

Newcastle Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Referral Pathway - Adults

Enabling disclosure

There are many reasons why victim/survivors won't, or feel they can't, disclose abuse to practitioners so it's important to create an environment that is safe, supportive and conducive to disclosure.

- Always be alert to the possibility that an individual is being subjected to domestic abuse and be prepared to offer information and support.
- Be aware of indicators that someone may be subject to abuse, e.g., physical injury (inconsistent explanations for injuries, frequent bruises / injuries), controlling behaviour (partner always present during appointments, won't allow person to talk for themselves, person has limited access to money) and environmental indicators (holes in doors/walls, broken furniture, tense atmosphere in the home).
- Only ask questions about domestic abuse when the potential victim/survivor is on their own and in a private place.

This referral pathway is applicable to all victim/survivors of domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines DA as any incident or course of conduct between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members. The abuse can encompass but is not limited to: physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological and emotional abuse. The Act also recognises children as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of the perpetrator's abuse. The definition includes 'honour' based abuse and forced marriage.

Domestic abuse can negatively impact on children and adults with care and support needs who may be abused directly by the perpetrator and by hearing, witnessing or intervening in abuse of another. If you are aware that someone is perpetrating abuse within a family, you must refer to your agency safeguarding policy and procedures and follow this referral pathway.

Remember, early intervention is crucial: domestic abuse commonly escalates and increases in severity over time.
Separation does not ensure safety: perpetrators often escalate their abuse when the victim/survivor is attempting to leave.
Consult domestic abuse specialist support services for safety planning advice if the victim/survivor wishes to separate.

Always use the DASH Risk Identification Checklist (RIC), available here in multiple languages: [Resources for identifying the risk victims face | Safelives](#)

In all circumstances

In an emergency, or if you are worried that someone is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

Never assume that someone else will take care of the domestic abuse issues. You should seek confirmation that other professionals/agencies have acted in a way that you would expect.

If appropriate, consult with other partners to clarify their roles and responsibilities, share information and seek advice, e.g., police, health, housing, domestic abuse specialists.

Follow up any referrals made to check they have been received and appropriately dealt with. When signposting to other agencies always consider risks associated with the perpetrator finding leaflets/letters, checking browsing history, etc.

You may be the victim/survivor's first and only contact. Deal with any immediate risks, including risks to others and yourself. Check internal records for risk information and/or warnings.

Document conversations, decision-making, actions taken to manage risk and rationale for sharing or not sharing information.

Remember that victim/survivors and perpetrators can deny abuse is happening or minimise the risk and/or harm being caused. Discuss any concerns with your manager, assess the risk level and act accordingly:



Case meets MARAC referral criteria (People aged 16 or over)

1. Be clear with the victim/survivor about confidentiality and MARAC information sharing procedures.
2. Complete a [DASH Risk Identification Checklist](#) with the victim/survivor, at first disclosure if possible.
3. Where the case is visible high risk (14 ticks on the checklist); or based on your professional judgement you have serious concerns about a victim/survivor's safety you **must** make a referral to MARAC with or without their consent.
4. Complete a MARAC referral form.

Contact your agency's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for MARAC. **Your agency SPOC:**

5. With the victim/survivor's consent, make a referral to NIDAS for an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) or Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA). [Access to services - NIDAS](#)
6. Your agency SPOC will make the referral to the MARAC Coordinator at Northumbria Police.
7. An IDVA or ISVA will contact the victim/survivor.
8. MARAC meetings take place every week during which key agencies share relevant information and agree an action plan to manage the risks posed by the perpetrator. The victim/survivor's views and safety concerns are presented by an IDVA.

Case meets safeguarding adults referral criteria (People aged 18 or over)

Domestic abuse is a form of abuse covered by multi-agency safeguarding adults policy and procedures.

An 'adult at risk' is defined in the Care Act 2014:

- Aged 18 or over; and
- Has needs for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met); and
- As a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

All adult safeguarding concerns should be referred to Adult Social Care at Newcastle City Council.

[Report a Concern - Newcastle Safeguarding](#)

1. Complete Safeguarding Adults Referral. Professionals must use an online form to do this, members of the public can contact Adult Social Care via other methods. Please refer to [Report a Concern - Newcastle Safeguarding](#) for more information.
2. Adult Social Care will determine whether the criteria for a multi-agency enquiry (Section 42 enquiry) has been met (see Care Act definition above).
3. Where criteria has been met, Adult Social Care will co-ordinate enquiries into the alleged abuse or neglect.

You should make a MARAC referral and a safeguarding adults referral if both criteria are met.

Further [practice guidance](#) on adult safeguarding and domestic abuse is available.

Case does not meet MARAC or safeguarding adults referral criteria

You still need to take action to safeguard and support the victim/survivor.

In all circumstances

1. Consider immediate and long-term risks and needs.
2. Inform the victim/survivor of their options for support (domestic abuse or otherwise) and signpost/refer them with consent.
3. Develop a [safety plan](#) with them covering different situations. Ensure they know where to go for help if they need it.
4. Share information with other relevant agencies if appropriate.
5. Keep timely, accurate, descriptive records of any disclosures made, actions discussed and referrals made.

If you have long term involvement with the victim/survivor, continue to monitor the situation, review the RIC and safety plan following any further incidents of abuse or change in the victim/survivors' circumstances.

If you have short term involvement

1. Review any previous decision-making in relation to domestic abuse and safeguarding adults – do not assume the victim/survivor's needs remain the same.
2. Consider whether the victim/survivor needs allocating to a longer-term practitioner.
3. Ensure recording is clear for future practitioners who may become involved.

Cases where children are involved (Aged under 18)

Remember that children are always impacted by domestic abuse. They are at risk of harm by direct abuse from the perpetrator and from hearing, witnessing or intervening in the abuse of another. You must refer to your agency safeguarding policy and procedures.

Concerns that a child or young person is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm must be referred directly to the Initial Response Service at Newcastle City Council.

[Report a Concern - Newcastle Safeguarding](#)

Telephone: 0191 277 2500
Emergency Duty Team: 0191 278 7878

If the case does not meet safeguarding thresholds, consider:

1. What support you and your agency can offer on an ongoing basis to meet the children's needs.
2. Starting an Early Help Assessment and Plan if there is not one already in place.

[Early Help for practitioners | Newcastle City Council](#)

Telephone: 0191 2115805
Email: earlyhelpplan@newcastle.gov.uk

Domestic abuse support services In an emergency, or if someone is in immediate danger, call 999	Good practice guidance when responding to an adult subjected to domestic abuse	Good practice guidance when responding to a child victim of domestic abuse
<p>In Newcastle, we have a range of services to support adult victim/survivors of domestic abuse, children and young people and anyone worried about their own behaviour towards someone in their family.</p> <p>NIDAS (Newcastle Integrated Domestic Abuse Service) Changing Lives Telephone: 0191 226 3688 (24/7) NIDAS offer a range of specialist emotional and practical support including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refuge for women and children• Outreach for anyone at risk of abuse: whether they want to leave their relationship or work to stay together safely• IDVA support for people aged 16+ at high risk of harm• ISVA support for people aged 14+ who have experienced sexual violence <p>The Angelou Centre Telephone: 0191 226 0394 The Angelou Centre provides a range of services for black, minoritised and migrant women, including legal advice on domestic abuse and immigration, specialist refuge accommodation for women and their children, counselling and education, training and personal development. Staff at the centre can speak a number of community languages.</p> <p>Newcastle Women's Aid Telephone: 0191 261 0504 or freephone 0800 923 2622 Services include flexible and structured support for women and the Freedom Programme.</p> <p>West End Women and Girls Domestic Abuse Peer Educators Telephone: 0191 273 4942 The Peer Educators provide support services for young women aged 11-25 years and deliver preventative domestic abuse and healthy relationship workshops in schools, colleges, youth groups, and any setting where young women are present.</p> <p>Children North East Telephone: 0191 256 2444 CNE provide a range of domestic abuse services to help babies, children and young people grow up to be healthy and happy.</p> <p>Action for Children Breaking the Cycle Counselling Service Telephone: 0191 272 4990 Counselling service for children and young people aged 4-16 years who have been affected by domestic abuse.</p> <p>Make a Change Telephone: 03000 20 25 25 Direct behaviour change work with people who are concerned about their behaviour towards their partner and/or ex-partner, including a structured 10 to 26-week programme. Proactive support for the partners and ex-partners of people referred to the service.</p>	<p>If you're concerned someone is being subjected to domestic abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is important that you act on your concerns. You could provide the only opportunity for the victim/survivor to tell someone.• Never ask about domestic abuse in front of anyone else, particularly a partner. Identify a later opportunity to speak to the person alone or pass your concerns onto another professional who could also attempt to ask when it is safe to do so.• Use a professional interpreter. Never use family, children or friends when you're concerned someone is being abused.• Provide a private, secure space where there is no risk of being overheard by the abuser or interrupted by anyone else.• Show the person you have time to listen. If you appear rushed or uninterested you are less likely to receive a disclosure.• Reassure about confidentiality and explain the limits of this, e.g. "I'm going to ask you a question and I want you to know that whatever you tell me will go no further without your permission, unless I believe you, a child or someone else is at risk of harm."• Begin with open questions, e.g. "How are things at home?"• Follow up with direct questions, e.g. "I notice that you seem anxious/have some bruises/often miss appointments (whatever your concern is), is there anything happening at home that you're worried about? Is anything happening in your life that is making you feel unsafe? Is someone hurting you?"• It may be necessary to ask more than once, as many victim/survivors do not identify that they are being subjected to domestic abuse if it's not physical violence and there are many powerful barriers that prevent them from disclosing. <p>Responding to an initial disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be sensitive, respectful and listen carefully to what you are being told.• Seek to empower victim/survivors, not to take over or make decisions for them. Ask them what they want you to do.• Remain non-judgemental and never imply that they are to blame for the abuse.• Thank them for trusting you enough to share their experiences with you.• Validate their experience by giving key messages, e.g. I believe you, you are not alone, you do not deserve to be treated like this, you are not to blame, you have a right to be safe and supported, there is help available for you. <p>Address immediate safety issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the immediate safety of the victim/survivor and anyone else in the family. Ask where the perpetrator is, is it safe for them to go home today?• Do not take any action that could place you or your colleagues at risk of violence, e.g., do not confront the perpetrator.• Seek emergency assistance if needed, e.g., police, medical treatment, safe housing, etc. <p>If the person doesn't want you to take any action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider mental capacity, coercion, public interest, risks of significant harm.• Always leave the door open for future discussion e.g. "You can contact me in the future if you feel you need further help and support." <p>Contact joanne.douglas@newcastle.gov.uk for information about Newcastle's domestic abuse training offer for practitioners.</p>	<p>For children under 16 To obtain accurate and reliable information from a child regarding a domestic abuse situation the language and questions must be appropriate for the child's age and developmental stage.</p> <p>Professionals should not press a child for answers. Instead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen and believe what the child says.• Reassure the child that the abuse is not their fault, and it is not their responsibility to stop it from happening.• If appropriate and safe, give several telephone numbers, including Childline, Northumbria Police and local domestic abuse services.• Don't promise to keep what a child tells you secret. Explain the limits of confidentiality and your safeguarding responsibilities. <p>Domestic abuse framing question for children: "We know that in many families, mums and dads have arguments and disagreements, does that ever happen in your family?"</p> <p>For young people (16-17 years old)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the adult practice guidance and refer to domestic abuse specialist services.• Safety plan with young person covering different situations. Ensure they know where to go for help if they need it.• Teenage pregnant women are particularly at high risk of harm from abusers. MARAC and safeguarding procedures should be initiated. <p>Good practice guidance when working with perpetrators of domestic abuse</p> <p>Be alert to and prepared to receive and clarify a disclosure about domestic abuse from a potential perpetrator. However, remember that most abusers will deny or minimise the abuse which they are perpetrating.</p> <p>You may have contact with a perpetrator directly or in the context of a family. They may present with a problem such as substance misuse, stress, depression or aggressive or offending behaviour – without reference to abusive behaviour in the household or relationship.</p> <p>Before seeking to clarify a disclosure from a potential perpetrator, practitioners should consider their own safety, the safety of any children, the safety of the victim/survivor and the safety of anyone else (such as ex-partners or extended family members).</p> <p>Don't collude. Be very clear that DA is never acceptable or justified and that it may constitute criminal behaviour.</p> <p>The most effective way to alter abusive behaviour is for the perpetrator to attend a structured behaviour change perpetrator programme which includes education, as well as challenging behaviours and beliefs about gender and relationships.</p> <p>Do not refer perpetrators to anger management courses and do not recommend couples counselling, mediation or restorative justice. In Newcastle, the only accredited perpetrator programme is Make a Change which is delivered by Harbour and Changing Lives (see support services).</p>