



Domestic Abuse

A Guide for Practitioners in Somerset

Identifying and responding effectively to domestic abuse is everyone's responsibility

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse typically involves:

- ⇒ Controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour
- ⇒ Violence
- ⇒ Physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse between adults over 16 years old who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members

It can happen to anyone of any age, gender, ethnicity or sexuality. At some point in their lives, it will affect:

- ⇒ One in four women
- ⇒ One in six men

Step 1: Identify

- ⇒ Injuries without explanation, concealed or minimised by client
- ⇒ A partner who is unwilling to allow a client to be alone with professionals
- ⇒ A patient or client who appears passive and dominated by their partner
- ⇒ Change in behavior, for example, appearing anxious

Step 2: Ask

If you have concerns, always try to find out more from the client. Make sure the person you are concerned about is on their own. If you are talking through an interpreter, make sure they are independent of the family.

Ways to start the conversation:

- ⇒ Are you happy?
- ⇒ How are things in your relationship?
- ⇒ Is anybody hurting you? (Don't refer to 'partner' as it could be someone else.)
- ⇒ Are you or your children scared or upset?

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Step 3: Act

If the situation is urgent, visible injury is evident or children are at risk: Phone 999 or your local authority's children's services, or follow your organisation's Child Protection Policy.

- ⇒ Always complete the domestic abuse risk assessment (DASH), even if the victim is not in immediate danger, to help inform your decision and determine escalation routes. If the DASH scores 14 points or more, refer to MARAC*.
- ⇒ Discuss with your MARAC representative* for more support.
- ⇒ Make sure the victim knows about sources of help and support that are available.

Top Tips

- ⇒ **Risk assess** - Complete a DASH*.
- ⇒ **Think family** - If there are other factors that impact on the individual and/or their families; refer to the Effective Support Document: <http://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/threshold-documents/>
- ⇒ Never advise them to leave their home or relationship.
- ⇒ Use your professional judgement – if you sense there's something wrong, you should act on it.
- ⇒ Use everyday language.
- ⇒ Note what has been said to you, including the time, date and injuries
- ⇒ Act on it -Don't keep what you know to yourself. The victim and family needs you to help them get help.

Somerset Domestic Abuse Service

General Enquiries: here.tohelp@knightstone.co.uk

Referrals: here.tohelp@knightstone.cjsm.net

*For further information: www.somerseturvivors.org.uk