

Our Approach to Domestic Abuse

The purpose of this guide is to share key learning and reflections from the communities of learning that came together during *Practice Learning Week 2* which took place between 7th-11th February 2022.

Background to this Guidance

During Practice Learning Week 2, social workers came together in their **communities of learning** to share practice examples of their approach domestic abuse. Across the communities we heard about social workers completing direct work and interventions with perpetrators, collaboration with children, parents and networks to create effective safety plans, and an example of a social worker using the DASH checklist as a risk assessment tool in a situation where the son was displaying violence towards his mother. The communities explored stereotypes and assumptions relating to domestic abuse based on factors such as gender, ethnicity and culture.

The Use of Chronologies

We know that referrals often contain information about a specific incident and this means they can lack any sense of context whether in terms of histories, socio-economic circumstances or information on family networks. This can lead us to respond to a specific incident and then later 'play catch up' in terms of trying to situate it in a broader picture. When updated regularly and used well, **chronologies** should enable any practitioner working with the family to understand key events that have happened in the life of a family and the impact this has had upon the child and/or parenting capacity. The chronology will enable us to understand the significance of accumulating concerns and incidents and this is key to keeping children safe.

Click this box to find excellent guidance on chronologies

The DASH Checklist

Remember the **Dash checklist** is a simple risk assessment tool for use by practitioners who work with adult victims of domestic abuse in order to help them identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a MARAC meeting in order to manage their risk. Use the links in the circles to get more information

DASH Risk Checklist & Guidance

Young Person's DASH Risk Checklist

The **Domestic Abuse Toolkit** was produced by young people from South Glos alongside a group of practitioners and aims to assist those who support children who may be affected by domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse Toolkit



1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will suffer Domestic Abuse at some point in their lives

The **Social Graces** is a practical tool to address inequality. In the context of domestic abuse, considering the social graces can enable us to explore and challenge stereotypes such as that all perpetrators are male or cultural assumptions regarding domestic abuse in traveller communities
Watch the film by clicking on the link

Systemic Concepts.

The Social GGGRRRAACCCEEESSS

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse for the first time: the behaviour of one person towards another if they are both 16 or over, they are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive. Behaviour is abusive when it is physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; psychological, emotional or other abuse. The behaviour can be a single incident or a pattern of conduct. This includes so-called 'honour'-based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Domestic abuse is rarely a one off incident and in most cases it will increase in severity and frequency over time.

Many Serious Case Reviews refer to a lack of professional curiosity or respectful uncertainty. Practitioners need to demonstrate a non-discriminatory approach and explore issues to formulate judgements that translate into effective actions. In particular it is vital that professionals understand the complexity of domestic abuse and are curious about what is happening in the child, victim and perpetrator's life. It is important that practitioners do not take everything they are told at face value and that the practitioner finds a way of seeing the suspected victim alone.

MARAC

MARAC stands for **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference**. It is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of different agencies including police, social care, health, probation, and other specialist agencies. The MARAC referral guidance and referral form can be found By clicking the circle

MARAC
Guidance

Specialist Support

Next Link
0800 4700 280
Click for
website

DRIVE
(Perpetrator
Programme)
Click for
website

Julian House
0117 942 4986
Click for
Website



Safety
Planning
Toolbox
Click Here

Practice
Tips

Stay Child Focussed

We must always remember to keep the **child at the centre**; to achieve this we need to explore and assess the impact of the domestic abuse on the child by gathering their views, wishes and feelings.

There are lots of tools we can use to help us to achieve this including the Helping Hand, the Safety House, the Three Houses and don't forget the use of safety objects.

When supporting babies we can use the A Day in the Life of tool and we can also apply our awareness of brain development to assess impact. There are some practice tips regarding brain development and the impact of domestic abuse on unborn children in the 'Practice Tips' circle



Safety Plans

Safety planning is a way of helping adult victims to protect themselves and their children during domestic abuse incidents.

- It helps to plan in advance for the possibility of future violence and abuse
- It helps the victim to think about how they can increase their safety either within a relationship, or if they decide to leave.
- Individualised safety plans should be created for the victim, and for the child or young person.
- Remember, safety planning is a collaborative process meaning that it should be completed together with family members and involved professionals.
- Safety plans should be dynamic meaning they need to be reviewed regularly to ensure they are working and are ultimately promoting safety for the victim and child in the best way possible.
- There are some resources for safety planning with children and young people in the context of domestic abuse available on the social workers tool box website – click the toolbox to access these
- Using written agreements with victims places responsibility on them to keep their children safe and this should be avoided.

Useful Resources – click the circles

Domestic
Abuse
Knowledge &
Practice Hub

NSPCC
Resources

Sharon's Story
Video from
A&S Police

Training available
in South
Gloucestershire