

What should I do if I suspect domestic violence/abuse or receive a disclosure?

- 1) Observe internal & multi agency safeguarding procedures on reporting immediate safeguarding concerns to the police.
- 2) Consider whether any associated children or adults may be at risk. Follow the links to seek guidance or make a safeguarding referral: [Children](#) [Adults](#)
- 3) If you need help for a child or young person affected by domestic abuse, please click [here](#).

At this time, is the victim/survivor willing access support from a specialist service?

YES

NO

- ✓ Offer reassurance that help will continue to be available and share number for UAVA Helpline: **0800 802 0028**.
- ✓ Complete a [DASH risk checklist](#) **or** follow your agency's protocol to ensure this is completed. The DASH risk checklist will tell you how much danger a victim is in.
- ✓ If you are concerned that the individual is at immediate risk, follow multi agency procedures and contact [UAVA](#) for guidance. UAVA can reach out to victims who feel unable to engage or who are at high risk of serious harm or homicide. This can include preparing a referral to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where appropriate. Wherever possible secure consent, however the referral can still progress without this.
- ✓ Record your decisions and share information proactively with relevant agencies.

- ✓ Complete a [DASH risk checklist](#) **or** follow your agency's protocol to ensure this is completed. The DASH risk checklist will tell you how much danger a victim is in. The format includes an opportunity to share the victim **and** the worker's perception of risk.

Options available:

- Find a safe space to support the victim/survivor to call United against Violence and Abuse ([UAVA](#))
- Public Helpline: **0800 802 0028**.
- Make an [immediate referral](#) on behalf of the victim/survivor. Include a completed DASH with your referral wherever possible.

UAVA Business/referral line: 0116 255 0004

- If you are concerned that the individual is at immediate risk, follow multi agency procedures and contact [UAVA](#) for guidance. UAVA can reach out to victims who feel unable to engage or who are at high risk of serious harm or homicide. This can include preparing a referral to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) where appropriate. Wherever possible secure consent however, the referral can still progress without this.
- ✓ Record your decisions and share information proactively with relevant agencies. Inform any originating referrer of outcome.
- ✓ **Always** record safe contact instructions from and share this UAVA along with your referral. Knowing the safest times/days to call maximises the chances of making early contact and ensures a proactive start.

Getting it right first time

Have you ever worried that a patient or client is suffering domestic abuse? Content for this practical resource is drawn from [Safe Lives website](#) and is designed to help you know what to do if you are worried about someone.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse includes any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between persons who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This includes 'honour'-based violence, female genital mutilation, and forced marriage.

Step 1: Identify: Who is most at risk?

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. Women are more likely to be victims, but men can also be the target of domestic abuse. Children can also be victims of domestic abuse – whether they live in a home with adult victims or are themselves harmed directly.

Things to look out for that may indicate domestic abuse:

- Injuries without explanation (normally people will volunteer an explanation)
- Injuries which are minimised or concealed
- A partner who is unwilling to allow a patient or client to be alone with professionals
- A patient or client who appears passive and dominated by their partner
- Anxiety, depression and being withdrawn, particularly if this is not usual for the patient or client

Step 2: Ask: Find out more

If you have concerns, always try to find out more from the patient or client. Make sure the person you are concerned about is on their own, without children, partner or other family members present. And if you are talking through an interpreter, make sure they are independent of the family.

Ways to start the conversation:

- Are you happy?
- How are things in your relationship?
- Is anybody hurting you? (don't refer to 'partner' as it could be someone else)
- Are you or your children scared or upset?
- Do you feel safe at home?

If the situation is urgent – for example there are injuries or risk of immediate harm	Call 999
If children are at risk	Call Children and Families Service and follow your organisation's child protection policy
Complete a DASH where it is safe to do so and at the first possible opportunity.	<p>Option 1: Complete a DASH risk checklist. The DASH risk checklist will tell you how much danger a victim is in. The format also offers an opportunity to share the victim and the worker's perception of risk.</p> <p>If you are not trained or able to complete a DASH, seek advice from your service manager or your service's domestic abuse champion about who can support with this. You can also seek assistance and referral support, via Local specialist domestic abuse services</p> <p>Agree a safe method of contact, including times or days of the week. This will be vital information to share with specialist domestic abuse services.</p>

	<p>If the DASH suggests high-risk, refer to your local MARAC. (see flowchart above for contact details and next steps) You do not need to get your client's consent to refer to MARAC if they are at high risk, although you should seek it.</p> <p>Where the worker holds significant concerns but the victim appears to be minimising, a referral can be progressed based upon professional judgement. Contact your team manager or specialist domestic abuse services for guidance.</p> <p>Every area of England and Wales has a MARAC, a local meeting which discusses every high-risk case of domestic abuse. They will make sure that the victim gets the help they need to get safe. And every victim discussed at MARAC will get 1-2-1 support from an IDVA, a trained domestic abuse specialist. Any professional can refer a high-risk case of domestic abuse to MARAC.</p> <p>The DASH risk checklist provides a common language of risk and is used by every police force and most other agencies across the UK.</p> <p>Option 2: If you are not able to complete a DASH, seek advice from your service manager or your service's domestic abuse champion about who can support with this. You can also seek assistance and referral support, via Local specialist domestic abuse services</p> <p>Agree a safe method of contact, including times or days of the week. This will be vital information to share with specialist domestic abuse services.</p>
<p>If the victim is not at current risk but are scared or frightened, or unhappy in their relationship</p>	<p>Completing a DASH risk checklist will tell you how much danger the victim is in.</p> <p>If the person is feels they do not wish engage at this time, offer reassurance that help will continue to be available and they will always receive a supportive and non-judgemental response.</p> <p>Make sure the victim knows about sources of help and support, including local domestic abuse services, and encourage them to get in contact.</p> <p>Find out if you can contact them safely and ensure they know how to contact you. If possible, arrange another appointment soon. This will give you another chance to discuss how to get them the right support</p> <p>You can ask what help you can offer at this time – this could include offering to contact a local domestic abuse service or the police.</p>

Don't be tempted to ask too much or feel that you have to ask everything at once as this might be overwhelming. Be prepared for the answers and don't express shock or disgust. Treat people with respect even if you think they are putting themselves at risk or denying that abuse is happening.

Step 3: act

Based on what you have seen and heard, make a judgment about what you should do next. Think about whether the abuse is current, how urgent the situation is, and whether there are children involved.

If you are still unsure about what to do, speak to a local or national domestic abuse service, the police or children's services for advice. They can suggest the right way forward and will speak initially on an anonymous basis.

Information-sharing

Sometimes people don't act because of concerns about whether or not they are allowed to share information. You can always share information with the consent of the victim, and you often can without consent too. If you feel a child is at risk you do not need consent to tell children's services or the police.

The best way to decide whether to share information is to complete a [DASH risk checklist](#).

Remember:

- Never make decisions for people or advise them to leave their home or relationship. This may put them in danger.
- Use your professional judgement – if you sense there's something wrong, you should act on it
- Be human and use everyday language - people may not see themselves as victims of domestic abuse. It's hard to talk about, so acknowledge that and thank them for being honest with you
- Make a record – make notes of what has been said to you, including the time, date and injuries, including as much detail as possible. Use the person's words wherever you can. Your professional judgement is also important. Write down what you think or feel about the situation and why.
- Act on it - it took a lot of courage for the victim to tell you. Don't keep what you know to yourself. The victim and family need you to help them get help.

For more information about responding effectively to domestic abuse visit:

<http://rsb.org.uk/domestic-abuse>