

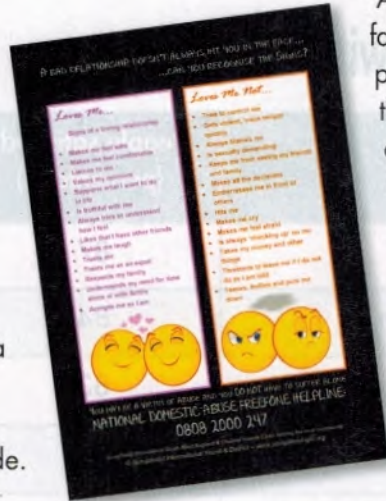
# Realising what domestic abuse is

Many victims of domestic abuse do not realise their relationship is abusive until they get out of it.

A new campaign has now launched to show people what makes a relationship abusive, rather than just unhappy.

A poster is being distributed throughout North Somerset by Soroptimist International, a group which works to transform the lives of women and girls worldwide.

Louise Branch, North Somerset Council's domestic abuse officer, said: "Many people in abusive relationships don't realise they are being abused until after they have left, or at a point of crisis. This is especially true if they have not been hit."



"Abusers will also find fault with their partner and tell them that they are the cause of all the unhappiness in the relationship.

"This encourages those living with abuse to blame themselves and to consistently try to repair the relationship,

rather than recognising that they are being abused and seeking help to leave, or at least keep themselves safe."

Cathy (not her real name) knows first-hand how this feels. She said: "I never knew anything different, I thought my relationship was normal.

"When someone said to me 'you are in an abusive relationship' I laughed and said 'I'm not, he doesn't hit me'."

As time went on, Cathy realised something was wrong but didn't know what.

"It was like walking on egg shells and I tried so hard to please him but he found fault with everything I did.

"I couldn't tell my family or friends. I was too embarrassed and wondered whether they would believe me. He never liked me seeing anyone outside our relationship.

"I was reading an article one day when suddenly the light went on and I thought that it was my story. I got in touch with a domestic abuse worker and she explained everything to me.

"You just don't see it when you are in it - you are just trying to survive for yourself and children."

