



# Domestic Abuse Policy

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”.**

This definition includes ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

- ‘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 their victim
- Behaviour includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional forms of abuse; stalking and harassment.

A coercive or controlling behaviour offence came into force in Dec. 2015, for behaviour amounting to extreme psychological and emotional abuse.

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 safeguarding issues for children and young people, especially if it is combined with substance misuse and/or mental health problems.

**Education settings must ensure that all staff & volunteers understand & follow this policy.**

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

## The DSL/D will:

- Talk to you, ask you to write it down, put the written record in the child’s safeguarding file
- Review the safeguarding information that the setting holds for the child or young person
- Talk to and share information with involved agencies
- Check whether the family have had any previous Children’s Social Care involvement through the Child Protection Enquiry Team (CPET) tel. **2734925**

Your DSL/D will use the information collected to consider how the needs of the child or young person 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.

## Safeguarding ‘Vulnerable’ Adults

The duty to safeguard applies to an adult who:

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

Perpetrating, experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse can seriously affect a person’s physical and mental wellbeing. If you think someone may be a ‘vulnerable’ adult, a referral should be made to:

**Adult Safeguarding Tel: 2736870**

## Confidentiality:

- All information **must** be passed to your DSL/D immediately
- Information must not be given to **anyone else** without the agreement of the DSL/D
- The DSL/D must only share this information with practitioners involved with the child or family or to make a referral to Children’s or Adult Social Care
- If a person is at high risk of serious harm or homicide as a result of domestic abuse, it is helpful to have their consent to share information with another agency but, as with child protection and vulnerable adults, the welfare of the victim is paramount
- If there is a serious risk to life or safety, then information may be disclosed without consent in order to refer the case to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVAS) so that agencies can take action to reduce risk.



### Routine questions:

Where appropriate we should ask men and women that we work with about their relationships, when we see them alone. 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?

### Indicators of domestic abuse:

- Suspicious injury
- Disguising an 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.

### How children experience domestic abuse:

- Actual or threatened physically harm
- Being injured while trying to intervene
- Witnessing or overhearing the abuse of others
- Being threatened to remain silent
- Seeing ill treatment of pets
- Seeing damage in the home, toys, belongings
- Abuse during contact sessions or handover
- Being encouraged to take part in the abuse
- Being abusive in intimate relationships
- Lost or reduced contact with parent, family and/or 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 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
- If the victim or perpetrator are under 18 consider referral to Children's Social Care
- If under 16 they **must** be referred to Social Care
- If 16 or over complete a DASH & if assessed as high risk refer to MARAC and IDVAS
- Cultural factors might make it more difficult to disclose abuse or seek help
- Consider the age, maturity & understanding of young people involved in sexual activity to decide if it seems appropriate
- Parental domestic abuse can make young people more vulnerable if it is 'normalised'

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 aged 16 or over can be referred for support to local domestic abuser services - see the [Sheffield Young People and Domestic Abuse Pathway](#).

**Be aware that an LGBT person accessing services will have to disclose both domestic abuse and 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/ex-partner is essential.**



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

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

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

### Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

**Sheffield 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

It does not replace existing arrangements for public protection but 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 IDVAS 'Advocate' (if the victim takes part)
- Share relevant & appropriate information
- Agree actions to reduce risk & promote the safety & well-being of the victim & children and adults with support needs
- Providing professional support to reduce the risk of further harm

Education settings should talk to their MARAC representatives in MAST if they want to refer anyone to MARAC. However, a referral to MARAC does not replace an assessment and referral, e.g. to Children's Social Care.

**The Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (IDVAS)** provides advocacy, support and service co-ordination for victims of domestic abuse.

IDVAS works with the MARAC to take the voice of the victim to the conference and keep them informed of the MARAC outcomes.

**Sheffield IDVAS tel. 0114 2493920**

### 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. The purpose is to:

- Establish what we can learn about how local agencies work to safeguard victims
- Identify what the lessons are, their timescales and what is expected to change
- Apply these lessons e.g. through changes to policies and procedures
- Prevent further domestic abuse homicide through improved working practices.

In Sheffield, Domestic Homicide Reviews are commissioned by the Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership which delegates the coordination of DHRs to the DACT.

**In an emergency call 999**

### Useful resources:

- [Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board \(SSCB\) Domestic Abuse Procedures](#)
- [Sheffield Young People and Domestic Abuse Pathway](#)
- Sheffield Safeguarding Adults Service, tel.: 2736870
- SSCB & DACT [Safety Planning](#) guidance
- Sheffield IDVAS tel. 0114 2493920
- Child Protection Enquiry Team (CPET) tel. 2734925

### DACT:

- Sheffield DACT: [www.sheffielddact.org.uk](http://www.sheffielddact.org.uk)
- Domestic abuse information card and other promotional materials, tel. 273 6851 or email: [dact@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:dact@sheffield.gov.uk)
- Sheffield DACT helpline: 0808 808 2241 (Monday – Friday 8:00am – 6:00pm)
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline, tel: 0808 2000 247
- [Domestic Violence Helpline website](#)
- [Domestic violence and abuse, Home Office guidance](#)