



Bromley Domestic Abuse

Language Guidance Document

The Bromley Intergenerational Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021 to 2024 is committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for victims and survivors of domestic abuse in Bromley.

DA Act 2021 Domestic Abuse Definition:

Behaviour of a person (A) towards another person (B) is domestic abuse if A and B are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other and the behaviour is abusive. Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following— Physical or sexual abuse, violence or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse and psychological abuse. It does not matter if this is a single incident or a course of conduct.

Language Guidance

As part of our response, we promote appropriate and sensitive use of language to ensure that victims' and survivors' experiences are not diminished. **We encourage all services to review their use of language, both spoken and in their literature as language can place very negative connotations on victim and survivors and their experiences.** We should not be using language that implies that victims and survivors are complicit or responsible for the exploitation or abuse they may suffer. The responsibility should always be placed on the perpetrator of the abuse.

Under the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 we now look to be gender inclusive in our language when discussing DA, as although we recognise that DA is disproportionately targeted at women and girls, all genders can experience this horrific crime and we want to ensure that everyone who has experienced DA feels included and that they will be supported.

While it is always best to be guided by the preferred terminology of those affected, this London Borough of Bromley document may be used at multi-agency forums, professional meetings or whenever there are discussions or communications regarding those impacted by domestic abuse.

As professionals, we are responsible for our own best practice but also for ensuring the good practice of others. If you hear or witness colleagues or other professionals using inappropriate language, please challenge this and refer them to this document.

V/S - Victims and Survivors DA - Domestic Abuse APTR—Alleged Perpetrator

Inappropriate Terms/ Comments	Why is this inappropriate?	Suggested Alternatives
Domestic Violence	Domestic abuse is not limited to violence, forms of control include threats, coercion, psychological, economic and sexual abuse (DA Act 2021)	Domestic Abuse
Complex Needs	This wording puts blame on the victim survivor	Additional Vulnerabilities
V/S alleged or claimed	<p>Using words like 'allege' or 'claim' suggests that we do not believe what we are being told.</p> <p>False allegations about domestic abuse are extremely rare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stated • Reported • Told me • Disclosed • Shared.
<p>They haven't been engaging and they don't want to help themselves</p> <p>V/S refuses to engage</p>	<p>There are many reasons why people may be or feel unable to access or engage with support or services, particularly those who live in crisis, chaos and in fear.</p> <p>Our language should demonstrate that we take responsibility for engagement and are willing to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have not been able to engage the V/S • Our agency is making ongoing attempts to engage the V/S.
It may be normal/common in their community	Domestic abuse is prevalent in communities and countries across the world but it should not be normalised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic abuse is not acceptable regardless of which community or country a person may come from • Just because it happens commonly, or is normalised doesn't mean it is acceptable.

<p>She/he refuses to substantiate police investigation</p> <p>She/he refused to cooperate</p>	<p>This implies that the victim does not wish to cooperate or pursue criminal investigation when there are a variety of reasons, namely fear, for which victims withdraw from investigations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V/S did not wish to discuss this matter further with the police • We have been unable to engage the V/S in criminal justice proceedings.
<p>V/S is denying the abuse</p>	<p>There are many reasons why the V/S may not feel safe or comfortable to disclose the extent of the abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimising the abuse • V/S does not recognise the abuse.
<p>Volatile relationship</p> <p>Stormy relationship</p> <p>Turbulent relationship</p> <p>Toxic relationship</p>	<p>‘Toxic’ or ‘Volatile Relationship’ suggests that both parties are responsible for the abuse. This is not the case. The abusive partner is choosing to be abusive and the onus is solely on them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with an abuser • V/S is in a relationship with perpetrator who is abusive • There has been a long history of the abuser using violence against the V/S • There is ongoing abuse from the perpetrator to the V/S • The V/S is at risk of ongoing abuse from her current partner.
<p>Abusive relationship</p> <p>History of abusive relationships</p>	<p>‘Abusive relationship’ doesn’t hold the abusive partner to account. The abusive partner, not the relationship, is causing the abuse.</p> <p>The fact that someone has experienced abuse before does not mean they are somehow attracted to abusers. To suggest that some victim survivors are particularly attracted to abusive people is victim-blaming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive partner • The survivor is in a relationship where they are being abused • The V/S has suffered abuse in previous relationships.
<p>Reconciled</p>	<p>Reconciled suggests a mutual decision, however this is highly unlikely to be the case when abuse is taking place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship has recommenced • The relationship has resumed • V/S has returned to relationship.

<p>They are just as bad as each other</p>	<p>Abuse is not mutual. In situations of domestic abuse, there is a pattern of power and control used by one person against another. If this is present, there is always a perpetrator and a victim.</p> <p>Intention to harm should not be equated with V/Ss defending themselves from abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parties have used violence against the other, however (-----) is the primary aggressor • Both parties have assaulted the other however (-----) elicits power and control over (-----).
<p>There are no risks</p>	<p>Risk is oscillating and changing; it is inaccurate to assume that there are no risks present in domestic abuse cases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have not been able to identify the current risks. • APTR is putting the survivor/family at risk by perpetrating said behaviours.
<p>Putting themselves at risk</p>	<p>This implies that the V/S is responsible for the risks presented by the perpetrator. Onus should be placed on the perpetrator.</p> <p>There are complex power dynamics which result in V/Ss returning to domestic abuse relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The APTR poses the following risks towards the V/S • The risk factors are... • V/S is at risk of...
<p>V/S had contact with the perpetrator despite this being a breach of the Restraining Order / Injunction</p>	<p>It is not the responsibility of the V/S to comply with the court orders placed on the perpetrator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APTR breached the order.
<p>V/S's behaviour provoked the attack</p> <p>APTR's behaviour was un-provoked</p>	<p>You should not be excusing or trying to justify the perpetrator's behaviour.</p> <p>Any reference to 'provocation' means that we are blaming the victim/survivor and relieving the abuser of responsibility for their actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APTR chose to... • APTR committed... • APTR (input verb)
<p>To imply that any of the below caused domestic abuse is inappropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol • Drugs • Mental Health • What v/s was wearing • In a public space at night • Walking Alone. 	<p>The perpetrator alone is responsible for their actions.</p> <p>Alcohol, drugs or mental ill-health can act as a catalyst but should never be considered the cause or reason for domestic abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APTR chose to... • APTR committed... • APTR (input verb) V/S.

<p>Crime of passion</p> <p>Loss of control</p>	<p>Domestic abuse is rarely about losing control, but taking control. Abusive people rarely act spontaneously when angry. They consciously choose when and how to abuse their victims.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APTR chose to... • APTR committed... • APTR (input verb) V/S.
<p>V/S was raped by perpetrator</p>	<p>The responsibility and focus should be placed on the person doing the action not on the victim.</p> <p>The same applies for all other abusive behaviours – strangled, struck, locked in a room etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APTR raped V/S • APTR (input verb) V/S.
<p>Non-consensual sex</p>	<p>This minimises the act committed by the perpetrator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rape.
<p>They are a good parent</p>	<p>Even if the abusive behaviours are not directed at the children – they are still victims of the abuse</p> <p>The effects of exposure to domestic abuse on children are traumatic and long-lasting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APTR appears as a “good parent” • APTR are manipulative and whilst may seem like good parents they are still perpetrating abuse • The children are also victims of the abuse.
<p>What about male victims?</p> <p>Women can be just as abusive</p>	<p>Men can be victims but in the vast majority of cases, domestic abuse is a gendered crime - experienced by women and perpetrated by men.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic abuse can affect men too, however there is a disproportionate effect on women and girls • Domestic abuse is a gendered crime • Domestic abuse disproportionately affects women. Statistics and figures demonstrate this.
<p>If it was that bad, they would leave/ report it</p>	<p>Victim/survivors stay in abusive relationships for many different reasons and it can be very difficult and dangerous to leave an abusive partner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any disclosure of DA should always be taken seriously.

<p>It's not domestic abuse as there has never been physical violence</p> <p>It's not serious as there is no physical abuse</p>	<p>The government defines domestic abuse any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (Domestic Abuse Act 2021).</p> <p>Emotional, psychological, financial, abuse, stalking or harassment can be just as dangerous and damaging as physical abuse.</p>	<p>Any disclosure of DA should always be taken seriously.</p>
<p>Abuse doesn't happen in same-sex relationships</p> <p>Abuse in same-sex relationships is not as serious.</p>	<p>Myths and stereotypes of this nature minimise the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and make it difficult for survivors to seek support.</p>	<p>Domestic abuse can happen to anyone irrespective of age, sex, gender identity, social-economic background, sexuality, religion or ethnicity.</p>
<p>V/S often lie about abuse</p>	<p>False allegations of domestic abuse are extremely rare. This myth is extremely damaging, because the fear of being called a liar can and does deter V/S's from reporting the abuse they have experienced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any disclosure of DA should always be taken seriously.
<p>Perpetrators of abuse grew up in abusive households</p>	<p>Domestic abuse is prevalent throughout society, and because of this many people have grown up witnessing domestic abuse. Many of these people never go on to perpetrate domestic abuse in their own relationships.</p> <p>Nothing, including adverse childhood experiences, excuses domestic abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other than gender, there are no key attributes to identify perpetrators of abuse. Although females can be perpetrators, domestic abuse is predominantly perpetrated by males.
<p>It's part of her traditions/cultural practice</p>	<p>No form of domestic abuse can be justified through culture or tradition. In many cases, perpetrators of abuse will use culture as a means to perpetuate the abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The perpetrator is using 'culture' to abuse the V/S.