

## Domestic Abuse: Routine Enquiry

**Domestic Abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. It is not limited to people who live together. Domestic abuse is a crime, including coercive control. Children are also victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse.**

**Research tells us that victims are more likely to disclose abuse and seek help if asked a direct question. This briefing will support all professionals to find the confidence to ask questions in order to support victims and their children to access safety.**

### Key Facts

**1 in 4 women will experience some form of domestic abuse in their lifetime. In the UK 2 women a week die as a result of Domestic Abuse**

**Anyone can be a victim, but women, including older women, and people with physical disabilities, mental ill health, substance dependence, and/or learning disabilities are at particularly high risk**

**Attempting to end or leave an abusive relationship can rapidly increase risk for victims. There are many barriers to accessing safety for victims.**

**Disadvantages related to aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or class, can intersect with each other to increase risk of harm and increase barriers to seeking help**

**Witnessing domestic abuse is a form of abuse against children and can cause significant harm.**

**80% of women in an abusive relationship seek help from health services, usually their GP, at least once and this may be their first and only contact with professionals**

### Routine Enquiry

**Proactive routine questions about domestic abuse, in the course of your work, will increase the chances of victims speaking out and accessing help. Bear in mind that many victims may not yet identify their experience as domestic abuse so ask exploratory questions without jargon or assumptions. Ask in private.**

#### Example Questions

"Many women experience intimidation or violence at home and I know it can be hard to talk about..."

...Is there anyone in your life that ever hurts you or who you're scared of?"

...Do you feel worried about anyone being angry about things you do?"

...Has this ever been an issue for you?"

Using open questions to follow up can help people tell their story, eg, "tell me more about that" or "what sort of things does he do?"

**Key message: ask!**



## What can you do to help?

When you ask questions, you may receive disclosures of abuse. Many professionals are concerned about how to respond.

**If you suspect an immediate risk to their safety call 999 -you do not need consent for this**

**It is vital to risk assess straight away. Indicators of high risk are:**

- Recent pregnancy or birth
- Imminent or recent attempts at ending the relationship
- Victim is isolated or marginalised - disabilities of any kind, language barriers, immigration issues, rural, little or no family support.
- Incidents of perpetrator threatening suicide
- Sexual violence
- Stalking and harassment
- Honour based violence
- Victim or perpetrator has complex needs such as mental ill health or substance misuse
- Victim perceives high risk - take victims very seriously if they express fear for their safety!

**The DASH risk assessment is a standardised and evidence-based tool used nationally. Ideally you should use this tool when you receive a disclosure.**



Access the risk assessment tool here

It is suitable for all professionals. If you receive a disclosure of domestic abuse you should strive to undertake the DASH risk assessment with the victim as soon as possible. Don't leave it to someone else, as this might be the only opportunity.

Make time for the questions. Go at a pace the victim appears comfortable with. Only proceed with consent. Do not push them to answer/provide detail when they don't want to as it can feel re-traumatising.

Guidance on how to use the tool



An introduction to completing the DASH risk assessment



## Safety Planning and Accessing Specialist Help

Once you have made an assessment of risk, whether using the DASH tool or not, you need to take steps to increase safety and help the victim access specialist support.

- **If the victim is or might be at immediate danger call 999** - you do not need consent to share information with the police
- **Ask what the victim wants** and what the barriers are to safety in their view
- **Offer support then and there to call for specialist help** - if the victim is safe right now and with you, this is a good opportunity to get specialist help. Do not wait to refer after she has gone. By then, the opportunity for her to get specialist support may be missed
- **If the victim is or might be at immediate danger call 999**
- **Call Hillingdon Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service (HDAAS) 07874 620 954** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm for advice, guidance, risk assessment and immediate safety planning, or
- **Call National Domestic Abuse Helpline 24/7 0808 2000 247** – [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk) for risk assessment support, immediate safety planning, support and access to refuge spaces
- **If there are children involved** in any way, also refer this as a child safeguarding concern via [Stronger Families Hub](#)
- **If the victim has care and support needs** (eg, mental health, learning disability, physical disability, frailty, long term illness) also raise a safeguarding concern to the Local Authority 01895 556633

# Further Resources and Guidance



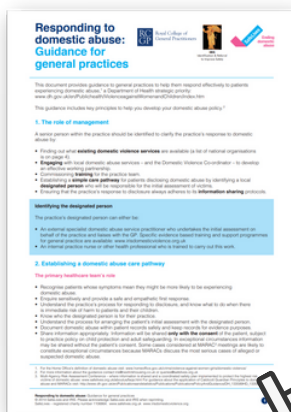
Support for the LGBTQ+ community and specialist information

**NICE** National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

NICE guidance for health services on Routine Enquiry to detect domestic abuse



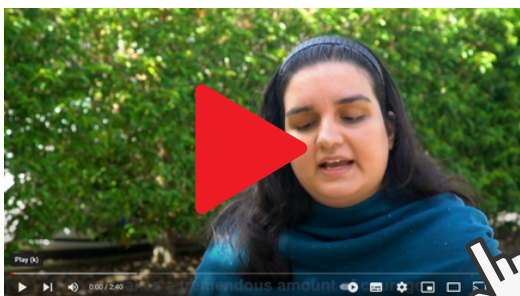
Guidance on assessing and managing risk of coercive control including the risks for children in the household.



Guidance for GPs on responding to domestic abuse



Learning from child safeguarding practice reviews: Multi agency briefing on domestic abuse



Safeguarding adults with disabilities from domestic abuse



Walking on Eggshells: Survivors' voices on coercive control and the harm that it does