly confidential, and you have the right to see a different GP if you don't feel comfortable talking to yours. Many GP

practices in Hackney have become more domestic violence aware thanks to help from the Iris Project, which educates practice staff to respond better and refer you on to further help.

The Iris Project is part of a larger organisation called the Nia Project, which has several services for women who have experienced domestic abuse. This includes refuges, advocacy services, a rape crisis service, a family support service and special services aimed at women who also have substance misuse problems or who are at risk of violent offending. Get in touch on 0207 683 1270 or email [info@niaendingviolence.org.uk](mailto:info@niaendingviolence.org.uk)

Hestia is another charity that operates in Hackney for women who have experienced domestic abuse, offering floating support services, counselling, support groups and refuges, as well as advice on safety, housing, benefits and legal rights. You can contact them on 020 8533 6211 or refer yourself online by emailing [info@hestia.org](mailto:info@hestia.org).

Hackney Council has its own domestic violence support team, which provides a helpline offering non-judgemental, confidential advice, and help in languages other than English. They will provide you with a caseworker, who can offer advice on housing, legal issues and benefits. Call the helpline on 0800 056 0905 (9.30am-5pm, Monday to

Friday) or email [dvhct@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:dvhct@hackney.gov.uk).

The National Domestic Violence Helpline can be contacted 24/7 for emotional and practical support on 0808 2000 247. They can also refer you to specialist services for men and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people experiencing domestic violence.

## Boxing clever

A new Muay Thai boxing group, open to people who've experienced mental health problems is starting in May in Bethnal Green.

Training will take place at Casa De Caboclo Cultural Centre, 5 Gales Garden, Bethnal Green E2 0EJ on Sunday evening from 5pm. There will also be monthly meetings for people who would like to determine what happens with the organisation of the group.

Muay Thai is a form of kickboxing and a full contact sport. The boxing itself will be taught at your pace, taking into account any mental or physical health problems you may be experiencing. It's a good way of getting fit, building confidence and learning to defend yourself in a physical way. In the near future there will be assertiveness training, to help learn to express feelings in a positive way.

Contact Gohar on 077697916 for more information. The project is supported by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets and Community Options.