

Domestic Abuse

The Home Office definition of domestic abuse is:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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”.

The definition includes ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and child to parent abuse.

- **‘Controlling’** behaviour makes a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them for personal gain, depriving them of independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour
- **‘Coercive’** behaviour is assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim
- **‘Behaviour’** includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional forms of abuse; stalking and harassment

A pattern of coercive and/or controlling behaviour is a criminal offence.

Domestic abuse can take place in an intimate or family relationship; its victims do not have to live together, are not confined to one gender or ethnic group and include children and young people living in fear of such behaviour.

Domestic abuse is a primary risk of harm for children and young people, especially if it is combined with substance misuse and/or mental health problems.

Education settings:

You must ensure that all staff & volunteers understand & follow this guidance.

If child or young person is experiencing known or suspected domestic abuse, staff must inform their Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy (DSL/D) **immediately**.

The DSL/D will:

- Talk with the staff member, ask them to write it down, put the written record in the child’s safeguarding file & review all of the safeguarding information that the setting holds for the child or young person
- Consider how the needs of the child(ren) can be assessed through the Family Common Assessment Framework (FCAF), the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment (see below) and/or by a referral to Children’s Social Care.
- If the child(ren) may be at risk of significant harm, the DSL/D will make a referral through the Safeguarding Hub **immediately**, tel. **0114 2734855**, and will share information appropriately & securely with other involved agencies

Confidentiality and consent:

- Staff must pass all information to the DSL/D **immediately**
- Information must not be given to **anyone else** without the agreement of the DSL/D
- The DSL/D should only share information with practitioners involved with the child & family and/or to make a referral to Children Social Care or the Adult Access Team
- If a person is at high risk of serious harm it is **not** essential to have consent to share information with another agency, e.g. to refer the person to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Safeguarding adults at risk:

The duty to safeguard applies to an adult who:

- Has need for care & support (whether or not the local authority is meeting those needs)
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect
- As a result of their care & support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect

If you are concerned about an adult with physical or learning disability and/or mental ill-health who is experiencing domestic abuse or violence, you can contact the **Adult Social Care First Contact Team**, tel.: **0114 2734908** in addition to other services.

Sheffield Domestic Abuse Helpline:

Tel.: 0808 808 2241

(Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm,

Saturday 9am – 5pm)

Specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) workers (with interpreters available) to listen advise, assess, refer & support people aged 16 or over

Indicators of domestic abuse:

- Suspicious injury
- Disguising injury through clothing & make-up
- Someone present & answering for the person
- Depression, alcohol and drug abuse
- Self-harm, anxiety and self-neglect
- Regular non-attendance for appointments
- Restricted access to money, work, education and a social life
- Children with behavioural difficulties
- Being withdrawn or sleep problems
- Direct disclosure

Routine questions:

Where appropriate we should ask parents that we work with about their relationships. This should never be done when their partner is present.

Questions that we can ask are:

- Are you afraid of someone's behaviour?
- Is anyone verbally abusive to you?
- Has anyone ever hurt you?
- Have you or someone you care about been threatened?
- Have you been forced to do something sexual that you didn't want to do?
- Do you feel controlled or isolated by anyone?
- Does anyone belittle or insult you?

How children experience domestic abuse:

- Actual or threatened physical harm
- Being injured while trying to intervene
- Witnessing or overhearing abuse of others
- Being threatened to remain silent
- Seeing ill treatment of pets
- Seeing damage at home, toys, belongings
- Abuse during contact sessions or handover
- Being encouraged to take part in the abuse
- Being abused and/or abusive in intimate relationships
- Lost or reduced contact with parent, family, friends
- Spending time with peers engaged in risky behaviour to avoid home
- Increased involvement in substance misuse or anti-social behaviour
- In the case of homicide, the loss of the non-abusing parent

Young people:

If a young person discloses partnership abuse **always** take them seriously; they may change their story due to pressure but it doesn't mean it didn't happen.

Young people's relationships:

- Can be less visible and change rapidly
- Abuse can escalate quickly & be very serious
- May be vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation, gang affiliation or sexually harmful behaviour
- May involve the impact of parental domestic abuse & what they think is normal behaviour
- May include cultural factors that might make it more difficult to disclose abuse or seek help
- May need consideration of the age, maturity & understanding of the young people involved in sexual activity to decide if it seems appropriate

What to do next:

If the victim or perpetrator is under 18 years old consider referral to Children's Social Care:

- If under 16 they **must** be referred to Social Care
- If 16 or over, complete a DASH and contact the Domestic Abuse Helpline; if assessed as high risk will be referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

In an emergency call 999

A [Domestic Abuse Traffic Light Tool](#) has been developed to help professionals consider the risks to young people from domestic abuse.

If the young person is 16 years or over this should be used in conjunction with the DASH.

Young people of any age can be referred for support to local services - see the [Sheffield Young People and Domestic Abuse Pathway](#).

Be aware that an LGBT+ person accessing services will have to disclose domestic abuse & their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Creating a safe and accessible environment where victims feel they can do this and using gender neutral terms such as partner or ex-partner is essential.

Community Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) workers provide long term advocacy, support & service co-ordination for victims of domestic abuse.

Community IDVA workers also take the voice of the victim to MARAC & inform them of the outcomes.

Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment:

- Helps identify the levels of risk & offer appropriate services and safety planning
- Should be completed with young people (aged 16 & over) & adults disclosing domestic abuse, stalking, harassment & honour-based violence

Further guidance about completing a DASH & the assessment template is here: [Sheffield DACT](#)

Sheffield Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) comprises representatives of statutory and voluntary sector agencies who discuss all high risk cases of domestic abuse to:

- Protect victims & their children
- Reduce serious harm and homicide

MARAC enables agencies to work together, improve accountability through action planning, and provides support for staff working with high risk domestic abuse cases.

MARAC will:

- Accept referrals from any agency who have assessed the case as **high risk** using the DASH risk assessment
- Hear the views of the victim through an IDVA worker (if the victim is working with the service)
- Share relevant & appropriate information
- Agree actions to reduce risk & promote the safety & well-being of the victim, children and other adults at risk
- Provide professional support to reduce the risk of further harm

Education settings can talk to the **Sheffield Domestic Abuse Helpline, tel. 0808 808 2241** for advice about support for someone involved in domestic or relationship abuse.

If the situation is suspected to be high risk, the IDVA worker may talk to you about completing a Domestic Abuse, Stalking & Harassment risk assessment (DASH).

If you are worried that a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm a referral must be made to Children's Social Care immediately.

If a case is due to be presented at MARAC involving a child or young person within your setting, the DSL will be sent a request for information.

The DSL must respond immediately as they may have information that is vital to safety planning.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)

A DHR takes place to review the death of a person aged 16 or over which appears to have resulted from domestic abuse/violence. The purpose is to:

- Establish what we can learn about how local agencies work to safeguard victims
- Identify what the lessons are, timescales for action and what is expected to change
- Apply these lessons e.g. through changes to agency responses, policies and procedures
- Prevent further domestic abuse/violence and homicide through improved and co-ordinated multi-agency working practices.
- Contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic abuse/violence
- Highlight good practice

Training:

Training about domestic abuse, risk assessment, DASH and MARAC is available from IDAS.

Follow this link for more information:

[Independent Domestic Abuse Services \(IDAS\)](#)

Useful resources:

- [Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership \(SCSP\) Child Protection & Safeguarding Procedures, Domestic Abuse](#)
- Adult Social Care First Contact tel. 0114 2734908
- Sheffield IDAS tel. 0114 2493920
- [Domestic abuse: how to get help, Home Office guidance](#)
- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline website](#)
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline, tel: 0808 2000 247
- [Independent Domestic Abuse Services \(IDAS\)](#)

Sheffield Domestic Abuse Coordination Team (DACT) resources:

- Leaflets and posters to download: [Sheffield Domestic Abuse Coordination Team \(DACT\)](#)
- For paper copies of leaflets and posters, email: dact@sheffield.gov.uk
- [Sheffield Young People and Domestic Abuse Pathway](#)
- [Young People and Domestic Abuse/Peer on Peer Traffic Light Tool](#)