



Multi Agency Safeguarding Protocol in Domestic Abuse Incidents

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Introduction

The risks to the safety and welfare of children associated with domestic abuse are well established. The risks may be direct physical harm or the longer term effects of exposure to such violence. Living with domestic abuse can have an impact on all the five key outcomes for children identified in Every Child Matters (Children Act 2004)

Lessons from Serious Case Reviews, both nationally and within Derbyshire have highlighted that protocol arrangements in Domestic Abuse referrals, need to involve a shared ownership, effective information sharing and appropriate thresholds for referral and intervention. In the case of children at risk of significant harm this should be in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection procedures, in many cases however, this will be through the Common Assessment Framework (early help) and through the provision of support services.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (chapter 2 paragraph 14) notes that the police are, "well placed to identify early when a child's welfare is at risk and when a child may need protection from harm. For example, an officer attending a domestic abuse incident should be aware of the effect of such behaviour on any children in the household".

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (chapter 2 paragraph 17) also highlights the responsibility of staff that provide services to adults in terms of establishing whether there are children in the family and considering whether the children need help or protection from harm. It identifies that children may be at greater risk of harm in families where the adults have mental health problems, misuse substances or alcohol, are in a violent relationship or have complex needs or have learning difficulties.

This protocol brings together a framework of good practice and safeguarding procedures and should be followed for all domestic abuse incidents.

Legislative and Procedural Context

Children Act 2004

Working Together 2010, 2013

From April 1st 2013, the Government's definition of domestic violence was amended to include 'coercive control' and those aged 16-17 years old.

Procedure

Initial Incident: The police attend an incident of domestic abuse. If the incident has been categorised as High risk or is already on the **critical register* due to previous incidents or concerns, the police officers dealing with the incident will be alerted to this before their arrival at the incident. The ACPO accredited Domestic Abuse Stalking/Harrassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH) risk assessment will be completed. If children are present and are considered at risk of significant harm unless immediate action takes place, the police can remove the children under *Police Protection* for up to 72 hours. This should only be used in emergency situations and in most cases the children can be safeguarded by the perpetrator removing themselves from the situation or the child and a parent staying elsewhere. Involved adults should be informed of the notification to Social Care and other agencies.

Incident passed to the Police Child Abuse Central Referral Unit: The incident is reviewed, with advice from the co-located child protection manager as required and taking into account any previous incidents and concerns. For High risk cases, or those that meet the threshold, a referral is made to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). These meet four weekly and are not convened in an emergency, so safeguarding procedures must still be implemented.

High risk cases are allocated to the Divisional Police Domestic Violence team and the Detective Sergeant may be asked to re-assess incidents that are borderline between Medium and High risk.

Notifications to Social Care, Health and Education, via secure email:

High risk cases are alerted within 24 hours of the risk being assessed to:

- **Call Derbyshire** (Social Care Children and Younger Adults). These are referred via the secure email and are categorised as 'section 47 –Significant Harm' (s47). If these are referred between 9-5pm on weekdays, they are screened by a senior practitioner and if they are referred at the weekend or outside office hours, the Out of Hours service will seek a manager's decision. Following screening, these are then referred to the district office as a s47 or for an initial assessment (children's social care assessment). If the case is already allocated, a s47 will be sent to the relevant worker, or case-noted (if not agreed as a s47) and an alert sent to the allocated worker. If there is an allocated Multi Agency Team worker (MAT), they will also be alerted. A strategy meeting or discussion will take place with the police and a child protection manager to agree immediate actions and to make a decision re convening an initial child protection conference.
- **Health Services** for cases involving children under 5 years and to midwives for pregnant women. This information is shared by the Central Referral Unit with health visitors and the GPs.
- **Education** for all school age children. A secure email is sent to the Education Welfare Department. The child's school is identified and a form is sent via secure email to the relevant Head teacher. The Head is invited to contact for additional information. A new full time administrator post for Education will assist to reduce delay in schools receiving this information. Additionally, a new child protection manager for Education will be based in the Police Central Referral Unit.

Medium risk cases are alerted within **3 days** of the risk being assessed to:

- **Call Derbyshire.** (Social Care Children and Younger Adults). These are referred via the secure email as a s17 children in need referral. The screening is undertaken as above and the outcome will be one of the following, based on an assessment of the risk; passed as an initial assessment (children's social care assessment) to the

district, stepped up to a s47 and passed to the district, sent as a case alert/s47 to an allocated worker, passed as a referral to the relevant multi agency team.

- **Health Services** for cases involving children under 5 and to midwives for pregnant women
- **Education** for all school age children. Process as in High Risk above.

Standard risk cases that meet the jointly agreed criteria are notified to agencies within 7 days of the risk being assessed.

Referral Criteria

All High risk cases will be referred to Social Care, Health and Education. Additionally, referrals will be sent if any of the following circumstances apply;

- It is a medium risk referral
- There is a child under 5
- There have been 3 significant incidents
- A child is present at arrest
- The child is in the arms of the victim
- A child is in the room when objects are thrown
- The victim intends to leave the family home
- The child contacts the police
- The victim or perpetrator is pregnant
- Drink, drugs or mental health are an issue including the victim being suicidal or depressed
- There are other significant reasons to believe that Social Care, Education or Health need to be notified.

Critical Register

Critical register notification will be created on addresses in the following circumstances;

- All High risk DV victim addresses, including any residential address where they are temporarily residing
- All addresses where the children present are on child protection plans
- Medium risk victim addresses where the perpetrator has used a weapon or has access to weapons
- Medium risk victim addresses where there is a non-molestation/restraining order in force
- Where there is a potential risk to officer safety/should be double crewed
- Where the resident perpetrator is already on the Integrated Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Scheme (IDAP)