

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Background: Domestic abuse (DA) is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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. It can include psychological, physical, sexual, financial & emotional abuse. It also includes so called 'honour' based abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) & forced marriage. Victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group. It includes abuse among and to older people & Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA).

Why it matters: Estimates suggest that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience DA at some point in their lifetime and may experience physical injury and mental health issues. 1 in 5 children have been exposed to DA and this has a significant impact on them, whether they witness the abuse or not. This impact can continue into adulthood with increased risk of substance use or criminal behaviour. Failure to deal effectively with DA has a lasting social and financial impact upon the whole community.

Questions to consider: When undertaking assessments, do you offer children and adults the opportunity of being seen alone in order to ask whether they are experiencing or have previously experienced DA? Remember there may be continued or increased risk of DA after separation, especially re child contact arrangements. Do you have contacts with adults who are threatening and abusive towards you or other professionals? Are you alert to the potential that these individuals may be abusive in their personal relationships?



Information: RECOGNISE – It is hard for someone to disclose they are experiencing DA. They may not recognise they are experiencing it (especially if they use another language) or they may think it only applies to physical violence. People need to feel the person they are talking to is genuinely interested, non-judgemental and will know how to respond. The SPB's Domestic Abuse Guidance for Professionals describes a range of common behaviours associated with DA including controlling/coercive behaviour, stalking, harassment & online abuse.

What to do: Read the SPB's Multi-Agency Procedures and Domestic Abuse Guidance for Professionals. Know the signs of DA and ask clients on contact about their home situation in a safe and confidential space. Use professional curiosity and find out the lived experience of children and families. Listen actively and notice changes in behaviour. If there is no disclosure but you suspect otherwise, provide opportunities to periodically ask the question again. Sign up to the SPB's Domestic Abuse Online course.

REFER – Encourage and support referral to support agencies. If the victim is pregnant or they have children, contact the Children and Families Hub. If the victim is an adult with care and support needs, contact SPOR. Consent of the victim does not need to be gained in high risk cases where you believe the victim is at significant risk of harm. Refer to Jersey Domestic Abuse Support for a risk assessment, further advice and support (www.jdas.je)

RESPOND – Ask people about DA routinely or where other factors indicate it would be appropriate. Ensure this is done in a safe, private place. Frame the question, validate the answer & address immediate safety concerns. Consider the safety of the whole family especially children.
RECORD – Consider safety and confidentiality when recording, especially if anything is recorded which the perpetrator could access. Document any disclosures as per your agency policies. If there is no disclosure, document details of your conversation accurately.