

**There's no excuse for abuse**

# **County Durham Multi-Agency Domestic Violence and Abuse Referral Pathway**

Domestic violence and abuse is: Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of their gender and sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, financial, sexual and emotional.



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## **This guidance is applicable to all victims of domestic abuse.**

Domestic abuse is predominantly perpetrated against women by men, however it can be perpetrated within same sex relationships, by women against men, and by other family members such as older children against their parents or the extended family/community as in cases of honour based abuse. Domestic abuse impacts upon children and/or vulnerable adults in the household whether they are abused directly by the perpetrators and by hearing, witnessing or intervening in incidents.

### **Enabling disclosure.**

There are many reasons why victims won't, or feel they can't, make a disclosure so it's important to build trust to enable a possible future disclosure.

- Always be alert to the possibility that an individual is experiencing domestic violence or abuse and be prepared to offer support or signposting.
- Be aware of signs that could indicate abuse is taking place, e.g. physical injury (inconsistent explanations for bruises or other injuries, frequent bruises or injury), controlling behaviour (partner always present during appointments, won't allow person to talk for themselves, person has limited access to money) and environmental indicators (holes in doors/walls, broken furniture, tense atmosphere in the home).
- Ensure professional interpreters are used, never use family members, children or friends where abuse is known or suspected.
- Only ask questions about domestic abuse when victims are on their own and in a private place.

### **Never assume that someone else will take care of the domestic abuse issues.**

You should seek confirmation that other professionals/agencies have acted in a way which you would expect. You may be the victim's first and only contact. Remember that victims can deny abuse is happening and minimise the risk and/or harm. Discuss with your line manager, assess the threshold level and act accordingly.

### **Remember: domestic violence and abuse commonly escalates and increases in severity over time.**

Separation does not ensure safety; it often increases the risk. Department of Health guidance states: in **30% of cases domestic abuse** either starts or significantly escalates during pregnancy.

Always consult domestic abuse specialist agencies - **Harbour (03000 20 25 25)** for safety planning advice if the victim wishes to separate.

**Always use the MARAC Risk Identification Checklist (CAADA DASH) as a starting point. Advice is available for professionals on the MARAC RIC from Harbour (03000 20 25 25) or the MARAC Co-ordinator on 0191 3752072.**

**Deal with any immediate risks, including risks to others and yourself.  
Check records for risk information or warnings.  
Contact emergency services if required.**

## Case meets MARAC Criteria (People aged 16 or over)

1. Be clear with the victim about confidentiality and **MARAC** procedures.
2. Complete the **CAADA-DASH** Risk Identification Checklist with the victim where possible.
3. Complete **MARAC** referral form.
4. Forward **MARAC** referral form either direct to **MARAC** at **Marac@durham.pnn.police.uk** or contact your agency's single point of contact (**SPOC**) for **MARAC** who will forward to **MARAC** coordinator.

**Your agency SPOC:**

5. Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (**IDVA**) or Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (**ISVA**) will contact the victim.
- 6 **MARAC** meeting takes place and victims views are presented by **IDVA/ISVA**.
7. Action Plan is developed.

Where the case is visibly high risk or based on your professional judgement you have serious concerns about a victim's situation you **MUST** make a referral into **MARAC**.

**Contact MARAC – 0191 3752072**

## Case meets safeguarding adults criteria

Domestic abuse is a form of abuse covered by multi-agency safeguarding adults policy and procedures.

Where the victim of domestic abuse is a Vulnerable Adult as per "No Secrets" definition:

- aged 18 or over; and
- who is or maybe eligible for community care services because of age, disability or illness; and
- who is unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.
- raising a safeguarding alert must be considered for all those persons meeting the above criteria where the MARAC route is not being followed.

To make a safeguarding adults alert:

1. Telephone **Social Care Direct (03000 26 79 79)** or contact allocated Social Worker if you are aware they have one.

Social Care Direct will decide whether safeguarding procedures need to be invoked.

Further practice guidance around domestic abuse and safeguarding adults is available on Durham County Councils website.

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## Case does not meet **MARAC** or safeguarding adults criteria

You still need to take action and support the victim.

Long term involvement.

1. Consider immediate and long term risks.
2. Signpost/refer the victim to domestic abuse support services - **Harbour (03000 20 25 25)**.
3. Share information with other relevant agencies.
4. Regularly revisit level of risk in terms of **MARAC** and safeguarding action.
5. Consider a referral to the Multi Agency Intervention Service (**MAIS**) where there are other issues, for example ASB, crime and other underlying problems. Always assess the history and not just each incident in isolation.

### Short term involvement

1. Consider immediate and long term risks.
2. Review any previous risks/decision-making in relation to domestic abuse or safeguarding adults – do not assume it remains the same.
3. Discuss basic safety plan with alleged victim – ensure they know where to go for help if they need it.
4. Signpost/refer to domestic abuse support services (see over).
5. Share information with other relevant agencies.
6. Consider whether case needs allocating to a longer term worker.
7. Ensure recording is clear for future workers who may become involved.

## Cases where children are involved (people aged under 18)

Remember that children are always impacted by domestic abuse. They are at risk of significant harm by direct abuse and from hearing, witnessing or intervening in incidents. This will be dealt with under multi-agency safeguarding children procedures.

If you have a concern that a child has been affected by domestic abuse:

1. Telephone **Children's First Contact (03000 26 79 79)**.
2. Complete referral and initial information record.

### In all circumstances

- **Document** decision-making, actions taken to manage risk and rationale for sharing or not sharing information.
- Be aware of your **professional role** and consult with other partners to: clarify their roles and responsibilities, share information and seek advice e.g. Police, health, housing, domestic abuse/violence specialists.
- **Follow up** any referrals.
- When **signposting** to other agencies always consider risks associated with the perpetrator finding leaflets/letters etc.



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## **Good practice guidance when responding to an adult victim of domestic abuse.**

### **If you suspect that abuse is happening but it is not disclosed:**

- When your suspicions are raised it is important that you act on them. You could provide the only opportunity for the victim to tell someone.
- Remember it can be dangerous to ask about domestic abuse in front of anyone else, particularly a partner. A later opportunity should be identified to speak to the person alone or pass your concerns onto another professional who could also attempt to ask. Also, children who are able to speak may later mention the conversation.
- Ensure privacy – you are unlikely to receive a disclosure if someone might overhear.
- Show the person you have time to listen – if you appear rushed or uninterested you are less likely to receive a disclosure.
- Reassure about confidentiality and explain the limits of this, e.g. “I’m going to ask you a question and I want you to know that whatever you tell me will go no further without your permission, unless I believe a child or vulnerable person is at risk.”
- Begin with open questions, e.g. “tell me how things are going”.
- Follow up with direct questions, e.g. “I notice that you seem anxious/have some bruises/often miss appointments (whatever your concern is), is there anything happening at home that you are worried about? Is anything happening in your life that is making you feel unsafe? Is someone hurting you?”
- It may be necessary to ask more than once, as many victims do not identify that they are experiencing abuse if it is not physical.

### **Responding to an initial disclosure:**

- Be sensitive, respectful and listen carefully to what you are being told.
- Seek to empower victims, not to take over or make decisions for them. Ask them what they want you to do.
- Remain non-judgemental – never imply that the victim is to blame for the abuse.
- Validate the victim’s experience; tell them you are glad they told you.
- Give key messages, e.g. you are not alone, you do not deserve to be treated like this, there is help available for you.

### **Address immediate safety issues:**

- Ensure the immediate safety of the victim and anyone else in the family.
- Do not take any action that could place you or your colleagues at risk of violence.
- Seek emergency assistance if needed.

### **The person doesn’t want you to take any action:**

- Consider mental capacity, coercion, public interest, risks of significant harm.
- Always leave the door open for future discussion e.g. “You can contact me in the future if you feel you need further help and support”.



## **Good practice guidance when responding to a child who is a victim of domestic abuse.**

### **Domestic abuse framing question for children (under 16):**

“We know that in many families, mums and dads have arguments and disagreements, does that ever happen in your family?”

To obtain accurate and reliable information from a child regarding a domestic abuse situation the language and questions must be appropriate for the child’s age and developmental stage.

Professionals should not press a child for answers. Instead:

- Listen and believe what the child says;
- Reassure the children that the abuse is not their fault, and it is not their responsibility to stop it from happening;
- Give several telephone numbers, including Childline, Durham Police and local domestic abuse services.
- Explain the limits of confidentiality and your safeguarding responsibilities.

### **For young people (16-17years old):**

- Use the adult questioning techniques and refer to domestic abuse specialist services.
- Safety plan with young person
- Teenage pregnancy with domestic abuse is high risk. MARAC and child protection procedures should be initiated.

## **Good practice guidance when working with perpetrators of domestic abuse.**

Be alert to and prepared to receive and clarify a disclosure about domestic violence from an abusive person. However, remember that the majority of abusers will deny or minimise the domestic violence which they are perpetrating.

You may have contact with a perpetrator directly or in the context of a family. They may present with a problem such as substance misuse, stress, depression or aggressive or offending behaviour – without reference to abusive behaviour in the household or relationship.

Before seeking to clarify a disclosure from an alleged perpetrator, professionals should first of all take into account their own safety, the safety of any children, the safety of the victim and the safety of any other potential victims (such as ex-partners or extended family members).

### **Clare’s Law**

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is designed to provide victims with information that may protect them from an abusive situation before it ends in tragedy. The scheme allows the police to disclose information about a partners’ previous history of domestic violence or violent acts. Please ring 101 to make an application.



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# **Domestic abuse support services**

## **In an emergency always call 999**

### **Durham Police**

In an emergency call 999 (all victims)

For advice and support call 101

### **Countywide Domestic Abuse Outreach Services for women, men & children/young people**

#### **Harbour Support Services**

durham@myharbour.org.uk

Tel:03000 20 25 25

### **Women's Refuges :**

#### **Derwentside**

Tel: 0120 728 2193

#### **Peterlee**

Tel:0191 586 8890

#### **Wear Valley Women's Aid Refuge**

Tel: 01388 600 094

#### **Durham Women's Refuge**

Tel:0191 386 5951

### **Victim Support - County Durham Area**

#### **Bishop Auckland**

Tel : 01388 664 111

### **Broken Rainbow**

(Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender victims)

#### **Advice and support**

0300 999 5428

### **Men's Advice Line**

(male victims)

0808 801 0327

### **Alcohol or Drug Support Services**

For initial advice contact:

Peterlee Substance Misuse Service

Tel: 0191 587 2194

# Domestic abuse support services

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### **Housing issues:**

For housing advice and support please contact Durham County Councils Housing Solutions Service on: 03000 268840 or 03000 260801

### **Angelou Centre**

(Black, Minority, Ethnic women and children, women with no recourse to public funds)

### **Outreach, advice and support**

0191 226 0394

### **Stalking**

The National Stalking Helpline ([link](#)) provides guidance and information.

Tel : 0808 802 0300

### **Forced Marriage**

A forced marriage is **“A marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties, where duress is a factor”**.

Forced marriages became a crime in June 2014 they are a form of domestic abuse and are dealt with as such by the Police. For further information and advice **contact the CHOICE helpline.**

0800 5999 365

Information and advice is also available from the Halo Project at [www.haloproject.co.uk](http://www.haloproject.co.uk)

### **Honour based Violence (HBV)**

“Honour based violence” is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community’. HBV is a very sensitive issue and confidentiality is crucial, please seek advice from your supervisor about any concerns you may have.

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Can take place because of cultural, social or religious beliefs but it can have negative effects on a girl's health and wellbeing. For further advice and guidance on HBV and FGM contact :Police on101 or Social Care Direct : 03000 26 79 79.



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