



Domestic Abuse Procedure for Customers



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Section 1 - Introduction

This procedure should be used alongside the Domestic Abuse Policy for Customers.

These procedures set out how the Council responds to domestic abuse in the community and provide a daily framework to ensure you give the right response to survivors, children and the perpetrator of abuse.

Everyone in the community uses our services and we are often well placed to identify and respond to domestic abuse. Some teams, such as Housing Solutions or Community Safety, may be the first point of contact for a customer after they have experienced domestic abuse. Those at risk might not come into contact with any other professionals who can offer help and support. Most employees will not need to make enquiries or carry out a risk assessment. However, they can play a vital role by sharing any concerns they have with someone who does. We all have a responsibility while at work to respond if we think that someone is at risk of harm. Survivors say they want us to take the initiative - they have repeatedly said they wish someone had asked them if they were experiencing problems in their personal relationships. The information we have can play an important part in bringing perpetrators to justice.

This procedure represents a commitment to take all reasonable steps possible to tackle the reality and impact of domestic abuse on those being abused and to challenge the behaviour of perpetrators. This procedure ensures that both survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse are aware of the support that is available within Mansfield District Council.

Domestic abuse is the abuse of power and control over one person by another. It can take many different forms, including:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- controlling or coercive behaviour;
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse;

Research shows that women are more likely to be subjected to serious injury and ongoing assaults than men. However, men also experience domestic abuse. Everyone can expect equal



support regardless of their gender or the type of abuse they experience.

The full definition can be found at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

Section 2 - Purpose:

These procedures will support you to:

- Identify individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse and individuals using harmful behaviour
- How to respond in a safe and supportive way including decisions on survivor engagement and support.
- How to record information on case management systems
- Ensure information is shared appropriately with internal teams, partners and customers.
- Create a safe space that enables disclosure and establish safe contact routes with customers.
- Provide an emergency, effective, believing survivor led response.
- Identify referral pathways to specialist services, MARAC, MASH etc.
- Identify risk levels and referrals needed to specialist agencies
- Positively support and engage with perpetrators
- Take enforcement action against perpetrators that doesn't negatively impact on survivor.

Section 3 - Recognising and responding to domestic abuse

Early intervention can help to prevent escalation and recurring abuse. Families live with domestic abuse for too long before getting effective help. At the point when a survivor gets help, the abuse is likely to be escalating in either frequency or severity or both. There are still far too many missed opportunities to get help for families experiencing domestic abuse. Each contact represents a chance for us to help the survivor disclose and get help.

How can we find families sooner? We must proactively identify families living with abuse and ensure they get the right response, first time and ensure identifying domestic abuse forms part of our daily practice.

All employees of Mansfield District Council have a part to play and can take effective steps towards recognising, reporting and supporting those who are affected by domestic abuse.

Stage 1: Recognise domestic abuse

It is important to note that the examples below are not a checklist. Some people may display no signs of violence or abuse. They should, however, raise suspicion and prompt you to attempt to see the customer alone to enquire further about the possibility of abuse. Even if the customer chooses not to disclose on this occasion, they will know that you are aware of the issues and may approach you in the future

Possible signs of domestic abuse

- Injuries inconsistent with explanation of cause
- Survivor tries to hide injuries or minimise their extent
- Partner, or other family member, always present at appointments
- Suicide attempts



- Frequent missed appointments
- Customer appears frightened, overly anxious or depressed
- Customer is submissive, reluctant or afraid to speak in front of partner
- Partner is aggressive or dominant, talks for their partner or refuses to leave the room
- Children are known to social care
- Customer appears to have little control over household finances
- Alcohol, drug use - as a means of coping with the situation
- Receiving lots of texts or calls that they feel compelled to respond to
- Having no money, escalating rent and service charge arrears
- ASB and noise complaints from neighbours.

Coercive control is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten survivors. Controlling behaviour like this makes a person dependant by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.

- Do you notice if a customer is being watched by their partner - almost like they are monitoring their every move?
- Does the customer appear isolated or mention they are not allowed to see certain members of their family?
- Do you ever notice a customer's partner taking control of their digital devices or asking: "who's that always calling and texting you?" or "Give me your phone?"
- Is the customer spoken to in derogatory terms and often put down by their partner?
- Have you ever noticed if a customer has been quizzed on how much they have been spending in an aggressive manner or do they appear to be given an allowance?
- Have you ever witnessed someone having to sacrifice their money to their partner?
- Have you ever witnessed a customer being told where they can go, who they can meet or even what they are allowed to wear?

Economic abuse is an aspect of 'coercive control' and involves a perpetrator using or misusing money which limits and controls their partner's current and future actions and their freedom of choice. It can include using credit cards without permission, putting contractual obligations in their partner's name and gambling with family assets.

- Have you noticed a customer having to ask their partner for money to buy essential items, such as food or supplies for children?
- Do you ever hear customers ask their partner things like: "I left some money on the side have you taken it, again?"
- Have you ever noticed lots of credit or debt statements lying around, or overheard a customer asking their partner to stop taking economic credit out in their name?
- Have you overheard a customer asking their partner if they are allowed to seek employment so that they can obtain their own money?
- Do you ever see a customer being given an allowance by their partner, often before they go out shopping?

If so, have you overheard them being asked to show proof of what they have purchased and hand over any change when they return from shopping?



Psychological abuse involves the regular and deliberate use of a range of words and non-physical actions used with the purpose to manipulate, hurt, weaken or frighten a person mentally and emotionally; and/or distort, confuse or influence a person's thoughts and actions within their everyday lives, changing their sense of self and harming their wellbeing.

- Have you ever noticed if a customer is being regularly shouted at, belittled or called names by their partner?
- Have you ever witnessed a customer being asked to tell their partner their passwords for their phone or their social media accounts?
- Do you ever experience a sense of extreme jealousy between customers? If so, does this appear to be triggered when you are in the property? Is the customer allowed to speak to you when they're alone?
- Have you ever noticed a customer being shouted at by their partner in a way which scares and intimidates them into submission?
- Has a customer ever threatened to hurt their partner, the people they care about or their pets in front of you?
- Have you ever noticed the customer telling their partner that they acted in a certain way or did something stupid and the accused can't remember or claims they didn't?
- Do you notice a customer being kept away/prevented from seeing family or friends?
- Have you witnessed a customer being prevented from leaving their home by their partner?
- Have you noticed a customer being constantly followed and checked on by their partner?
- Being accompanied or met for appointments
- Asking for 'permission' to speak, go to the bathroom
- Needing to leave before the end of appointments

Physical abuse encompasses a broad range of behaviours including actions such as punching, slapping, shaking, hitting, biting, pinching, kicking, pulling hair, pushing, shoving, burning, strangling, withholding food or medication, withholding aids and equipment, tying up, stabbing, using objects, female genital mutilation.

- Have you noticed physical injuries that are not consistent with the customer's explanation?
- Have you had to repair something that has clearly been damaged due to physical force?
- Have you witnessed a customer or children being visibly scared of their partner/parent?
- Have you ever noticed if a customer has visible bruises or injuries that could be consistent with being physically hurt?
- If there are visible injuries, has the injured ever made excuses by claiming they are clumsy?
- Do they often wear clothing that could be deemed inappropriate for the weather, such as wearing a scarf in the summer or sunglasses inside their home?
- Have you been asked to attend a property to fix something that is repeatedly broken like a bathroom lock, a bedroom door, damage to doors & walls by a hand/fist
- Have you ever witnessed a customer being abusive to their partner, pinching, pushing or calling them derogatory names?
- Do you notice any more obvious signs such as the suspected survivor or even the children of the house being shaky, subordinate or timid in front of their partner/parent?

Sexual abuse is common in abusive relationships because the survivor's right to consent is likely to be ignored. Any situation in which an individual is forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity is sexual abuse. This can include:



- Forced sex
- forced prostitution
- ignoring religious prohibitions about sex
- not being allowed to use contraception
- deliberately passing on sexual infections
- sexual humiliation and degradation
- being kept pregnant
- being forced to have a termination
- preventing breastfeeding
- being forced or coerced into taking part in sexual activity that someone is not comfortable with, including watching or making pornography.

Stalking is a criminal offence and it involves a person becoming fixated or obsessed with another. Survivors are often subject to persistent unwanted attention that makes them feel pestered, scared, anxious or harassed.

- Have you ever noticed a person persistently turning up to a customer's property, often unwanted and with unwanted gifts?
- Do you ever get told: "I wish he/she would stop calling/texting me" by a customer whose telephone is constantly ringing?
- Have you ever noticed or been told that a disgruntled ex-partner, or even a current partner, constantly drives by the property to check on the customer's whereabouts?
- Have you ever overheard threatening behaviour whilst working in someone's home?
- Is there damage to the property which could be consistent with someone trying to enter uninvited?
- Are the customer's curtains or blinds constantly closed in the middle of the day, perhaps in an attempt to hide themselves away?

Online Digital. Online platforms are increasingly used to perpetrate domestic abuse. Online domestic abuse can include behaviours such as monitoring of social media profiles or emails, abuse over social media such as Facebook or Twitter, sharing intimate photos or videos without consent and using GPS locators or spyware.

- Have you ever noticed a person is constantly being texted by their partner, asking where they are and what they are doing whilst you are working in their home?
- Has a customer ever told you that their partner has shared unwanted sexual images of them online?
- Do you ever notice a customer become withdrawn, down or upset after spending time on their mobile phone or other digital devices?
- Have you ever heard a customer being asked in an aggressive or demanding way what the passwords to their social media or email accounts are?
- Have you ever overheard threatening conversation such as: "I will share that photo of you naked online?"
- Have you ever heard a customer tell their partner to keep their phone with them at all times when he/she leaves the house so that they can constantly check on where they are and what they are doing?



Stage 2 Respond to Domestic Abuse

It is important to understand that Domestic abuse has many damaging effects on the survivor and undermines their ability to be in control and live a healthy, strong, adult life. A survivor can be desperate to change their situation, but trying to stop domestic abuse or trying to leave is dangerous and can put survivors at risk of murder, serious injury and increased abuse. Many survivors experience many incidents of domestic abuse before they seek help. Survivors may not seek, or respond to offers of help and may wish to remain in their abusive relationship. They will most often feel unable to leave due to a combination of real or perceived factors. Reasons why it isn't easy for survivors to leave include:

- Fear of the abuser and/or what they will do, threats they have made
- Leaving is one of the most dangerous times: 75% of domestic abuse homicides happen post-separation
- Being isolated
- Not being aware of their rights or support services
- Doubt about the impact of any action taken by the Police or Courts, and fear of pressure to pursue a criminal case
- Lack of knowledge/access to support services
- Lack of resources, economic or otherwise
- Fear of not being believed
- Love, loyalty, attachment towards their partner and the hope they will change
- Feelings of shame or failure
- Fear of response and pressure from family/children/friends
- Religious or cultural expectations
- Long term effects of abuse e.g. self-neglect, depression, low self-esteem
- Drug and/or alcohol addiction
- Anticipated impact on children, or fear of losing contact with children/other relatives/friends.
- Having no experience of being in control, making choices, very low confidence, self-doubt and low self-image.
- Staying to prevent further harm to children, harm to pets or having to leave pets behind

Stigma, as well as social and cultural norms, often prevent survivors from speaking about their experiences and seeking help. Ensuring an inclusive response to domestic abuse is vital for customers to have confidence that they can come forward and for the right support to be available when they do. Some groups of women and men may experience additional difficulties or vulnerabilities and may be reluctant to disclose domestic abuse. Some may face multiple forms of discrimination that makes it difficult for them to seek help.

- LGBT+ customers experiencing domestic abuse may be reluctant to speak out or seek help, particularly if they are not 'out'. They may fear that a perpetrator will threaten to 'out' them.
- Women may experience increased levels of domestic abuse when they are pregnant or after giving birth, and subsequently when they have childcare responsibilities.
- Disabled people experience higher levels of domestic abuse than non-disabled people



and they may be less likely to speak out about their abuse especially if the abuser is also their carer.

- Minority ethnic women and men may face added barriers to seeking help and disclosing domestic abuse and seeking support because of discrimination and racism. They are often made responsible for their family's perceived honour and it often means leaving more than just their perpetrator.
- Language barriers and fear that interpreters may not keep confidentiality
- Older women and men are less likely than younger women and men to report their experiences of abuse and seek help.
- Men experiencing domestic abuse often find it difficult to talk about their experiences and to know where to access support services.
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse are often reluctant to acknowledge what they are doing and to ask for help.
- Make no assumptions about elderly customers - abuse does not discriminate
- Immigration status/no recourse to public funding
- Assumptions that physical and sensory impairments prevent people from making their own decisions

Mansfield District Council recognises that survivors will often find it extremely difficult to make a disclosure and ask for help. It is vitally important, therefore, that if a disclosure is made, it is dealt with in a sensitive, believing and supportive manner.

Some service areas will routinely enquire about domestic abuse and questions will be included on standard assessment forms. This includes housing options, temporary accommodation, tenancy services and the assist teams.

All other service areas will use selective enquiry and will ask questions if they see or hear something that indicates they may be experiencing domestic abuse.

- It is important that you approach any conversation about domestic abuse in a non-judgemental and believing way, it is not appropriate to ask for proof.
- Only ask about domestic abuse if it is safe to do so – the customer is on their own, they are safe to talk, you are in a safe, quiet space and you both have the opportunity to talk without interruption or time restraints.
- Acknowledge the courage of the customer and how difficult it must be to talk.
- Ask if they would like to talk to someone else. Many women may feel more comfortable to talk to another woman and likewise a man may prefer to talk to another man.
- Ensure all their needs are met – For example: do they need an interpreter? If an interpreter is needed, ensure they are an independent person and understand the rules around confidentiality and safety. Do not use a survivor's partner, child or another family member.
- Might children be involved? Establish how many children live in the household and include those in contact with the perpetrator, for instance, any children living with an ex-partner
- Confirm the confidentiality of the disclosure – inform the customer of what information will be recorded on the case management system and who will have access to this and confirm that information will only be shared with external partners with their permission



unless there is an imminent threat to life, harm of children, or vulnerable adults. Reassure them that the perpetrator will not have access to their confidential information.

- Have an open posture. Reach towards them but be sensitive that they may feel threatened by invasion of personal space.
- Be prepared for them to be upset and tearful – ensure you are emotionally strong enough before you begin any discussions.
- Ensure blame is taken off the survivor and the responsibility is placed on the perpetrator - avoid language like “Why don’t you leave?”, “How can you let this happen?”. Instead use language that reinforces they are not at fault “Why would they do that to you?”
- Following disclosure, ensure you get support for yourself and an opportunity to debrief.
- Think of your conversation as the start of a process, not a one-off event. Not all survivors are going to open up the first time they realise you think they are being abused. Try to make them feel comfortable about coming back to see you again and talking again in the future. Provide your contact details and confirm safe contact details with the customer – For example: safe times to call, leave a voicemail. Repeat the enquiry at further appointments.
- Even if abuse is not disclosed offer information to the customer on support services, regardless of the reply to your questions. Disclosure is not the only effective outcome and knowing that a professional is interested and takes domestic abuse seriously provides the opportunity for a survivor to talk if they choose. Always check with the customer that it is safe for them to take information away with them. A survivor may be put at greater risk if the perpetrator finds information about domestic abuse support services.
- Even if you disagree with the decisions being made, it is important to understand that a survivor of domestic abuse may make a number of attempts to leave their partner before they are finally able to do so. Your role is not to deal with the abuse itself but to make it clear that support and help is available.
- Never assume that someone else will take care of domestic abuse issues - you may be the customer’s first and only contact.
- Don’t act as a domestic abuse caseworker for the customer once you have referred them to specialist agencies for help and support, but if appropriate to your role do be prepared to work in partnership with those organisations.

Below are some examples of questions you could selectively ask (Routine enquiry questions will be on your service paperwork):

- How are you doing at the moment? Are there any issues you would like to discuss with me?
- Make observations on presentation and body language.... I’ve noticed...you have an injury, you appear in pain when sitting, you seem anxious, you look upset...your phone goes off a lot...is it always like that?
- Follow up with an appropriate comment depending on the answer.... you don’t look fine, what happened, do you want to talk about it, has this happened before? Do you feel safe at home? Does anyone use words to hurt you?
- If there’s anything you would like to talk about any time I’m always here to support you.
- How can I support you? What do you need from me?
- Ensure resources are available in the toilets and in public spaces – if you need to use the toilet whilst you’re here...have you seen all the leaflets we have, feel free to have a look...



Don't feel that you have to know all the answers. Domestic abuse is a difficult subject to understand - both why it happens and how to deal with it.

Stage 3 – Provide Support

- If a disclosure of Domestic abuse is received always ask what the survivor wants and needs. They are able to manage their risk and are an expert in their life. However, if there is a threat to life or adult or child safeguarding concerns then consent is not needed and information will need to be shared. It is good practice to empower the survivor to be involved in this process.
- Provide information about internal and external support services, **please see below and the directory on the intranet.**
- Give information on access to civil and criminal laws, to offer protection and to prevent further abuse. Explain the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as 'Clare's Law'. **APPENDIX 5**
- Ask the customer if they have reported the abuse to anyone else. It may be the case that other agencies are already aware of the abuse and are working with the survivor. This will help to reduce the likelihood of you making enquiries or repeating actions that another agency has already instigated. Do not assume that because another agency may be aware of domestic abuse that they have acted on it. You should make appropriate enquiries and make an informed decision as to whether you need to take further action.
- If you receive a call from someone requiring information on a customer staff must not confirm or deny any information without following safe processes. Perpetrators or someone on their behalf may call to extract information so always ask for a landline number and call them back to confirm who they are.
- If the survivor agrees to a referral to specialist services, support them to put the referral in. The specialist domestic abuse service will support with safety planning, risk management and ongoing support tailored to the customer's needs.
- If the survivor doesn't want a referral, then you will need to complete a safety plan and DASH risk assessment. **These are on the intranet.**

APPENDIX 1, 2 and 3 will support you with this and you can put it on your office wall for reference.

- Log your discussion and any actions on your case management system and follow the appropriate process for your service. **Please see case management policy and procedure.**
- Ensure all case notes are clear, factual and use non-judgemental, empowering language. **Appendix 4 will help you with this.**
- Never be tempted to act as a go-between - Don't pass on messages or facilitate contact as you could put yourself and the customer in danger.
- Never advise a customer to leave their partner. Survivors are at high risk of injury or murder when they are leaving a violent partner, so leaving immediately might not be the best option. Supporting them, assessing whether they and any children are in immediate danger and referring them to sources of help are the best things you can do for them.



Stage Four – Assessing risk, referrals and signposting to specialist agencies

It is important to be aware of the risk levels associated with domestic abuse, referral pathways for safeguarding and the range of specialist agencies available to survivors of domestic abuse both nationally and locally. This knowledge will be critical in supporting a survivor to seek the help available.

Risk in domestic abuse situations is dynamic and can change very quickly. Named disclosure without consent may be made in exceptional circumstances:

- If it is believed the survivor and /or children/family members are at risk of serious injury or death.
- If it is believed that there is a substantial risk of harm to any children or vulnerable adults involved in, or witnessing, the abuse.

Any decision to disclose without consent should be documented.

It is good practice to complete a DASH (Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment) risk assessment (**Can be found on the intranet along with guidance and good practice points**) with every survivor who discloses domestic abuse. This enables risk to be assessed and appropriate measures to be put in place to manage safety. All support offered should be service user led and with their consent, however, if the survivor is high risk or there are children at risk then referrals should be made without consent if necessary. If the survivor gives consent, then contact can be made with Nottinghamshire Women's Aid duty team for women and Equation for men (details below) who will complete a DASH and ensure appropriate support is implemented. Remember risk is fluid and a DASH should be completed after every new incident, disclosure or at set periods throughout support.

Explain to the survivor that if they are high risk they will be referred to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which is a meeting attended by representatives from a range of services. The perpetrator is not aware of the meeting and the survivor doesn't have to attend as an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) will attend on their behalf, advocate for them, support them and feedback all actions to them. All agencies share any information they have and an action plan is written to ensure that the survivor and their family are safeguarded, that the right support is in place, and that the appropriate action has been taken against the perpetrator.

Ensure you remain sensitive and trauma informed (remember level of FEAR). Reassure the survivor and ensure you don't escalate fear or minimise impact if they are standard risk.

Explain safeguarding responsibilities for children:

High risk and Medium Risk – referral to MASH

Standard risk – referral to Early Help Services

If someone is in immediate danger, advise them to call the police on 999.

- Safety planning can also be completed with the survivor and/or children to increase safety when at home, at work, out in the community, at school. It also helps plan in advance for future abuse and how they can increase their safety either within the relationship or if they decide to leave the relationship. (**Copy on Intranet**)



- Discuss housing and tenancy options with the survivor and make every effort to ensure that a safe environment is provided:
 - Homeless team can refer the survivor to the housing liaison worker for support if consent given.
 - If the survivor wants to remain in their home discuss sanctuary measures – assess risk and tenancy status – for example: joint tenancy. **(Information and referral form can be found on intranet).**
 - Discuss refuge services.
 - Discuss other housing options including supported housing, social housing, private rented sector etc.

You should keep the survivor informed of your actions and any outcomes.

Useful Contacts: **(additional support in the directory on the intranet)**

The domestic abuse commissioned service in Mansfield is Nottinghamshire women's Aid - For women, children and young people (including young men up to age 17 years, 11 months).

www.nottswa.org

email: enquiries@nottswa.org

Phone: 01909 491330

Equation - For men aged 18 and over:

www.equation.org.uk

e-mail: info@equation.org.uk

Phone: 0115 960 5556

Respect - For perpetrators:

www.respect.uk.net

0808 802 4040

Local, Freephone, 24-hour domestic abuse helpline - 0808 800 0340

National, Freephone, 24-hour Domestic Abuse Helpline - 0808 2000 247

NIDAS is a non commissioned domestic abuse service offering support to women and their children across Mansfield and Ashfield.

www.nidas.org.uk

01623 683250

- Mansfield District Council Homelessness Team – 01623 463121
- Children and Adult Social Care - 0300 500 8080
- LGBT+ Services - Galop – If you've experienced hate crime, sexual violence or domestic abuse, GALOP is there for you. galop.org.uk
- Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services - 0115 941 0440
- Mental Health Support – please see your GP, 111 or in a crisis contact - 0115 956 0860
- Drug and alcohol support services – CGL - 0115 896 0798

Section 4 – Dealing with customers who are perpetrators of domestic abuse



The safety of the survivor is our main priority and we will take action to minimise the safety concerns and risks posed by the perpetrator if it is appropriate and safe to do so. We will work alongside the survivor, considering their views, opinion, what they want to happen and the best way to manage risk.

Mansfield District Council recognise survivors are never responsible for domestic abuse. We will hold perpetrators to account and take the responsibility of the abuse away from the survivor.

We will explore options safely including:

- Using empowering language and ensure we do not 'survivor blame' in our terminology. For example: Not saying why don't you leave but instead using terms like why would they do that to you?
- Looking at alternative housing arrangements for the perpetrator
- Exploring civil and criminal options (including injunctions, domestic abuse protection notices/orders) to give the survivor space to think and take action. We understand not every survivor will want to end their relationship, or will want us to take enforcement action against the perpetrator. It is important, therefore, to manage risk and ensure that as many safeguards are in place as possible.
- Ensuring perpetrators are solely accountable for any damages caused by ensuring rechargeable repairs are not placed on the survivor
- Waiver of rent arrears where there is economic abuse and the perpetrator is responsible for any debt incurred
- Signpost perpetrators (who are assessed as standard risk) to agencies who can offer them support if they acknowledge their behaviour, want to change and consent to a referral being made.
- Consider taking action against any customer who breaches their tenancy agreement as a result of committing domestic abuse. This may manifest itself as neighbours reporting antisocial behaviour of shouting, swearing, arguing, loud noise etc.
- We will actively seek support from specialist agencies to ensure a holistic approach to tackling domestic abuse.
- When applying for housing with the Council all customers are asked if they have any unspent criminal convictions. These will be considered before someone is included on the Housing Register. If someone has committed domestic abuse and been prosecuted it may affect their chances of being rehoused.

It should be remembered that mental illness, culture, childhood experiences, stress, alcohol consumption or substance misuse does not excuse the behaviour of perpetrators.

Domestic abuse is one person using controlled behaviour by choice to assert power and control over another person.

Do not refer to anger management as this may help to excuse someone's behaviour and give a perpetrator increased control in domestic abuse situations.

Identification of a perpetrator could be prompted through disclosure, a violent incident, an allegation, or notice through the police or social care. It is also important to remain alert during contact with customers and be aware of signs that could indicate they are using abusive behaviours:



- Negative comments made by the abuser about a partner
- Expressing anger and blaming their partner for issues
- Constant text messaging or telephoning a partner
- Repeated injuries such as scratches, bite marks, bruised knuckles
- One partner controlling an appointment and not letting their partner speak or answer questions
- Body language which indicates fear, anxiety, checking in before they speak

There may be any number of reasons for this behaviour and assumptions shouldn't be made. Staff members who suspect that domestic abuse may be an issue should discuss their concerns with their manager and the safeguarding lead, try and make options available to see the partner on their own and document concerns on the case management system.

It is important to remember that it may not be possible to assess whether someone is a perpetrator based solely on their outward behaviour. Most perpetrators conceal their abuse by behaving pleasantly to most people.

If a member of staff believes there is immediate threat to life, the police should be contacted.

Engaging with perpetrators in a constructive way doesn't mean excusing the abuse, but it is necessary to increase safety and even save lives.

When engaging with perpetrators:

- Ensure the safety of yourself and other employees – this could be attending appointments with 2 staff members present.
- Remember the safety and wellbeing of the person experiencing abuse is the priority. Consider what support can be provided to reduce risk.
- Let them know that it may be necessary to speak to the police or other agencies.
- Be clear that abusive behaviour is a choice
- Be respectful
- Be positive: it is possible for perpetrators to change if they recognise that they have a problem and take steps to change their behaviour.
- Help the perpetrator to be aware of the potential cost of continued abuse. This could include: arrest; prison; loss of their relationship, long term physical and emotional damage to their partner and children; loss of contact with children; being sacked from work; loss of their home; economic losses; damage or loss of relationships with family and friends.
- Don't mandate a perpetrator of abuse to attend a perpetrator programme. All programmes require the perpetrator to want to change.

Referrals to specialist support and/or perpetrator programmes can play a role in changing attitudes and behaviours that lead to domestic abuse.

Respect - For perpetrators:

www.respect.uk.net

0808 802 4040

Your Choice Programme

Referral form on Intranet



Claims from customers that there is mutual abuse within the relationship.

Domestic abuse is characterised by coercive, controlling behaviour and the imbalance of power within a relationship. Mutual domestic abuse, where both people are trying to gain power and control over their partner is very rare. There will almost always be a primary perpetrator and a survivor.

Staff need to be mindful when claims like this are disclosed as perpetrators can be very manipulative and will attempt to get agencies to collude with them. Supporting a perpetrator as if they are a survivor is harmful and increases risk as it offers the perpetrator opportunities to further control the survivor and blocks their access to services.

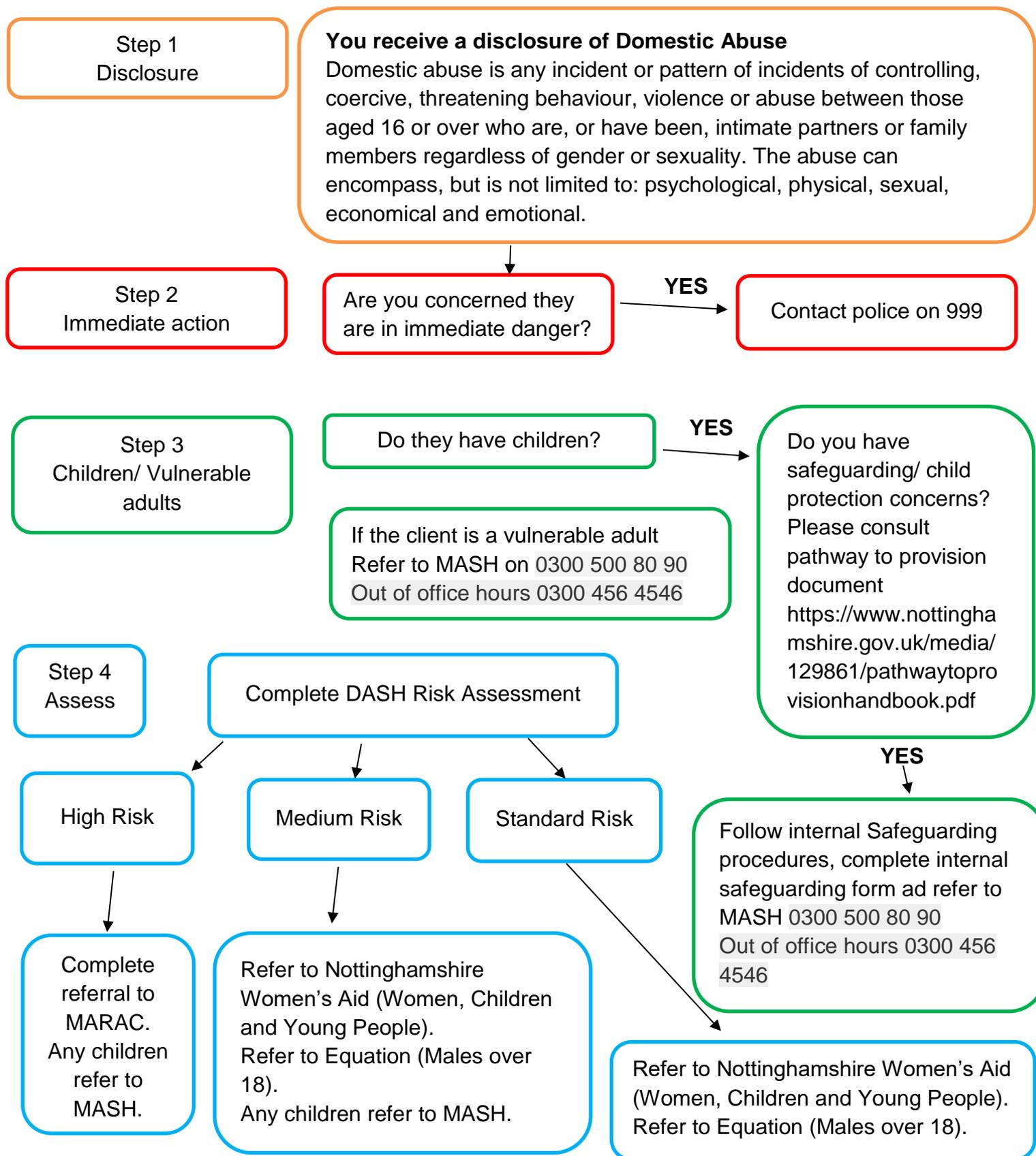
If there are mutual allegations of abuse it is important to gain a realistic understanding of power and control dynamics within the relationship, assess levels of fear and risk. If it is unclear who is the primary perpetrator in a relationship, staff must seek specialist advice from Nottinghamshire Women's Aid or Equation.

Section 5 - Recording Information

Any discussions that take place about domestic abuse, and any actions agreed should be documented on the appropriate case management system to provide as full a picture as possible. These records need to be clear and accurate, and where possible provide dates, times and locations as they may be used to provide evidence in any potential legal action within the criminal or civil justice system or in any internal review.

As required by the Data Protection Act 1998, any records should be kept in a locked cabinet; protected by a password if stored on computer, and recorded by codes if used for statistical purposes, to maintain anonymity.

Appendix 1 - Referral flow chart



Appendix 2 - Support pathways for all services in Mansfield District Council apart from Housing Services and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams

You receive a disclosure of domestic abuse

- If it is appropriate ensure the customer is on their own, they are safe to speak and have time to talk before you begin any discussion.
- Can you meet their individual needs – consider language or any other barriers that may be present.
- Explain your duty to pass on all information to the safeguarding lead.
- Listen and respond with a non-judgemental approach. Ensure they feel validated, believed and are not blamed for the abuse. Ensure survivors needs and wishes are heard.
- All responses given acknowledges that perpetrator represents the risk and the responsibility for the survivor’s safety does not lie with them.
- If there is an imminent risk of harm contact 999.
- If there is no imminent risk of harm, ask them what they want to happen and if they would like a referral to specialist services who can help them access further support confidentially and safely:
- **If Yes** – Explain to the customer that you will pass their details to the safeguarding lead or their housing officer if relevant and they will make contact with them. Clarify safe contact information with them. Give them information on specialist services:

Women, children and young people to Nottinghamshire women’s aid www.nottswa.org email: enquiries@nottswa.org Phone: 01909 491330	Men over the age of 18 to Equation. www.equation.org.uk e-mail: info@equation.org.uk Phone: 0115 960 5556
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- Complete a safeguarding internal report form and send to the safeguarding team and inform them of any referrals that need making.
- Get support for yourself from a colleague, your line manager, a safeguarding champion, the safeguarding lead or HR.
- **If No** - inform the customer that you will have to pass your concerns to the safeguarding lead
 - Complete brief safety planning with them – helpline numbers – Women - 24 Hour Freephone Helpline Tel 0808 800 0340. Men - 0800 9956 999. If they are in danger at any point, then advise them to call 999.
 - Inform the customer that in the future if they have anything they would like to talk about or any additional support needs they can always come back and see you or another staff member.
 - Ensure access to specialist services by informing them of what support is available, ensuring phone numbers are displayed on website, toilet doors etc.
 - Continue with your work/support as appropriate.
 - Complete a safeguarding report form and pass your concerns to the safeguarding lead and housing officer as appropriate.
 - Get support for yourself from a colleague, your line manager a safeguarding champion, the safeguarding lead or HR.



You have concerns that a customer is experiencing domestic abuse

- Ask questions using the selective enquiry process – acknowledge check and enquire about your concerns. Ask direct questions about what you are seeing/ hearing/ your concerns
- If they disclose abuse, follow the guidance above.
- If they do not disclose abuse:
 - Inform the customer that in the future if they have anything they would like to talk about or any additional support needs they can always come back and see you or another staff member.
 - Ensure access to specialist services by informing them of what support is available, ensuring phone numbers are displayed on website, toilet doors etc.
 - Continue with your work/support as appropriate.
 - Complete a safeguarding report form and pass your concerns to the safeguarding lead and housing officer as appropriate.
 - Get support for yourself from a colleague, your line manager

Appendix 3 - Support pathways for Housing Services and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams

You have concerns that someone is experiencing domestic abuse or you receive a disclosure of domestic abuse (consider selective and routine enquiry)



- Ensure the customer is on their own before you begin any discussion and they are safe to speak (especially if online or over the phone)
- Ensure the customer has time to talk before you begin any discussion
- Create a safe, confidential space to explore and discuss domestic abuse.
- Can you meet their individual needs – consider language or any other barriers that may be present and how you can overcome these to ensure support is accessible and inclusive. Consider paperwork, wording and resources used and referrals to specialist services.
- Explain your confidentiality policy, how you will store their information and your duty to refer if you are concerned about threat to life, adult or child safeguarding.
- Listen and respond with a non-judgemental approach. Ensure they feel validated, believed and are not blamed for the abuse.
- Ensure you are trauma informed - Survivors needs and wishes are placed at the centre of any risk identification practise and decision making – even if a survivor is high risk doesn't necessarily require them to flee their home – this should be a collaborative decision with the survivor.
- All responses given, language used, case notes etc. acknowledges that perpetrator represents the risk and the responsibility for the survivor's safety does not lie with them but with the systems and agencies surrounding the survivor.

Disclosure received - Discuss what they would like to happen and explain their options.



Survivor doesn't want a referral to specialist services.

Survivor wants a referral to specialist services

- Discuss their needs, wishes, housing needs etc. and be clear on your limitations.
- Is there an imminent risk – contact 999 - Demonstrating understanding that many survivors do not wish to involve police for many reasons including negative experiences with police but that you have a duty of care and you are concerned for their safety.
- Consider safeguarding concerns – adults and children. Complete internal

- Is there an imminent risk – contact 999 - Demonstrating understanding that many survivors do not wish to involve police for many reasons including negative experiences with police but that you have a duty of care and you are concerned for their safety.
- Homeless team including temporary accommodation refer any woman, child or young person to the housing liaison worker who will complete DASH, support needs,



safeguarding form and discuss with internal safeguarding lead and refer to MASH as appropriate (informing the survivor throughout and your reasons for referring).

- Discuss the DASH and whether they would like to complete it to enable them to get additional support and manage any risk.
- Complete the DASH if consent given and refer to MARAC and MASH as appropriate.
- If no consent given and there is no imminent risk or safeguarding concerns, ask if they would like to complete a safety plan (template on intranet) to enable them to explore their safety and manage their risk.
- Give information on specialist services and what support they can get confidentiality – emotionally, practically, legally etc.
- Continue with your support as appropriate – housing etc. Ensure you are led by what the survivor needs and wants and remain trauma informed – even if you don't agree with their decisions – they are the expert in their experience. Ensure you maintain regular contact and confirm safe contact – telephone, answer phone message, address, e-mail and safe days and times to contact. Ensure you offer all options including whole housing approach, sanctuary, remaining in their property and moving perpetrator. Where appropriate and safe, supporting the survivor to seek an occupation order or non-molestation order to temporarily prevent perpetrator access to the property then empowering and enabling the survivor to have space to consider their options.
- Survivors are not required to produce immediate evidence of abuse when seeking support and making a disclosure – particularly when presenting as homeless, particularly crime reference numbers or other evidence of police involvement.
- Document all your discussions, information given and actions carried out accurately on your case management system ensuring

ongoing referrals etc. Refer any men over the age of 18 to Equation.

- All other services refer:
Women, children and young people to Nottinghamshire women's aid
www.nottswa.org
email: enquiries@nottswa.org
Phone: 01909 491330
- and any men over the age of 18 to Equation.
www.equation.org.uk
e-mail: info@equation.org.uk
Phone: 0115 960 5556
- Please still follow safeguarding procedures if you have safeguarding concerns – adults and children. Complete internal safeguarding form and discuss with internal safeguarding lead and refer to MASH as appropriate (informing the survivor throughout and your reasons for referring).
 - Continue with your support as appropriate – housing etc. Ensure you are led by what the survivor needs and wants and remain trauma informed – even if you don't agree with their decisions – they are the expert in their experience. Ensure you maintain regular contact and confirm safe contact – telephone, answer phone message, address, e-mail and safe days and times to contact. Ensure you offer all options including whole housing approach, sanctuary, remaining in their property and moving perpetrator.
 - Survivors are not required to produce immediate evidence of abuse when seeking support and making a disclosure – particularly when presenting as homeless, particularly crime reference numbers or other evidence of police involvement.
 - Document all your discussions, information given and actions carried out accurately on your case management system ensuring empowering, believing and non-judgemental language.



empowering, believing and non-judgemental language.

- Get support for yourself from a colleague, your line manager, a safeguarding champion, the safeguarding lead or HR.

- Get support for yourself from a colleague, your line manager, a safeguarding champion, the safeguarding lead or HR.

No Disclosure received, no information on risk, need or safeguarding



- Inform the customer that in the future if they have anything they would like to talk about or any additional support needs they can always come back and see you or another staff member.
- Ensure access to specialist services by informing them of what support is available, ensuring phone numbers are displayed on website, toilet doors etc.
- Continue with your support as appropriate – housing etc. Ensure you maintain regular contact and confirm safe contact – telephone, answer phone message, address, e-mail and safe days and times to contact.
- Continue to check in with them as appropriate at future appointments – do you need any additional support today? Is there anything further you would like to discuss? Selective enquiry if you notice an injury or a change in behaviour.
- Document all your discussions, information given and actions carried out accurately on your case management system ensuring empowering, believing and non-judgemental language.
- Get support for yourself from a colleague, your line manager, a safeguarding champion, the safeguarding lead or HR.

Appendix 4 - Good practise guidance and language to be used with survivors.

Your notes on domestic abuse should include:

- Disclosure received – Self/ Selective/ Routine enquiry
- Response to the enquiry (if enquiry was used)
- Relationship to perpetrator, name of perpetrator/ whereabouts of perpetrator
- Whether a female survivor/perpetrator is pregnant
- The presence of children in the household including children that don't permanently live there (contact arrangements)
- Description of the abuse experienced, current injuries and reference to specific incidents
- Whether this is the first episode. If not, how long has it been going on and how regularly
- Enhanced risk factors – left relationship, planning to leave, protected characteristics etc.
- Discussions held and support options offered
- Action taken - completion of DASH, safeguarding referrals, signposting to specialist services etc.
- Indication of action taken (for example call to helpline, referral)
- Details of other agencies involved with the survivor/perpetrator/children.
- If you have passed on information without consent due to risk of harm. If you do pass on information without the customer's consent, you should be completely sure that your decision doesn't place someone at risk of greater violence. You will need to be able to justify your decision and if you are in doubt or the case is highly sensitive or complex, discuss it with your line manager first.

Remember, failure to share information can be as dangerous as breaking confidentiality inappropriately.

It is essential that language used is non-judgemental, accommodating of survivor needs and empowering.

The table below taken from DAHA Toolkit resources is an example of good practice.

It is important to clarify with the survivor how they would like to be referred to –survivor etc. and how they prefer their perpetrator to be referred to – perpetrator, abuser, ex-partner, their name etc.

Judgemental/ negative language	Preferred positive and non-judgemental language	Notes
• Investigation	• Information gathering • Enquiries	• Investigation is often associated with criminality and has negative connotations for a survivor who has bravely decided to disclose abuse.
• Abusive relationship	• Abusive partner	• Abusive relationship doesn't hold the abusive partner to account • The abusive partner, not the relationship is causing the abuse



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refused • Failed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to • Not in a position to • Didn't • Hasn't 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuse suggests that someone is being deliberately obstructive. This is rarely the case for those living with domestic abuse. They are the experts in their abusive partner and know when it is safe/ unsafe to do something. It may be part of their safety plan to appear uncooperative and they may also have valid reasons to distrust professionals. • As professionals it is our role to support someone to engage with us: to empower them to achieve what may seem to us like small tasks, but to them may be enormous steps.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claim • Allege 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State • Report • Told me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using words like allege or claim suggests that we do not believe what we are being told. • We need to only state the fact what we are told verbatim. Anything else would be opinion. In the rare instance that opinion is needed it must be clearly stated on records.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons • Triggers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survivor's actions should never be cited as a reason or trigger for the abusive partner's behaviour – this is survivor blaming. Full accountability for the abuse must be placed on the abusive partner.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly believe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My professional judgement is based in the following facts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is normal to use your instincts and professional curiosity when assessing risk. This needs to be in addition to using an evidence based risk assessment too. • Distinguishing between facts and opinions is paramount: statements like I strongly believe suggest partiality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disengaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to continue our engagement • We could not maintain our engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many reasons why people may feel unable to access or engage with support or services, particularly those who live in crisis, chaos and fear. • Our language should demonstrate that we take responsibility for engagement and are willing to work creatively and flexibly. • Give the reasons for discontinuation of the service if you can (always try to find out where possible).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor • Survivor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor of domestic abuse • Survivor of domestic abuse • The person's name • Non-abusive partner/ parent/ child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the person how they wish to be referred to in notes. This acknowledges that their personhood is affirmed. • Remember the person can request these notes and may object to being defined in certain ways. • The most neutral and simple statement of fact is non abusive partner/ parent/ child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Risk • Low Risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where domestic abuse is disclosed, there is always a risk



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of risk can change very rapidly, and it is unsafe to suggest that the risk is low, and inaccurate to say there is no risk at all.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a history of domestic abuse relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has suffered abuse in previous relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fact that someone has experienced abuse before does not mean they are somehow attracted to abusers. • Be factual and avoid any language that suggests that the survivor of abuse is complicit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship has recommenced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciled suggests a mutual decision, however this is highly unlikely to be the case. • Many factors contribute to the relationship recommencing but will most likely be driven by the abusive partners need for control.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survivor let their abusive partner back in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abusive partner has returned to the property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The point of separation poses the highest risk for survivors. They know this and may feel safer if the abusive partner is in close proximity. • The survivor may have had no choice and been too fearful not to open the door to a persistent, abusive partner. They may have received warnings for ASB noise nuisance and will do anything to ensure neighbours are not disturbed and they don't lose their tenancies. They may believe that the abusive partner is homeless. • Whatever the reason, it is important to demonstrate an understanding of reasons why an abusive partner returns to the property.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hostile • Aggressive • Antagonistic • Difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agitated • Distressed • Frightened • Upset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that whilst no staff member should be subject to abuse, when recording be careful to note what is said as well as change in demeanour when writing up case notes, even if you must act on threats.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic relationship • Volatile relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with an abuser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic or volatile relationship suggest that both partners are responsible for the abuse. This is not the case. • The abusive partner is choosing to be abusive and the onus is solely on them.

Other language considerations

Do not class Domestic Abuse as Anti-Social Behaviour. It is essential they are kept separate. ASB Officers shouldn't lead on domestic abuse cases and they should not be recorded on ASB systems.

The reason for this is categorising domestic abuse into anti-social behaviour can significantly increase the risk to individuals experiencing domestic abuse, prevent further disclosures and will not prevent further incidents. Incorrectly putting domestic abuse under ASB can lead to punitive repercussions towards those experiencing domestic abuse rather than a supportive approach focused on the individuals needs and safety.

A survivor of domestic abuse will often have become adept at reading body language to determine threat and assess risk through constant vigilance with their abusive partner. Often,



they will transfer this skill to scan for threat in other people while still in a state of crisis. This means that they will be reading body language and demeanour towards them and others. Correspondingly they will also have become skilled at masking their own thoughts and feelings though artificially adapting their language, both verbal and nonverbal to avoid confrontation with/demonstrate submission to their abusive partner. It's therefore important not to make judgements about survivors based on their body language and outward appearance – this is dangerous and could put them at further risk by minimising their experiences.

Appendix 5 - Civil Orders

- Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders - If the Police have a reasonable belief that domestic abuse has occurred; they are able to serve the perpetrator with a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) as the first step to acquiring a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO). A DVPO can prevent a perpetrator from returning to a residence, and from having contact with the survivor, for up to 28 days. This allows the survivor some time to consider their options, and to engage with some support.
- Restraining Orders - These can be made by a court in relation to a criminal case alleging domestic abuse, whether or not the case is upheld. A restraining order is made when there is a need for the order to protect a named person or persons from harassment or conduct that will put them in fear of violence. A restraining order imposes prohibitions and may cover a range of behaviour. It can, for example exclude a person from a specific geographical area, from contacting specific people, or behaving in a particular way.
- A person at risk of domestic abuse can make an application for an injunction. They can do this by applying directly via a solicitor, with the assistance of a specialist domestic abuse support service, or via believe housing if it is safe and appropriate for us to do so. An injunction is a 'stay away' order which prevents the abuser from certain behaviour (e.g. contacting the survivor) or compels them to action (e.g. to leave the home). There are two types of injunction available: an occupation order, and a non molestation order.
 - o Non-Molestation Orders - A non-molestation order can protect a person and any relevant child from violence or harassment. A person can obtain a non-molestation order against someone who has not been physically violent, but has been harassing, intimidating or pestering her. Non-molestation orders can run for a fixed period, or indefinitely. Generally they run until they are cancelled by a court.
 - o Occupation Orders This is another type of injunction, which establishes who has the right to remain in a home. An occupation order can order an abuser to move out of the home, or to keep a certain distance from the home; it can order the abuser to stay in certain parts of the home at certain times (e.g. order him to sleep in a different bedroom), to let the survivor back into the home if they have been locked out, or order them to continue to pay the rent or bills.
- Domestic Abuse Offender Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) - This scheme allows someone to make enquires about their partner if they are worried that they may have been abusive in the past. If Police checks show that there may be a risk, they will consider sharing the information. An application can be made directly by the affected person if they have a concern that they may be at risk of harm; or any concerned third party (such as parents or friends) can also make an application if they are concerned. However, if someone else applies, they would not receive the information; it would only be given to the person in the relationship, or someone who is in a position to protect them from the abuse.