

PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE



SUPPORTING THOSE AT RISK of Domestic Abuse



“ DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK ”

This guide has been written to support a range of workers providing services to individuals who have experienced domestic abuse, including children and young people.

Through your work you will regularly encounter people who have experienced domestic abuse, whether they disclose to you or not. This information should increase your understanding, and help you to recognise, support and respond to those who have experienced such abuse. You are not expected to be an expert, but you can play a crucial part in responding to the immediate and long term impact on those affected.

Domestic abuse is one form of gender based violence where women are predominately the victim. Many women will experience more than one form of such abuse – more information is available from **Fife Violence Against Women Partnership**

Victims of domestic abuse often blame themselves, minimise what has happened and may be reluctant to disclose. They often feel ashamed or afraid they will not be believed.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic abuse (as gender based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include:

- Physical abuse: assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviours
- Sexual abuse: acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will
- Mental and emotional abuse: such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends.

National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland, Scottish Government 2000

Domestic abuse is persistent and controlling behaviour. It is very common, usually perpetrated by men against women and children. Some men may be abused by their female partner and it occurs in same sex relationships. **It is about control, manipulation and humiliation.**

- It is a pattern of domination and isolation
- undermines self-confidence and self-esteem
- cuts across class, ethnic and social boundaries
- happens when cohabiting or living independently
- often involves serious and sustained physical and sexual abuse which can cause injuries and lead to long-term health problems
- involves fear and threats
- includes manipulating or forcing sexual acts
- includes withholding money and finances
- often involves stalking
- includes distributing intimate images

The key risk factor for experiencing domestic abuse is being female, but anyone can be a victim, at any time in their life. Repeat victimisation is common with the abuse often increasing in severity and frequency.

Domestic abuse impacts on children's health, relationships, behaviour and education - all of which have implications for the support children need from services. Children do not need to be directly subject to abuse to be affected by it. The impact on children at different developmental stages show the broad range of ways in which children react to their environments.

- Babies living with domestic abuse are at greater risk of ill health, poor sleeping habits, excessive screaming and disrupted attachment patterns
- Children of pre-school age tend to show most behavioural disturbance and are particularly vulnerable to blaming themselves for adult anger
- Older children and young people are more likely to exhibit disruption in their school and social environments

PREVALENCE

In 2015/16 there were 4,047 domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police in Fife and Fife Women's Aid supported 1,017 women and 362 children. We know that many incidents go unreported, or may be known to your service - but not others.

ATTACHMENT

Perpetrators of domestic abuse often undermine a woman's mothering capacity as part of the abuse of power and control leading to disrupted attachment. Supporting the non-abusive parent (usually the mother) is an essential in ensuring the child's wellbeing. Where children have protective factors in their lives, they can demonstrate high levels of resilience, recovering from trauma more quickly and completely.

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

A significant proportion of women accessing services live with domestic abuse, if you have concerns – **ask** – it lets survivors know that you and your service are open to talking about domestic abuse and makes it easier for them to talk to you. Don't assume that the person you are asking will be offended or hostile to your questions. If they are angry, it doesn't mean you shouldn't have asked, they may come back later and want to discuss it when they are more able to do so.

If you have concerns about domestic abuse - ask



You have a professional responsibility to engage with survivors of domestic abuse and provide a high quality responsive to individual need.

SUPPORT DISCLOSURE

Your role will vary depending on the nature of your contact, whether it is one-off or ongoing, however you should ensure the following:

- Provide a safe, quiet and confidential space
- Ask non-threatening and open questions
- Treat the service user with respect and dignity
- Ensure there are no access barriers e.g language, learning disability

You don't need to be an expert, there are specialist agencies that can support you. You don't need to feel alone in offering support.

Raising the subject of domestic abuse might feel daunting and you may be anxious of doing or saying the wrong thing.

Victims of domestic abuse report that they wish someone had asked, as it would have made it easier to get help.

INDIRECT QUESTIONS:-

- Help me understand why you are upset.
- What else is going on for you that you might need help with?
- If it is difficult for you to talk about what has happened to you, that is ok, we can take it slowly.



DIRECT QUESTIONS:-

- Do you feel safe at home?
- Tell me what has happened.
- What do you need help with?
- Would it be easier to talk to someone else (consider male/female option)

Those experiencing domestic abuse often minimise their experiences and may choose not to disclose. A range of questions may be required to get a complete picture of the situation.

■ HOW TO DEAL WITH A DISCLOSURE

The victim / survivor may never have disclosed before, acknowledge talking about it might be difficult for them.

- be calm
- validate their feelings and acknowledge the impact of the abuse
- indicate that you believe them and reassure them that they are not to blame
- ask if they want to talk about it (in their own time and at their own pace)
- let them know you are concerned about them, and any children, and you are willing to help
- tell them there are people who can help - give information about services and resources

Be aware of your own reactions, which should be empathic. You want to avoid the following:

- excessive grief, sadness or distress
- reaction of anger or shock
- the need to rescue or to be over-protective
- any collusion with the perpetrator

■ COPING STRATEGIES FOR YOU

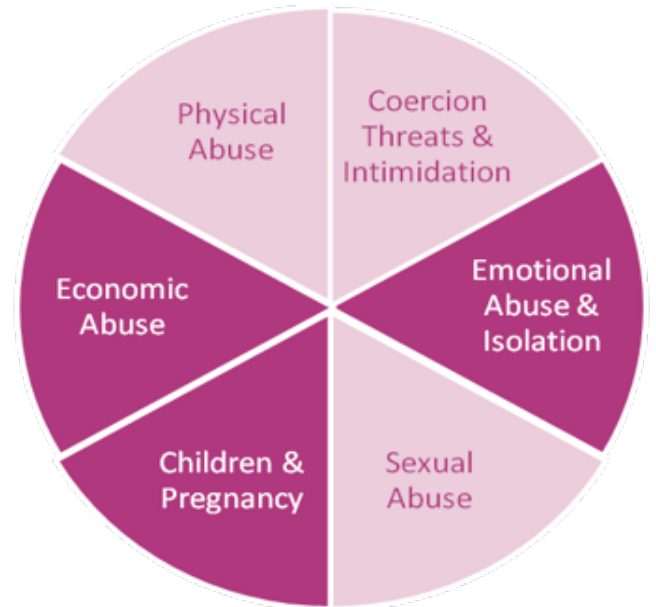
You shouldn't feel alone with this, the following will help:

- immediate support at work, talk to a trusted colleague (be aware of confidentiality)
- supervision
- training
- focus on positives rather than negatives
- find activities that help you relax and unwind at home
- workload balance

RISK ASSESSMENT

Your service will have its own policy and procedures for addressing domestic abuse. Partner organisations in Fife have adopted a risk assessment tool developed by Safe Lives for MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conferencing) (see page 18)

This checklist gives a consistent tool for working with adult victims of domestic abuse helping to identify who is at high risk of harm. It captures the victim's assessment of their situation which combined with your professional judgement should give a fairly accurate assessment of the situation considering these key areas.



Coercion, threats and intimidation – what are the victim's fears - s/he usually knows the abuser better than anyone? Is the victim being stalked, are there excessive texts, phone calls, uninvited visits, damage to property? Being pursued after separation is particularly dangerous. Phrases such as "If I can't have you no one else can..." need to be taken seriously

Emotional abuse and Isolation – a victim may be prevented from seeing family or friends or creating support networks. It can make it more difficult for a victim to leave and can impact on mental health. Victims may blame themselves, minimise and deny how serious their situation is.

Sexual Abuse including the use of threats, force or intimidation to obtain sex, deliberately inflicting pain during sex, or combining sex and violence and using weapons.

Children and Pregnancy – pregnancy can be a trigger for escalation. The presence of children can increase the risk for the mother. Child contact can be used to access the victim – there may be fears that children will be harmed

Economic Abuse is a common form of control that can impact on safety options available to a victim; they may not have access to money in their own right

Physical Abuse can take many forms from a push or shove to a punch, use of weapons, choking or strangulation – any escalation is important to identify.

When someone discloses domestic abuse to you – you have the opportunity to help them think about ways they can improve their (and possibly their children's) safety. This may be the only time you see them, or there may be a long gap before they come back to you. This is a really valuable piece of work to prioritise if you have the opportunity.

- Safety planning can empower victims
- Need not be complicated but tailored to individual circumstance
- A living document that is adapted to new circumstances

Fife Violence Against Women Partnership has safety planning tools you can use available at:

www.fifedirect.org.uk



In addition to the support you can offer yourself, there are a range of services in Fife that can help someone experiencing domestic abuse.

Those experiencing domestic abuse often need support from a range of services so good partnership working is important and support to co-ordinate help can be crucial.


**MARAC
(multi-agency risk assessment conferencing) co-ordinates the response for highest risk domestic abuse cases.**

If you have serious concerns you should complete the MARAC risk assessment tool with the victim and consider a referral to MARAC.

In lower risk cases it may be that you can help co-ordinate services and help the service user get the help they need when they need it.

Fife Women's Aid (women only)

- emotional and practical support
- refuge accommodation
- independent advocacy
- counselling
- befriending service

 **0808 802 5555 (24hours/ 7 days a week)** Support line
01383 732289 Business line

Shakti Women's Aid (ethnic minority women)

- information, practical / emotional support
- temporary refuge accommodation.
- help with resettlement.
- forced marriage

 **01383 431243**

Public Protection Unit (Domestic Abuse)– police / social work (men and women)

Advice and support to victims, including referrals to Woman's Aid, home security reviews, advice about the various legal options. Practical assistance including police alarms (highest risk), hand held alarms and where necessary mobile telephones

 **101**
e-mail: FifeDAIU@scotland.pnn.police.uk

National Domestic Abuse Helpline (women and men)

 **0800 027 1234**

Saje Scotland (women only)

Structured groups for women addressing domestic abuse, the impact and life choices

 **01592 786701**
e-mail: sajescotland@yahoo.co.uk

Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project

Counselling for survivors of childhood sexual abuse who also experience domestic abuse.

01592 644217



email: info@kasp.org.uk

Prevention First (Housing Advice) (men and women)

Providing housing advice, assessment and referral to specialist agencies to anyone in Fife who is homeless, threatened with homelessness or has a housing issue:

- range of targeted housing advice appointment and interventions
- referring to Fife Keyfund, Fife Law Centre and other specialist agencies
- referring to targeted Prevention First short term housing support

To arrange an appointment or to attend the drop-in services telephone or call into

- Fife Council local office
 - Home4Good Resource Centre
 - Kingdom Housing Association / Ore Valley Housing Association;
 - YMCA or Gilven House, Glenrothes
-

Safe, Secure and Supported @ Home including Fife Cares (men and women)

Offer a free security risk assessment to those with experience of domestic abuse including advice and where necessary provision of:

- Personal safety
- Door and window security
- Security lighting
- Intruder alarms



03451 551503

Do it On-line: www.fifedirect.org.uk/doitonline/


Fife Women's Aid Children and Young People's Support Service

Provides 1:1 support and group work opportunities to any young person who is affected by domestic abuse. Support can be provided at home, in schools and/or any appropriate external venue.

 **0808 802 5555** (24hours/ 7 days a week)

CEDAR plus (children experiencing domestic abuse recovery)

Therapeutic groupwork programmes for children (0 to 16 years) and their mothers

 **01592-583676** to discuss referral with CEDAR co-ordinator

Family and Community Support Team (FACST)

FACST provides support to vulnerable children, young people and their families in partnership with other services:

- targeted support and intervention for children, young people and their families
- working with families in a holistic way to address issues of concern
- helping to build the capacity of individuals and families

There are a number of other processes that can enhance safety and wellbeing of victims and hold perpetrators to account. In the course of your work you may become aware of the following, these support a holistic response to addressing domestic abuse in Fife.

MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) (men and women)

Practitioners risk assess and share information about high risk domestic abuse cases enabling a multi-agency risk management plan to be agreed. MARAC Practitioner's Guidance provides information including risk assessment, safety planning and referring. Or contact the MARAC Coordinator.



03451 555 555 ext:441965
email: marac@fife.gcsx.gov.uk

MATAC (multi-agency tasking and co-ordination)

this is a police led process, where multi-agency sharing of information efficiently and effectively targets repeat domestic abuse perpetrators - those who present the greatest risk of harm to victims.

Disclosure Scheme Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS)

is a Police Scotland initiative. It is a formal mechanism to make inquiries where there are concerns about a partner who may have been abusive in the past. If police checks show a record of violent behaviour, or there is other information to indicate that they may present a risk, then the police will consider sharing this information. The request can come from an individual enquiring about their own partner, a third party (eg family or friends) who has concerns or a professional.
[Link to police Scotland website](#)

Domestic Abuse New Relationship Form (DANRF)

has been developed for use by statutory agencies to share information when a perpetrator of domestic abuse develops a new relationship. This is to ensure that all safety/protective measures can be put in place for the new partner and any children, and where necessary disclosures made regarding the perpetrator's offending.

Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Groupwork Programme

Social Work Criminal Justice run court mandated groups to challenge men's abusive behaviour towards their partner. There is partner support provided in partnership with Fife Women's Aid.

Fife VAWP

provides a range of learning and development opportunities which are widely advertised. For more information contact:



01592 583690

email: fdasap@fife.gov.uk

MARAC RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

- Has current incident resulted in injury?
- Is victim frightened?
- What is she/he afraid of (further violence)?
- Is victim isolated from family / friends?
- Is victim depressed or suicidal?
- Have they separated or tried to separate within the last year?
- Is there conflict over child contact?
- Does perp constantly text / call / contact / follow / stalk / harass ?
- Is victim pregnant or had a baby within 18 months?
- Are there vulnerable adults in the household?
- Is abuse happening more often?
- Is abuse getting worse?
- Is perp controlling or jealous?

- Has perp used weapons against victim?
- Has perp threatened to kill anybody - does the victim believe they would?
- Has perp attempted to strangle / choke / suffocate victim?
- Does perp do or say things of a sexual nature?
- Is there any other person victim afraid of?
- Has perp hurt anyone else (children / family / ex partners)?
- Has perp mistreated a family pet or animal?
- Financial issues?
- Does the perp have any alcohol / drug / mental health problems?
- Has perp threatened suicide?
- Has perp broken bail / interdict / order / child contact?
- Has perp been in trouble with Police or have a criminal history?

▶ PLEASE ADVISE THAT INFORMATION MAY BE SHARED WITH APPROPRIATE AGENCIES

Based on CAADA checklist www.caada.org.uk

NOTES:

