

# DOMESTIC ABUSE CUE CARD

Domestic abuse is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse. Abuse includes physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; or psychological, emotional or other abuse.



## ENABLING DISCLOSURE

- Never assume someone else is addressing the domestic abuse issues. Safeguarding is everyone's business. It is important that you act on your suspicions. You may be the victim's first and only contact.
- There may be reasons why an individual won't, or feel they can't, make a disclosure of domestic abuse so it is important to build trust to enable a possible future disclosure.
- Always be alert to the possibility that an individual may be experiencing domestic abuse and be aware of signs that abuse may be taking place (e.g. bruises, inconsistent explanations for injuries, partner always present, tense atmosphere at home, an increase in deferring to partner).
- Enquire sensitively; create an opportunity, providing a quiet environment where an individual can feel able to talk about their experience(s).
- If 'asking the question', ensure it is safe to do so; only ask questions about domestic abuse when the individual is on their own and in private, including in front of children who may later mention the conversation.
- If there is no disclosure, but you suspect otherwise, accept what is being said but periodically ask 'the question', offer other opportunities to talk, consider giving information if safe to do so and document.
- You may have to ask more than once as many victims either do not identify or will deny they are experiencing abuse, especially if it is not physical, and/or they may be minimising what is going on.

## RESPONDING

- Do not appear to be shocked by what you are being told. Be non-judgmental, sensitive, respectful and listen carefully.
- Validate what is happening to the victim. Remind them they are not alone, they are not to blame for the abuse, they do not deserve to be treated this way and that there is help available.
- Seek to empower the victim. Do not take over and make decisions for them. Ask them what they want you to do.
- Reassure about confidentiality and explain the limits to this.

- All agencies are encouraged to use the SafeLives DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence) Risk Identification Checklist to assess risk to the victim and inform safety planning.
- It is not your role to comment on or encourage the victim to leave the perpetrator. Separation does not ensure safety; it often increases risk. If the victim wishes to separate or has recently separated, consult a domestic abuse specialist.
- Be prepared to offer support and signposting. Be familiar with, and know the contact details of, your local domestic abuse service (see overleaf).
- Document any disclosure, or suspicion of domestic abuse, in professional records kept at your organisation (not in the victim's handheld records) and record what you are told in their own words.
- Document decision making, actions taken to manage risk and rationale for sharing or not sharing information (with or without consent).
- If you need to use interpreters, ensure they are professional. Never use family members, friends or children.

## SAFETY

- Focus on safety. Assess and deal with any immediate safety risks to the victim and any others (adults and children), including yourself. In an emergency call 999.
- Consider risks associated with communication/correspondence e.g. the perpetrator finding letters/leaflets/text messages/phone call logs etc.
- Where children or vulnerable adults are living with, or at risk from domestic abuse, follow your usual Safeguarding processes and ensure appropriate referrals are made.
- For Honour Based Abuse (HBA) or Forced Marriage (FM) cases, share information on a strictly needs to know basis. Take active steps to ensure records are kept secure, confidential and where possible, restricted.
- For FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) cases refer to your local safeguarding procedures and ensure agency records are kept restricted.

**At every meeting always recognise, respond, refer, record**

## RISK

On disclosure of domestic abuse, the SafeLives DASH Risk Identification Checklist should be completed to identify the level of risk posed to the victim. Professional judgement, 'visible high risk' (i.e. number of ticks on the DASH checklist) and potential escalation should all be considered. Below is a list of some of the high risk factors:

1. Victim's perception of risk
2. Separation (child contact)
3. Pregnancy/new birth (under 18 months)
4. Escalation
5. Community issues/isolation
6. Stalking
7. Sexual Assault
8. Strangulation (choking, suffocation, drowning)
9. Credible threats to kill
10. Use of weapons
11. Controlling and/or Excessive Jealous Behaviour
12. Child Abuse
13. Animals/Pet Abuse
14. Alcohol/Drugs/Mental Health
15. Suicide – Homicide

## MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

'High' risk cases should be referred to the MARAC, a monthly multi-agency meeting where relevant information about the case is shared and a risk management plan agreed.

Speak to the Designated MARAC Officer (DMO) within your agency to make a referral. If you do not know who your DMO is/your agency does not have a DMO, contact the MARAC Coordinator via the Police non-emergency number.

Victims do not attend the MARAC but are represented by an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) who will attempt to contact the victim prior to the meeting.

'Medium' or 'Standard' risk cases can be referred (consent based) to the local Outreach service.

## LOCAL PROCEDURES

Berkshire Child Protection Procedures

<http://berks.proceduresonline.com> Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Policies and Procedures [www.berkshiresafeguardingadults.co.uk](http://www.berkshiresafeguardingadults.co.uk)

## CONTACTS

**Berkshire Women's Aid** - IDVA, outreach and refuge service covering Bracknell

0118 950 4003

[www.berkshirerewomensaid.org.uk](http://www.berkshirerewomensaid.org.uk)

**Bracknell Forest Council**

01344 352000

[www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk) or [www.itsneverok.co.uk](http://www.itsneverok.co.uk)

**The Dash (Domestic Abuse Stops Here) Charity** - IDVA, outreach, refuge

and children's service covering RBWM

01753 549865

[www.thedashcharity.org.uk](http://www.thedashcharity.org.uk)

**Domestic Violence Assist** – Emergency injunction service and Occupation Orders

0800 195 8699

[www.dvassist.org.uk](http://www.dvassist.org.uk)

**Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)**

020 7008 0151

[www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage)

**Galop** - National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) domestic abuse helpline

0800 9995428

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

**Karma Nirvana** – Support for victims and survivors of FM and/or HBA

0800 5999 247

[www.karmanirvana.org.uk](http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk)

**Men's Advice Line** – Support for men experiencing domestic abuse

0808 801 0327

[www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

**National Stalking Helpline** – Support for victims of stalking

0808 802 0300

[www.stalkinghelpline.org](http://www.stalkinghelpline.org)

**Respect PhoneLine** - Advice for perpetrators, partners and professionals

0808 802 4040

[www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

**SAFE!** – Support for young people 8 to 25 years old hurt by crime

0800 133 7938

[www.safeproject.org.uk](http://www.safeproject.org.uk)

**Thames Valley Police**

Emergency 999 Non-emergency 101

[www.thamesvalley.police.uk](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk)

**The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

01628 683800

[www.rbwm.gov.uk](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk)

**Victims First** – Information, advice and help if you've been a victim of crime in

the Thames Valley

0300 1234 148

[www.victims-first.org.uk](http://www.victims-first.org.uk)

**24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline**

0808 2000 247

[www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)