



**Staying Safe Online  
When Accessing  
LGBT+ Domestic  
Abuse Support**





**0800 999 5428**  
[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

Contains information about:

**Domestic Abuse**

This information sheet offers some advice you can use to stay safe online while you are seeking help with domestic abuse.

Your safety should always be your first priority and if you are ever in immediate danger, call the police on 999. Local domestic abuse services should be able to provide support. If you need confidential advice from an LGBT+ specific service, you can contact the National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0800 999 5428.

### Getting Help Online

The internet is an incredible resource for getting help, but comes with certain risks which are important to take into account. Whether chatting to support services, downloading information sheets like this one or just searching for information, taking steps to protect yourself online can help keep you safe.

### Browser history

Whenever you visit a website or make a search using your internet browser, some information is saved to your device. It will depend on what browser you use (e.g. Firefox, Chrome, Edge etc.) and what settings you have, but will usually include images from sites you visit, search terms you enter and a trail of what sites you visited and when.

If someone is checking your device, they could use this information to see what you have been doing - if an abuser feels like you are trying to get away from their control, they may escalate the abuse.

You can view and delete sites from your browsing history by pressing Ctrl and H in most browsers. You should also check if your browser has a function to clear all browsing data - this will usually be in the settings or privacy menu.

### Logging out

If you're logged into a website (like your email, social media account or forum), closing the window won't necessarily mean you're logged out. That means that anyone who opens up the internet browser after you might be able to access your details, read your messages etc. It's important to remember to log out every time.

### Private browsing

Most browsers now have a private browsing mode. When using these, nothing about your internet activity will be saved to your computer. While information about the websites you visit will still be available to the company that supplies your internet connection, this won't be visible to anyone using your computer.

Check the options menu of your browser to see if it offers a private browsing mode. It may also be called anonymous mode or incognito mode.

### Using public computers

If you feel unsafe using your personal computer because your abuser has access to it, consider using a public computer if you can access one. Most public libraries offer free internet access.

## Spyware

Spyware' refers to a range of computer programs that can be installed without your knowledge that allow someone to remotely view your activity on your computer or phone. An abuser might use spyware to view your emails, see who you are talking to or learn about where you are planning on being. If someone seems to know a lot about your details or computer use but has no physical access to your devices, they may be using spyware.

## Detecting & Removing Spyware

There are many free apps and programs for detecting and removing spyware. If you think your smart phone is affected, go to your app store and search 'spyware removal'. There will be a number of free options - make sure to choose one that has a high number of positive ratings to avoid any potential harm to your phone.

The same is true for computers. Go to a trusted site, such as [download.cnet.com](https://www.download.cnet.com) and search for 'spyware removal'. Again, choose an option that has good ratings.

**Remember: if an abuser feels like you are breaking away from their control, they may escalate the abuse. Before taking action, like removing spyware, consider what course of action will help you to remain as safe as possible.**