

# Sunderland's Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Referral Pathway

## Enabling disclosure

- There are many reasons why victims won't, or feel they can't, make a disclosure so it's important to build trust to enable a possible future disclosure.
- Always be alert to the possibility that an individual is experiencing domestic abuse and be prepared to offer support or signposting. Keep the local 0800 066 5555 helpline number in your phone.
- Be aware of signs that could indicate abuse is taking place, such as physical injury (e.g. inconsistent explanations for injuries, frequent bruises, covering up injuries), controlling behaviour (e.g. partner always present during appointments, won't allow person to talk for themselves, person has limited access to money) and environmental indicators (e.g. holes in doors/walls, broken furniture, tense atmosphere in the home).
- If you need to use interpreters, ensure they are professional interpreters. **Never** use family members, children or friends where abuse is known or suspected.
- Only ask questions about domestic abuse when victims are **on their own and in private**. Don't ask in front of children who can speak as they may repeat the conversation to the perpetrator

This guidance is **applicable to all victims of domestic abuse**. Domestic abuse is predominantly perpetrated against women by men, however it can be perpetrated within same sex relationships; by women against men; and by other family members such as older children against their parents or the extended family/community as in cases of 'so-called honour based violence'. Domestic abuse impacts upon children and/or vulnerable adults in the household whether they are abused directly by the perpetrator and by hearing, witnessing or intervening in incidents. The emotional impact of domestic abuse can be as great as the physical impact.

Remember: domestic abuse commonly **escalates** and increases in **severity** over time. **Separation does not ensure safety; it often increases the risk. If the victim wishes to separate, ALWAYS** consult specialist domestic abuse agencies (e.g. Wearside Women in Need – WWIN - 0800 066 5555) for support and safety planning advice. Please see overleaf.

**Use the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist** as a starting point. Deal with any immediate risks, including risks to others and yourself. **Check records for risk information or warnings. Contact emergency services if required.**

**Never assume** that someone else will take care of the domestic abuse issues. **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.** Seek confirmation that other professionals/agencies have acted in a way you'd expect. You may be the victim's first and only contact. Remember, victims can deny abuse is happening and minimise the risk/harm due

## Case meets MARAC Criteria (People aged 16 or over)

1. Be clear with the victim about confidentiality and the DASH RIC and [MARAC procedures](#).
2. Complete the [DASH RIC](#) with the victim where possible (14 or more ticks on RIC, meets MARAC criteria)
3. Complete MARAC referral form.
4. Forward MARAC referral form to your agency's single point of contact (SPOC) for MARAC
5. SPOC will then forward your referral to the MARAC Coordinator

The DASH RIC, referral forms, SPOC lists and MARAC info is all available on from the [Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board's online procedures](#) under 'domestic abuse'. Use this space below to note your agency's: SPOC Name:

Tel: and

Email:

If no agency SPOC, contact the Police's MARAC Coordinator Tel 0191 5617289 (or 101) or email [sunderland.marac@northumbria.pnn.police.uk](mailto:sunderland.marac@northumbria.pnn.police.uk)

6. You **must** also refer the victim to the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA): Tel: 0191 565 88 77 or email [idva.team@wwin.cjsm.net](mailto:idva.team@wwin.cjsm.net) for their referral form
7. IDVA will contact the victim if high risk
8. MARAC meeting takes place and victim's views are presented by IDVA
9. Action Plan is developed. Agencies to flag /tag their systems

**Remember:** Where the case is visibly high risk (14 or more ticks) or based on your professional judgement (where you have serious concerns about a victim's situation) you **MUST** make a referral into MARAC via your SPOC and also a referral to the IDVA service.

## Case meets safeguarding adults criteria

Domestic abuse is a form of abuse covered by multi-agency [safeguarding adult's policy and procedures](#).

A victim of domestic abuse is an Adult at Risk (Care Act 2014) if they are aged 18 and over and:

- have needs for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met);
- are experiencing, or are at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

If the above criteria are met you must:

1. Raise a safeguarding adult concern.
2. Go to [www.sunderland.gov.uk/safeguarding](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/safeguarding) and then click on the link for "Report a Safeguarding concern - professionals and volunteers" which will take you to the page where you can download the [safeguarding adult concern \(SAC\) form](#) which you need to complete and submit.
3. For queries or advice Tel: 0191 520 5552 (anytime)
4. It is good practice to make a safeguarding adult referral and MARAC referral if both criteria are met
5. **Further information is available [here](#)**

Make a note of your Agency's Adults Safeguarding Lead:  
Name  
Tel:  
Email

## Case doesn't meet criteria for MARAC or safeguarding adults

You still need to take action and support the victim.

### Short term involvement

1. Consider immediate and long term risks and their needs.
2. Risk can fluctuate so regularly review any levels of risk/decision-making in relation to domestic abuse or safeguarding adults.
3. Discuss basic [safety plan](#) with victim (& any children)
4. Ensure they know where to go for help if they need it. Signpost/refer to domestic abuse support services (see overleaf), if needed.
5. Share information with other relevant agencies with victim's consent.
6. Consider whether case needs allocating to a longer term worker to keep victim engaged.
7. Ensure recording is clear for future workers who may become involved.

### Long term involvement

1. Consider immediate and long term risks and if case needs referring to a longer term worker.
2. Work with the victim to assess their readiness for change.
3. Signpost/refer the victim to domestic abuse support services – WWIN (0800 066 5555) (and see overleaf)
4. Share information with other relevant agencies with victim's consent.
5. Help the victim access other support (e.g. housing, benefits advice, legal advice etc.).
6. Continue to work with the victim to address their needs and help strengthen their protective factors and resilience
7. Risk fluctuates and can escalate over time - regularly revisit level of risk in terms of MARAC and safeguarding action and always assess the history not just each incident in isolation.
8. Always leave the door open for future discussion e.g. "You can contact me in the future if you need support"

## Cases where children are involved (people aged under 18)

Remember that children are always impacted by domestic abuse. They are at risk of significant harm by direct abuse and from hearing, witnessing or intervening in incidents. This will be dealt with under multi-agency safeguarding children procedures. If you have a concern that a child has been affected by domestic abuse:

1. Telephone Children's Safeguarding on 0191 561 7007 (office hours) or 0191 520 5552 (out of hours).
2. Download the Together for Children [child protection / child in need / child care concern referral form](#)
3. For advice, speak to your agency's lead for children's safeguarding.

Your Agency's Children's Safeguarding Lead is:

Name

Tel:

Email

## In all circumstances (adults & children)

- Document decision-making, actions taken to manage risk and rationale for sharing or not sharing information.
- Be aware of your professional role and consult with other partners to: clarify their roles and responsibilities, share information and seek advice e.g. Police, health, housing, domestic abuse specialists.
- Follow up any referrals.
- When signposting to other agencies always consider risks associated with the perpetrator finding leaflets/letters etc.

**Consider mental capacity:** Be aware that when it comes to mental capacity, an apparently unwise decision may be the result of coercion & controlling behaviour by the abuser so you must explore this.

## Domestic abuse and other support services. In an emergency always call 999

[Northumbria Police 999 \(emergency\)](#) or for advice and support call 101  
[Wearside Women in Need \(WWIN\)](#) (refuge accommodation, confidential helpline, outreach support, group work and IDVA service). Support for ALL victims Tel: 0800 066 5555 (24/7).

[Safeguarding Advice](#) 0191 520 7007 or 0191 520 5552 (out of hours).

[Victims First Northumbria](#) (independent victim referral service) 0800 011 3116 or email [enquiries@victimsfirstnorthumbria.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@victimsfirstnorthumbria.org.uk)

[Women's Aid](#) (national 24 hr domestic abuse helpline) 0808 2000 247.

[Men's Advice Line](#) (Confidential helpline to support male victims of domestic violence) 0808 801 0327 (Monday – Friday 10am-5pm)

[Forced Marriage Helpline](#) 0800 5999 247 (not 24 hours).

[Forced Marriage Unit](#) 020 7008 0151.

[Galop](#) (for LGBT+ people who are experiencing domestic violence) 0800 999 5428. Email [help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

[Rape Crisis](#) (provides co-ordination for the rape crisis movement in England and Wales - the website lists local centres. Tel: 0808 802 9999.

[REACH](#) (Rape examination, advice, counselling and help) 0191 221 9222.

[Sunderland Counselling Services](#) (counselling for male and female adult survivors of sexual violence and abuse) 0191 514 7007.

[Angelou Centre](#) (support for BME women and children survivors of violence plus those with no recourse to public funds). Tel: 0191 226 0394.

[The Halo Project](#) (support for those experience honour based violence and forced marriage; plus advice for agencies) 01642 683 045.

[The National Stalking Helpline](#) provides guidance and information 0808 802 0300 (ran by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust).

[Paladin](#) - National Stalking Advocacy Service Tel: 020 3866 4107

[Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#). It is mandatory to report suspected cases of FGM. If you suspect someone is at risk call the Police on 101.

[NSPCC](#) Confidential number for children and young people 0808 800 5000.

[Sunderland City Council – Housing Options](#) 0191 520 5551

[Gentoo Victim Support Service](#) 0191 525 5000

[Legal Advice:](#) Holmes Family Law's 24/7 advice line 0191 500 9338; or Newcastle Law Centre 0191 230 4777 or [www.resolution.org.uk](http://www.resolution.org.uk)

[Drug and Alcohol Helpline \(Adults\)](#) 0800 234 6798 (24hrs a day)

[Drug and Alcohol Helpline \(Children and young people\):](#) Youth Drug and Alcohol Project (YDAP) 0800 169 9892

[Mental Health Advice \(Adults\)](#) 0191 566 5450 or 0191 566 5454

[Washington MIND](#) 0191 417 8043

[Sunderland MIND](#) 0191 5657218 or 07984595542

[Mental Health Advice \(Children and young people\)](#) 0191 566 5500

[Clare's Law](#) To make an application, ring 101, or visit a police station or apply on-line at [www.northumbria.police.uk](http://www.northumbria.police.uk)

### If the person doesn't want you to take any action?

1. Consider mental capacity: explore if any apparently 'unwise' decisions are the result of a victim being coerced and controlled by their abuser.
2. Consider public interest and risks of significant harm.
3. Always leave the door open for future discussion e.g. "you can contact me in the future if you feel you need further help and support".
4. Talk them through some basic safety planning.
5. Give them to local 24/7 domestic abuse helpline number 0800 066 5555 and other contact details for support agencies listed above.

## Good practice guidance when responding to an adult victim of domestic abuse

### What do you do if you suspect that abuse is happening but it is not disclosed, and how do you ask about it?

- When your suspicions are raised it is important that you act on them. You could provide the only opportunity for the victim to tell someone.
- Remember it can be dangerous to ask about domestic abuse in front of anyone else, particularly a partner. A later opportunity should be identified to speak to the person alone or pass your concerns onto another professional who could also attempt to ask. Also, children who are able to speak may later mention the conversation. Ensure privacy – you are unlikely to receive a disclosure if someone might overhear.
- Show the person you have time to listen – if you appear rushed or uninterested you are less likely to receive a disclosure. Make sure you establish how long you have to talk
- Find a quiet area to talk without disruptions.
- Establish where the perpetrator currently is.
- Reassure about confidentiality and explain the limits of this, e.g. "I'm going to ask you a question and I want you to know that whatever you tell me will go no further without your permission, unless I believe a child or vulnerable person is at risk".
- Begin with an open indirect question, e.g. "Are you alright?"; "Is everything OK at home at the moment?"
- Then use framing questions e.g. "Because domestic abuse is so common in our society I have started asking all of my clients/patients about it".
- Follow up with **direct questions** e.g. "Is there anything happening at home that you are worried about? Is anything happening in your life that is making you feel unsafe? Is someone hurting or controlling you?"
- It may be necessary to ask more than once, as many victims do not identify that they are experiencing abuse if it is not physical.

### How to respond to an initial disclosure:

- Don't appear shocked. Be sensitive, respectful and listen carefully to what you are being told. Record what they tell you in their own words.
- Seek to empower victims, not to take over or make decisions for them. Ask them what they want you to do.
- Remain non-judgmental – never imply that the victim is to blame for the abuse.
- Validate the victim's experience and give key validation statements e.g. "I am glad that you told you", "You are not alone", "You don't deserve to be hit or hurt like this, there's help available".
- Keep the responsibility for the abuse explicitly with the perpetrator.
- Document your decision making and actions.

### Address immediate safety issues:

- Ensure the immediate safety of the victim and anyone else in the family. Ask if they have somewhere safe to go in an emergency
- Don't take any action that could place the victim, or you or your colleagues at risk of violence. Seek emergency assistance if needed.
- Discuss the use of the DASH RIC (see overleaf) or arrange a follow-on private appointment to do this, and discuss the possibility of sharing the information about the disclosure with others who could help.
- Offer your ongoing contact. Carry out basis safety planning by discussing how the victim has/can keep themselves safe until the next time you meet.
- Always get safe contact details for the victim.

## Good practice guidance when responding to a child who is a victim of domestic abuse

To obtain accurate and reliable information from a child regarding a domestic abuse situation the language and questions must be appropriate for the child's age and developmental stage.

**Domestic abuse framing question for children (under 16)** could include: "We know that in many families, mums and dads have arguments and disagreements, does that ever happen in your family?"

**Professionals should not press a child for answers. Instead:**

- Listen and believe what the child says;
- Reassure the children that the abuse is not their fault, and it is not their responsibility to stop it from happening;
- Give several telephone numbers, including Childline (0800 1111), Northumbria Police (101) and local domestic abuse services (0800 066 5555).
- Explain the limits of confidentiality and your safeguarding responsibilities.
- Make a children's safeguarding referral for any child who is living with or experiencing domestic abuse.

### For young people (16-17years old):

- Use the adult questioning techniques and refer them to domestic abuse specialist services. Use the [young person version of the DASH RIC](#)
- Safety plan with young person
- Make **both** a children's safeguarding referral **and** refer into MARAC if high risk. Remember that teenage pregnancy with domestic abuse is high risk.

## Good practice guidance when working with perpetrators of domestic abuse

Be alert to and prepared to receive and clarify a disclosure about domestic violence from an abusive person. However, remember that the majority of abusers will deny or minimise the domestic violence which they are perpetrating.

You may have contact with a perpetrator directly or in the context of a family. They may present with a problem such as substance misuse, stress, depression or aggressive or offending behaviour – without reference to abusive behaviour in the household or relationship.

Before seeking to clarify a disclosure from an alleged perpetrator, professionals should first of all take into account their own safety, the safety of any children, the safety of the victim and the safety of any other potential victims (such as ex-partners or extended family members).

The most effective way to alter abusive behaviour is for the perpetrator to attend a structured perpetrator programme which includes education, as well as challenging behaviours and beliefs about gender and relationships in order to change their behaviour. **Do not** refer perpetrators to anger management courses. **Do not** recommend couples counselling, mediation or restorative justice (due to coercive control). The national helpline for domestic abuse perpetrators is run by [RESPECT 0808 802 4040](#). In Sunderland, the accredited perpetrator programme is [The Big Programme](#), Tel: 0191 567 8282 Fax: 0191 566 0629 Email: [BIG@impactfs.co.uk](mailto:BIG@impactfs.co.uk)