

1. What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse (DA) is unacceptable and frightening behaviour that leaves people scared and gravely affected by their experiences. It does not discriminate.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. It is abusive behaviour of one person towards another, where both are over 16, who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone and does not discriminate against race, religion, gender, sexuality, age or socioeconomic status. It encompasses but is not limited to stalking, controlling and coercive behaviour, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse, so called 'honour-based' abuse, female genital mutilation and forced marriage

2. Recognising the signs

When considering the signs of domestic abuse, it is important to understand how your assumptions about people's beliefs, values, age, gender identity or sexuality may affect how you recognise and respond to domestic abuse. It is important to be non-judgemental and challenge any biases we may hold. Understanding an individual's intersectionality components will help identify signs of abuse, as they may differ depending on people's situations and demographics. Identifying potential signs is the first step towards supporting a person to keep themselves safe.

3. Potential signs of domestic abuse

Low self esteem
Missed appointments/school/work/social occasions without explanation
Isolated from friends and family
Alcohol/drug issues
Appearing afraid or anxious
Frequent unexplained or excused injuries
Limited access to money
Depressed, anxious or suicidal
Increased repairs in the home, or damage to internal walls/doors.

This list is not exhaustive, and these signs also do not automatically indicate abuse, but they would indicate a potential need for support and open pathways for discussion around relationships and domestic abuse.

What is Domestic Abuse? 7 Minute Briefing

4. Ask the question

Ask the question: If you are concerned about someone, it is vital that the question is asked about domestic abuse. This may be uncomfortable for you and your client but knowing someone is concerned and offering support can help them make the first step towards seeking support. Sensitively asking about a person's experiences in their relationships and supporting them in recognising the signs of abuse provides a space for clients to discuss their relationship in a safe environment.

They may choose not to disclose at that time, but knowing you are aware of the issues and are supportive builds trust and lays foundations for them to approach you at another time.

Be non-judgemental: Consider intersectionality and how this may cause further barriers and challenges to the individual whilst always challenging your own biases

Believe: It is important that victims are believed. It often takes many incidents of abuse before someone discloses. You may be the first person they open up to and your response can help them know they are not alone, and support is available.

Safe Environment: Offer/arrange to speak with your client privately. It is important that services provide a safe and private environment in which people feel able to disclose. Never discuss the relationship in front of the potential perpetrator.

Support communication: If the person needs support to communicate, use a professional who is impartial and has a duty to maintain confidentiality. Do not use family and friends.

Offer support: Be aware of local and national support services including specialist and 'by and for' services.

5. Referral Pathways

Considering a person's situation and intersectionality will support you in guiding them to the relevant support.

Police: If an adult or child is in immediate danger call: 999.

Non urgent concern call: **101**

Report online: [Report domestic abuse | Metropolitan Police](#)

Safeguarding: If you are concerned about an adult or child safety, follow your service's safeguarding procedures and refer directly to appropriate safeguarding agencies.

DA Support services: Encourage anyone affected by domestic abuse to access specialist services: [Domestic Abuse Service Directory](#)

DASH: Complete a DASH risk assessment to assess risk level to identify suitable levels of support : [Dash risk checklist quick start guidance FINAL.pdf](#) (safelives.org.uk)