

PROFESSIONALS IN ALTERNATIVE FRONTLINE SERVICES FACTSHEET

Getting it right first time: top tips for professionals

Have you ever worried that a person attending your services is experiencing domestic abuse?

This factsheet is designed to help you know what to do if you are worried about a patient or client.



Step 1: Identify

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. Things to look out for that may indicate domestic abuse:

- Injuries without explanation (normally people will volunteer an explanation)
- Injuries which are minimised or concealed
- A partner who is unwilling to allow a patient or client to be alone with professionals
- A patient or client who appears passive and dominated by their partner
- Anxiety, depression and being withdrawn, particularly if this is not usual for the patient or client

Step 2: Find out more

If you have concerns, and it is safe for you to do so, try to find out more from the patient or client. Make sure the person you are concerned about is on their own, without children, partner or other family members present. And if you are talking through an interpreter, make sure they are independent of the family.

Ways to start the conversation in private:

- 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?
- Do you feel safe at home?

Don't be tempted to ask too much or feel that you have to ask everything at once as this might be overwhelming. Be prepared for the answers and don't express shock or disgust. Treat people with respect even if you think they are putting themselves at risk or denying that abuse is happening.

Step 3: Take action

You must act if someone discloses abuse to you or you suspect abuse.

Based on what you have seen and heard, make a professional judgment about what you should do next.

If you identify or recognise the above, be professionally supportive, inquisitive and take the following action:

- If the victim or other vulnerable person is in immediate risk of harm this **MUST** be reported immediately - dial 999

- Safeguard the victim and any children (discreetly and not in the presence of their suspected abuser) by moving them into another room
- Explain to the victim your priority is to make them and any other vulnerable people safe. Establish:
 - Their name, date of birth, address, contact details
 - Who are they at risk from – gather as much detail as possible about the offender name, date of birth, where they are now, are they known to police?
 - Details of what has happened.
 - Whether there is anyone else living in the same dwelling e.g. children. Again full details if possible: name, date of birth and are they also at risk from the offender?
 - Does the victim already have a plan or suitable options to make themselves safe?
 - Will the victim tell the police? (Discreetly and not in the presence of their suspected abuser):

If yes:

Arrange for the victim to speak to the police on 101, explain the circumstances and arrange to meet a police officer in a safe place (police station or other agreed location)

If no:

Explain you cannot ignore what you have been told or seen and will have to report the matter yourself.

If the victim is adamant that they do not want the police involved:

- a) Do they have a safety plan e.g. go somewhere else to stay and where is it?
- b) Provide the victim with the agency support details listed overleaf,
- c) Make every effort to persuade the victim not to return to the premises where they are in danger,
- d) You MUST then call the police on 101 yourself and report all information you hold

If there is immediate risk of danger

If the situation is urgent – for example there are injuries or a risk of immediate harm, dial 999 and ask for the police. Additionally, once you have dialled 999, if children are at risk, you should call your local authority children’s services or follow your organisation’s child protection policy.

If the situation is serious and the victim is scared and frightened, but there is no immediate risk of danger

You should seek advice from your service manager or your service’s domestic abuse champion and follow your organisation’s safeguarding protocols.

If the victim is not in immediate danger, but is scared or frightened, or unhappy in their relationship

Ask them how you can help. Make sure the victim knows about sources of help and support, such as those listed below, as well as any local services, and encourage them to get in contact.

Signposting for help and support

For details of the help and support agencies in Lancashire, visit www.noexcuseforabuse.co.uk

If you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to someone, or it is an emergency, you should always dial 999.

If you are unsure what to do

If you are unsure about what to do, speak to a local domestic violence service, the police or children's services for advice. They can suggest the right way forward and will speak initially on an anonymous basis.

Remember:

- Never make decisions for people or advise them to leave their home or relationship. This may put them in danger
- Use your professional judgement – if you sense there's something wrong, you should act on it
- Be human and use everyday language - people may not see themselves as victims of domestic abuse. It's hard to talk about, so acknowledge that and thank them for being honest with you
- Make a record – make notes of what has been said to you, including the time, date and injuries, including as much detail as possible. Use the person's words wherever you can. Your professional judgement is also important. Write down what you think or feel about the situation and why
- Act on it - it took a lot of courage for the victim to tell you. Don't keep what you know to yourself. The victim and family need you to help them get help