

23rd February 2017



DOMESTIC ABUSE CALLS AT ALL TIME HIGH

- **RED NOSE DAY CASH WILL FUND INNOVATIVE NEW LIFELINES**

As Red Nose Day approaches, Comic Relief is shining a light on the extent of domestic abuse across the UK. Charities funded by Red Nose Day cash report overwhelming demand from those suffering every single day behind closed doors – an endemic which saw 1.2 million women experiencing domestic abuse in the last year^[1] and two women killed each week in England and Wales because of domestic violence.^[2]

Figures released by the National Domestic Violence Helpline, a vital support service launched by Comic Relief in 2003 and run in partnership by Women’s Aid and Refuge, show that demand for domestic abuse crisis assistance is at an all-time high with on average a staggering 230 calls received every day.^[3] Comic Relief reports that recent grant applications demonstrate a significant uplift in demand for all types of domestic abuse support services, with some organisations reporting an increase of up to 60%.

Gilly Green, Head of UK Grants for Comic Relief, says: “More and more women are finding the courage to come forward, which will help to tackle the stigma that continues to surround domestic abuse and ensure more people get the support they need.

“However, domestic abuse is still a reality for far too many people and help often comes too late. It is vital that we keep the spotlight on domestic abuse, encourage more women to seek help, and make sure that they receive the support they need as early and as easily as possible.”

With more and more people speaking out about their experiences, latest research also underlines that anyone can experience domestic abuse. Statistics from the Femicide Census released in December 2016 show that more than one quarter (25.7%) of victims of femicide were over the age of 56.^[4] Gilly Green adds: “Little has previously been known about older victims of domestic abuse, with services currently largely geared to younger women. This abuse doesn’t just happen within couples – many women experience abuse at the hands of their children, which can be an impossible thing to talk about. Funds raised by this year’s Red Nose Day will help us to better support older victims of domestic abuse, whose specific needs have been largely misunderstood.”

¹ Office for National Statistics, Domestic Abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2016

² Office for National Statistics, Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, Year ending March 2015

³ National Domestic Violence Helpline, 2017

⁴ The Femicide Census, Women’s Aid, December 2016

As part of Comic Relief's wider efforts to raise awareness about the issue of domestic abuse and to provide support for victims, today NetMums will host a Facebook Live chat at 1pm with a spokesperson from Refuge who will offer expert advice about how to get help. To further highlight the issue, grime artist Rapman has recorded an exclusive track, 'Promise' for Red Nose Day 2017, telling the story of a young pregnant woman who becomes trapped in a controlling relationship, which can be viewed at rednoseday.com/domesticviolence.

Comic Relief is seeking to give a voice to survivors and victims of domestic abuse, to encourage other victims to find the strength to seek help. One survivor received support from a Comic Relief funded project and will soon begin studying for a Masters on the issues around domestic abuse, while also providing support for other victims; another is a peer mentor for mothers after her own ordeal saw police being called to her home 11 times before she was able to seek help.

Polly Neate, CEO at Women's Aid highlights the different forms that domestic abuse can take. "Many of us think of physical violence when we talk about domestic abuse, but it's crucial that people understand any form of control – be it repeated comments about weight and appearance, controlling access to money, or restricting your contact with friends, family and even social media – is abusive."

To help address the unprecedented demand for the services it funds, Comic Relief has opened a new 'Tech vs Abuse' programme. This initiative is currently open for applications from organisations seeking funds for innovative new solutions that use technology to support the hardest to reach victims of abuse. Some of the money raised during this year's Red Nose Day will fund more initiatives to help provide early support victims of domestic abuse. Comic Relief is also partnering with Women's Aid to tackle hidden domestic abuse by training community members – from hairdressers, priests and even sales reps – to spot the signs of domestic abuse.

The 24 hour freephone National Domestic Violence Helpline is available on 0808 2000 247 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Red Nose Day is back on 24th March 2017. The money raised will transform people's lives in the UK and across the world's poorest communities, including people affected by domestic abuse.

-ENDS-

Other powerful stats which demonstrate the hidden complexities of domestic abuse include:

- Up to 60% of women experiencing domestic violence are abused while pregnant (Department of Health, Responding to Domestic Abuse: A handbook for healthcare professionals (London: Department of Health, 2005), citing British Medical Association Domestic violence: a health care issue? (London: BMA, 1998)
- In 2016 domestic abuse related crime was 10% of total crime, an increase of 2% since the previous year (HMIC, Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse (Published online: HMIC, 2015)
- The volume of domestic abuse prosecutions completed rose in the year 2015/2016 to 100,930 from 92,779 in 2014/2015 – this is the highest level ever recorded (Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Violence against Women and Girls Crime Report 2015-2016 (Published online: Crown Prosecution Service, 2015)
- On average the police receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour (HMIC, Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse (Published online: HMIC, 2015)

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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Rapman's video 'Promise' is available to download from this link

<https://wetransfer.com/downloads/01aa3c07e5817c2acf1c8ebdf945046320170221154346/734e1ca014d1f54f1dae20ff4491ff1620170221154346/2225e3> or via

www.rednoseday.com/domesticviolence

Notes to editors

About Red Nose Day

- Red Nose Day is back on Friday 24th March and it's all about your power to make the world a better place, simply by having a great time.
- By raising (or donating) cash this Red Nose Day, you're helping to change lives. That's because Comic Relief spends the money raised to help the people who really need it most, both here in the UK and across Africa.
- From workplace bake sales and fancy-dress fundraising in schools, to danceathons, quizzes and surreal sponsored challenges, put on a Red Nose and make your laugh matter by doing whatever you enjoy to raise life-changing cash.
- It all culminates in a massive night of comedy and entertainment, live on the BBC.

About Comic Relief

Comic Relief is a UK charity which aims to create a just world, free from poverty - where everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered. Since 1985, Comic Relief has raised over £1 billion. That money has helped, and is helping, people living incredibly tough lives, both at home in the UK and across the world.

For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit www.comicrelief.com

Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland)

 For the latest news, statements and exclusive content direct from the Comic Relief Press Office follow [@ComicReliefNews](https://twitter.com/ComicReliefNews)

About the National Domestic Violence Helpline

The Freephone 24 Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline, run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge, is a national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

The Helpline can give support, help and information over the telephone, wherever the caller might be in the country. The Helpline is staffed 24 hours a day by fully trained female helpline support workers and volunteers. All calls are completely confidential. Translation facilities for callers whose first language is not English, and a service for callers who are deaf or hard of hearing are available.

The 24 hour freephone National Domestic Violence Helpline is available on 0808 2000 247 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

