

## Domestic Violence and Abuse Prompt West Berkshire Health Services

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is defined as “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 can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: Psychological, Physical, Sexual, Financial and Emotional”.

The [NICE DVA](#) Pathway suggests that trained staff in antenatal, postnatal, reproductive care, sexual health, alcohol or drug misuse, mental health, children's and vulnerable adults' services should ask service users whether they have experienced domestic violence and abuse as a routine part of good clinical practice, even where there are no indicators of such violence and abuse.

### **Before asking about whether Domestic Abuse is an issue for the patient consider:**

- ✗ Do not ask questions in front of the potential perpetrator
- ✗ Make sure you ask in a private environment and do not use family or friends as interpreters. Consider the presence of children over the age of 2 years who may be able to report back to perpetrator
- ✗ Be aware of patients holding a mobile phone during the consultation as the perpetrator may be listening to the conversation
- ✓ Patients highly value compassion and the quality of being non-judgemental

Domestic abuse in any form physical, financial, emotional, coercive and whether current or historic presents in a health care setting as a health issue. This is likely to be both a real association and also an ‘excuse’ to get away from the perpetrator. Examples include, but are not limited to

- Chronic pain
- Widespread pain
- Fatigue,
- Dizziness
- Recurrent gynae symptoms
- depression anxiety and substance abuse. Sometimes people who are depressed/have chronic pain have gone through major events such as bereavements, difficult abusive relationships.

### **Children who experience or witness DVA may be brought with:**

- Behavioural or sleep issues
- Bed wetting,
- Eating issues,
- Anxiety and depression
- Physical injuries and or frequent A&E attendances.

So be curious, ask yourself what is driving this behaviour or causing the symptoms?

Use these as opening questions to find out more

- How are things at home?
- Is there anything particular making life difficult at the moment?
- When did this all start

## What to do if you identify a concern

Domestic  
Abuse  
Concern

### Is the person safe right now?

**No:** Call 999 and put in place immediate safeguarding measures.

**Yes:**

- 1) Encourage referral to specialist domestic abuse service (Wokingham, Reading, Bracknell: BWA 0118 950 4003 - referral form at the end of this document)  
(West Berkshire: A2 Dominion – 0800 731 0055)
- 2) Provide safety planning information leaflet (if safe to do so, if not, discuss key elements)
- 3) Consider if the case meet the MARAC threshold?  
PRIMARY CARE HAVE a discussion with BHFT Sue Carrington 079001674160 to make a MARAC referral or your CCG safeguarding team support it with a DASH risk assessment and referral form
- 4) Consider if you need to make Children/ Adult Services referral?

### Safety Planning: a few suggestions:

- Think of situations where there could be danger and what you could do to get to a safer place if things escalate (eg try to avoid being in the kitchen or anywhere there could be items used as a weapon against you; try to get to a room where you can lock the door or put a door wedge in place to give yourself a few additional minutes for the police to arrive).
- Try to keep your phone with you and make sure it is always fully charged so you can call 999 in an emergency.
- Contact the domestic abuse services for help to make a detailed safety plan for yourself and your children; support with safe accommodation; information about potential legal options available to you etc.
- Think about who you could talk to about what is happening, who can help you emotionally as well as practically (trusted family member, friend, colleague, neighbour).
- Reassure your children and let them know that they aren't responsible for what is happening.

## Helpful Opening Questions:

1. **You've said about the ..... (presenting symptom) but is something else troubling you? (low mood / not themselves / upset / tired)**
  - a. *If yes, proceed to asking the screening questions below. If no, but you are concerned use your professional judgement and proceed to the screening questions below.*
2. **Have you ever felt frightened or had to change your behaviour due to someone who you have a close relationship with?**
  - a. *If yes, proceed to asking the screening questions below. If no, but you are concerned use your professional judgement and proceed to the screening questions below.*
3. **Fearful of consequence / things not allowed to do (question)**

## Helping Screening Questions and or DASH tool :

1. **Have you ever been hurt by this person?**
  - a. *Do you feel able to tell me about it?*
  - b. *Has this happened before? How many times?*
2. **Within the last year, have you ever been embarrassed or made to feel stupid by this person?**
  - a. *Do you feel able to tell me about it?*
  - b. *Does this happen at home or in front of other people?*
3. **Have you been stopped from doing things that you enjoy?**
  - a. *Do you feel able to tell me about it?*
  - b. *Do they have control over your finances or possessions, i.e. car?*
  - c. *Do you feel that you are being sabotaged, such as not being able to find your purse/keys when you are planning to go out? Are you no longer allowed to see your friends or family, have you seen them less often?*
  - d. *Do they tell you who you can see socially or contact, including via social media?*
4. **Have you been in any situation sexually where you felt uncomfortable or felt unable to say no to any kind of sexual activity that you did not want?**
  - a. *Do you feel able to tell me about it?*
  - b. *Have you been forced or pressured to do anything of a sexual nature that has humiliated, upset or hurt you?*
  - c. *Have you ever been pressurised to use any drug/substance as part of a sexual encounter?*
5. **Do you have any concerns about the impact on children/people that you have caring responsibilities for and/or pets?**
  - a. *Are you worried about them? Have they been hurt? What about pets?*
  - b. *What are you worried about?*
  - c. *Have you noticed any change in their behaviour?*

### **Protection Planning: Do you have a safe place to go in an emergency?**

- a. *Do you have family or friends who can support you? Are they aware of your circumstances?*
- b. *Would you call the police if you were frightened?*

## Domestic Violent and Abuse Tool (DVA Tool)

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Dash%20risk%20checklist%20quick%20start%20guidance%20FINAL.pdf>

The Domestic Violence and Abuse tool has been developed to aid practitioners to understand/establish the level of concern they have following discussions with the client. This can help to ensure that an appropriate response is given to the level of concern indicated and covers a wide range of DVA indicators which should be considered. Where high risk factors are identified or your professional judgement indicates high risk of harm, consider a MARAC referral.

Level of Concern	STANDARD	MEDIUM	HIGH
<b>General Relationship Dynamics</b>	Consensual & respectful, equal relationship	Difference in balance in relationship  Consider age gap/difference in ability/ level of maturity & intellect Consider ethnicity/culture	Significant difference in balance of relationship  Previous violence / abuse in this or other relationship
	Joint decision making	Unequal power balance and decision making	Power and control used in relationship (and accepted) – see power and control wheels for some examples.  Forced to comply
<b>Jealous and controlling/ coercive behaviour</b>	Freedom of choice	Pressure to undertake activities or behave in a certain way – feels uncomfortable or unable to refuse	Coercion or forced to undertake activities or behave in a certain way - feels unable to refuse; often due to fear of consequences
	Independence, freedom and loss of autonomy	Possessiveness, loss of autonomy, can be a slow creep of loss of independence, may not be obvious initially	Controlling jealous behaviour by perpetrator so victim is prevented from making own decisions
	Communication with friends/family	Becoming withdrawn from friends / family  May have relationships actively sabotaged by partner  May still have a significant other to speak to eg friend/family member	Isolated from friends / family / sudden unexplained change in social circle  Made to account for/prove whereabouts  'Has to' respond to calls/texts immediately
<b>Separation</b>		May attempt/ indicate desire to separate	Scared to separate/ Attempts to separate / recent separation
<b>Verbal abuse</b>	Appropriate language and healthy disagreements	Aggressive / disrespectful language to individual	Direct threats and intimidation to individual, they may describe violent, aggressive &/or degrading language
<b>Physical abuse</b>	None	Pushing and shoving to the individual  Minor injuries where medical attention not sought  No physical abuse to children Destruction of property	Escalating aggressive behaviour e.g. hitting, punching, kicking, aggressive pushing, strangulation, choking, smothering, restricting breathing  Injuries that should require medical attention but do not seek medical advice  Injuries do not accord with explanation of cause  Fear evident – verbal or non-verbal

Level of Concern	STANDARD	MEDIUM	HIGH
			cues from individual or their children
<b>Financial abuse</b>	None - Able to access money whether it in a joint or own account	Unable to access accounts freely	Unable to access accounts Finances controlled by perpetrator Made to account for purchases/provide receipts
<b>Sexual activity</b>	Consensual	Verbal, physically unacceptable sexual activity; threats made if partner does not comply	Non-consensual sexual contact/activity  Feels unable to say no due to fear of consequences  May feel they have "consented" because they failed to decline due to fear of the consequences
<b>Internet/social media use</b>	No restrictions to use of internet / media to communicate with friends/family	Some restriction imposed	Controlled & restricted use of social media  Tracking the victim  Perpetrator sharing or viewing threatening /violent / abusive/explicit content online and / or interest in accessing 'violent' websites or explicit images online NB this could also indicate CSE
<b>Mental Health and Substance Abuse</b>	Emotionally stable	Low mood as a result of relationship that makes individual more vulnerable to anxiety / depression Substance / alcohol misuse	Self-harming / suicidal / erosion of self-esteem Panic attacks, anxiety Substance misuse / Alcohol misuse
<b>Animal Welfare</b>		Threats to pets including threats if you say you will leave	Maltreatment or killing pets
<b>Individual at risk</b>		Prepared to take advice on safety Insight into the risk to both themselves (and children / vulnerable adult if appropriate)	Increased requests for police intervention Fear of use of statutory services
<b>Abuser/ Perpetrator</b>		Engaging with services fully (not just turning up)  Victim makes excuses for behaviour	Stalking & harassment behaviour Breaching bail conditions/non-contact orders Says will engage with services but makes excuses Minimal or no remorse /guilt Blames victim No insight into impact on partner or children Minimises and denies
<b>Children</b>		Children may be witnessing DA incidents  Children may be threatened with harm if they intervene  Consider the impact on the child	Threats to harm children  Children unable to use safety strategy due to fear of abuser OR Physical harm to children  Consider Neglect - look at repeated non-attendance – was not brought

Level of Concern	STANDARD	MEDIUM	HIGH
			guidance

**Referral forms and links**

Please use the form on DXS safeguarding landing page for referral to Berkshire Woman aid and links to A2 dominion for west Berkshire.

*This prompt has been co –produced with Wokingham Borough Council domestic abuse co-ordinator, GP lead for Tilehurst Surgery Partnership and Berkshire Woman’s Aid Service Manager*