



West Midlands
Domestic Abuse and Sexual
Assault and Abuse Standards

2024 - 2028

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Written by the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership.

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| West Midlands Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault and Abuse Standards | 5 |
| Standard 1 - Organisations have a robust safeguarding response to domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse reflected in all relevant policies | 7 |
| Standard 2 - Organisations address domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse through internal Workplace policy | 7 |
| Standard 3 - Organisations have pathways and procedures to respond to Domestic Abuse and Sexual assault and abuse | 9 |
| Standard 4 - Staff are trained, supervised and supported | 9 |
| Standard 5 - Safety, security and dignity | 10 |
| Standard 6 - Avoiding Unsafe Responses and promoting safe responses | 11 |
| Standard 7 - Diversity and Fair Access to Services | 11 |
| Standard 8 - Working with domestic abuse Perpetrators | 13 |
| Standard 9 - Multi-agency working | 14 |
| Standard 10 - Commissioning and service design | 15 |
| Standard 11 - Supporting Children and young people | 16 |
| Standard 12 - Supporting men and boys | 16 |
| Audit and quality assurance | 17 |
| Appendix - Legislation, national and local guidance, frameworks | 17 17 |
| Definitions - | 19 |
| Domestic Abuse definition | 19 |
| Sexual Assault and Abuse definition | 20 |
| Understanding Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Abuse | 20 |

Introduction

Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Assault and Abuse (SAA) are abhorrent crimes and as such, there is no place for them in society. Organisations working in the West Midlands Metropolitan area (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, Wolverhampton) are committed to adopting a partnership approach to ending interpersonal abuse and exploitation.

The West Midlands have taken a multi-agency, public health, trauma-informed and evidence-led approach to tackling all forms of exploitation and abuse. We are working together to prevent such crimes from taking place, hold perpetrators to account and support statutory services to effectively safeguard, protect and bring justice to victims-survivors. As a partnership, we are dedicated to breaking down the barriers to disclosure as well as commissioning specialist domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse services that are by and for the communities they support.

We pledge to affect the system wide change needed to address the inequalities that interpersonal abuse currently creates.

Domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse are widely hidden crimes with true prevalence and scale largely unknown. Increased reporting in recent years as well as research from centres of expertise has bolstered the knowledge and evidence. For domestic abuse, there are an estimated 2.4 million victims (1 in 20 (aged 16+)) every single year,¹ with an estimated 1 in 3 women and 1 in 7 men experiencing domestic abuse in their lifetime (aged 16+).² In addition, there are an estimated 9.8% of children who witness domestic abuse each year.³ The costs related to domestic abuse in England and Wales are estimated at around £71 billion per annum (Jan 2021).⁴ For sexual assault and abuse, there are an estimated 1.1million adult victims⁵ and 500,000 child victims⁶ every single year, with an estimated 1 in 4 women and 1 in 18 men experiencing sexual assault and abuse in their lifetime (aged 16+).⁷ For children; at least 15 percent of girls and 5 percent of boys are sexually abused before the age of 16.⁸

It is likely that there will be survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse who are also employed by every agency. Therefore, it is imperative that there are robust policies and protections in place to support internal staff as well as members of the public.

These standards will help your organisation to prepare for occasions where you may need to work with and/or support a victim-survivor of domestic abuse and/or sexual assault and abuse and feel confident in how you respond to them to ensure they get the most appropriate support.

1 CSEW, Nov 2022, estimated 5.0%/1 in 20 adults (6.9% women and 3.0% men) aged 16 years+ experienced DA (year ending March 2022).

2 CSEW (March 2022) estimated 1 in 5 aged 16 years+ (10.4 million) experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years.

3 CSEW (March 2019) estimated 8.5 million adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced abuse before the age of 16 years (20.7%).

4 Workplace support for victims of domestic abuse: review report, January 2021.

5 CSEW March 23 – Sexual Offences in England and Wales Overview. The CSEW uses 'sexual assault' as an umbrella term that includes the following sexual offences, including attempts of each: rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault and indecent exposure.

6 Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse, Child sexual abuse in 2020/21: Trends in official data.

7 CSEW Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales, year ending March 2022.

8 Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse, Child sexual abuse in 2020/21: Trends in official data.

West Midlands Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault and Abuse Standards

The following standards are principally aimed at public services and organisations who are likely to receive disclosures of domestic abuse & sexual assault and abuse and who may refer people into specialist support services.

It is understood that victims-survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse may come into contact with a number of different organisations, some of which are not designed to specifically support domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse. As a result of this, we recognise that the level of expertise, responsibility and interface with victims-survivors may differ. **However, all services have a responsibility to provide a service which is safe and not re-traumatising for people who may have experienced abuse.**

These standards are divided into three priority categories which relate to the level of intervention and interaction the professionals would likely have with a victim-survivor of abuse. These categories are defined below:

- **Tier 1 (Universal)**
- **Tier 2 (Intermediate)**
- **Tier 3 (Specialist)**

| Priority Tiers | Professional Role | Examples of Role |
|--|--|--|
| Tier 1 - Universal The universal level competency recommended for everyone in the workforce. | All workforce | Everyone employed at the organisation, including stakeholders and volunteers. |
| Tier 2 - Intermediate The professional has some limited contact with adults in need, children and/or young people where exploitation and/or abuse has been identified as a concern but it is not their role to provide direct interventions. | These staff may have roles which bring them into contact with members of the public. They are not providing direct support to them, but they may be providing other services and will be required to refer to other appropriate support agencies. | First responders, Team co-ordinators, managers of residential homes, managers of services who work within exploitation, volunteers, Parent Teacher Associations, decision makers, housing officers, advice workers. This is not an exhaustive list. |
| Tier 3 - Specialist The professional has direct contact with adults in need, children and/or young people who have been identified as being at risk of suffering harm or are suffering harm from exploitation and/or abuse. | These staff will have roles which fit into one or more of the following descriptions: they work predominantly with the public including children, young people, families and adults in need; they have specialist safeguarding responsibilities; they may be operational managers for frontline staff; they may have senior management responsibility for services to the public. Some of these staff will work in organisations which are identified as First Responders. | Support workers, residential staff, youth workers, community workers, teachers, health workers, social workers, Youth Offending Team, clinicians, victim advocates, policing, statutory bodies. This is not an exhaustive list. |

Each standard outlines whether it is 'recommended, desired or essential' for organisations based on the tier categories above.

We recommend that organisations refer to the [Competencies, Training and Development Framework for Tackling Exploitation and Abuse](#) for more information on the level of competency/training required as an aide to upskill workforces.

In recent years, the Government have released several strategy and guidance documents to support organisations in their response to domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse. Organisations should refer to the

[Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy \(2021\),](#)

[Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan \(2022\),](#)

[Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy \(2021\),](#)

[End to End Rape Review \(2021\)](#)

and other national publications for more information on how to support victims-survivors.

- STANDARD 1 – Organisations have a robust safeguarding response to domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse reflected in all relevant policies
- STANDARD 2 - Organisations address domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse through internal Workplace policy
- STANDARD 3 - Organisations have pathways and procedures to respond to Domestic Abuse and Sexual assault and abuse
- STANDARD 4 - Staff are trained, supervised and supported
- STANDARD 5 - Safety, security and dignity
- STANDARD 6 - Avoiding Unsafe Responses and promoting safe responses
- STANDARD 7 – Diversity and Fair Access to Services
- STANDARD 8 – Working with domestic abuse Perpetrators
- STANDARD 9 – Multi-agency working
- STANDARD 10 – Commissioning and service design
- STANDARD 11 - Supporting Children and young people
- STANDARD 12 – Supporting men and boys

A full list of support services available to victims-survivors across the West Midlands can be accessed via the [No Excuse for Abuse website](#).

STANDARD 1

Organisations have a robust safeguarding response to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Abuse reflected in all relevant policies

Tier 1 (Universal) - **Essential**

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - **Essential**

Tier 3 (Specialist) - **Essential**

1.1 Organisations have robust safeguarding policies which refer to domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse.

1.2 Staff know what to do if they become aware of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse including understanding and appropriately using relevant risk assessments for adults and children. This includes; Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Tool (DASH), Multi-agency Referral Forms (MARF), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). More information on these risk assessments are detailed within the appendix of this document.

1.3 Staff know and understand how to signpost and make referrals to appropriate support services for victims-survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse appropriate to their role.

1.4 Organisations have protocols in place to hold perpetrators accountable and manage their risk. More information on working with perpetrators is detailed in Standard 8.

1.5 Data Protection policy clearly states when information is shared and how it is shared safely in the context of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse.

1.6 Measures are in place to ensure safe working practices and to protect the physical safety and mental wellbeing of staff and volunteers.

STANDARD 2

Organisations address Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Abuse through internal workplace policy

Tier 1 (Universal) - **Desired**

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - **Essential**

Tier 3 (Specialist) - **Essential**

For the purposes of this section, these standards will refer to a 'Sexual Harassment Policy' as the appropriate terminology pending the completion of the [Worker Protection \(Amendment of Equality Act 2010\) Bill 2023](#) (as the Government's intention to introduce a duty requiring employers to prevent sexual harassment).

2.1 Organisations have a recent and up to date Domestic Abuse Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy which includes definitions of abuse, lists all type of abuse and includes risk assessment and referral pathways. The policy should also include;

- Accessible guidance for staff on what to expect from the organisation in terms of protection, support, workplace flexibility and external sources of support
- Accessible guidance for managers and human resources on how best to support and protect employees experiencing domestic abuse and sexual harassment from their colleagues
- Accessible guidance and mechanisms for dealing with domestic abuse and sexual harassment perpetrators

2.2 The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Harassment Policies link to other internal policies, including; safeguarding, information-sharing, wellbeing and record management.

2.3 Organisations should engage with national accreditation/quality marks such as [White Ribbon](#) to support internal responses to ending violence against women and girls.

2.4 Organisations should incorporate trauma-informed practice⁹ into internal policy. For additional guidance on trauma-informed approaches, please access [Trauma-informed approaches to supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage](#) and [Developing and leading trauma-informed practice](#) for more information and guidance.

2.5 Organisations should promote the use of ‘Domestic Abuse Champions’ or ‘Sexual Abuse Champions’ who are trained to spot the potential signs of domestic abuse or sexual assault and abuse. They act as a confidential ear and are available to signpost individuals to support services within their respective organisations.

2.6 Organisations should work with frameworks that support the work of sexual assault and abuse services and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA’s) such as the [national framework for working with ISVAs and support services](#).

The Employers’ Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA) in collaboration with Public Health England (PHE) and the Business in the Community (BITC) produced [Domestic Abuse: A toolkit for employers](#) to educate employers on domestic abuse, provide guidance and offer best employer practice. We recommend that organisations utilise this toolkit as a basis to build their own workplace policy in relation to domestic abuse. Organisations may also want to refer to the Government’s [Workplace support for victims of Domestic Abuse](#) review report from 2021 for more information.

Organisations should where possible explore becoming affiliated to an associated body such as the [The Employers’ Initiative on Domestic Abuse \(EIDA\)](#).

⁹ Working definition of trauma-informed practice - GOV.uk (www.gov.uk)

STANDARD 3

Organisations have pathways and procedures to respond to Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Abuse

Tier 1 (Universal) - **Essential**

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - **Essential**

Tier 3 (Specialist) - **Essential**

Procedures and pathways will include:

3.1 Staff take a proactive approach in identifying domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse; using professional curiosity and actively asking about the abuse where appropriate.

3.2 Staff know what to do if they become aware of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse and are confidently able to signpost/use relevant risk assessments for adults and children appropriate to their role. E.g. DASH and make appropriate referrals, including to specialist domestic abuse services and MARAC. For more information, please see the appendix.

3.3 Staff have protocols in place to hold perpetrators accountable and manage their risk. More information on working with perpetrators is detailed in Standard 8.

3.4 Staff are aware of and follow process to ensure information is shared safely in the context of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse.

STANDARD 4

Staff are trained, supervised and supported

Tier 1 (Universal) - **Desired**

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - **Essential**

Tier 3 (Specialist) - **Essential**

All staff should receive training at a level commensurate to their role. We recommend that organisations refer to the [Competencies, Training and Development Framework for Tackling Exploitation and Abuse](#) for more information on the level of competency/training required as an aide to upskill workforces.

4.1 All relevant staff are confident in using internal safeguarding systems and processes.

4.2 Training needs are identified in a systematic way that keeps abreast of emerging and developing issues.

4.3 Training is not held in isolation but reinforced in the workplace through effective supervision, peer reflection and workplace policies and procedures.

4.4 Sufficient Supervision and/or Clinical Supervision to reduce vicarious trauma is provided for staff (appropriate to their role).

4.5 Training complies with any organisational guidance relevant to your sector, such as NICE, Department for Education, or the College of Policing and is systematically evaluated for impact.

STANDARD 5

Safety, security and dignity

Tier 1 (Universal) - Recommended

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - Essential

Tier 3 (Specialist) - Essential

5.1 Organisations provide a safe, comfortable, trauma-informed and supportive space where victims-survivors can discuss their experiences.

5.2 Organisations receive informed consent from victims-survivors (where possible) when there is an intention to share information. If informed consent is not given then they must explain to the victim-survivor and document the reasons given for a breach of confidentiality (on safeguarding grounds).

5.3 Organisations have up-to-date, accessible information in public spaces and through online channels which provide clear signposting information to suitable support.

5.4 Organisations provide confidential spaces where children are not exposed to disclosures of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse by adults.

5.5 Organisations are prepared for emergencies such as where the perpetrator has followed the victim-survivor or where emergency resources may be needed.

5.6 Organisations should consider the value of offering the victim-survivor a worker of the same gender and where this is not possible consideration appropriate referral pathways to mitigate.

5.7 Organisations provide professional and confidential interpreting services that have undergone appropriate domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse training. Family, friends or children are not used to interpret.

5.8 Provision for women survivors should be available in locations separate from services for men wherever possible. Organisations should refer to the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance on separate and single sex service providers](#) for more information.

5.9 Organisations will ensure that all interventions prioritise the safety, security and dignity of service users and staff/volunteers.

5.10 Needs and risks to service users are assessed prior to or just after taking up the service and reviewed at regular intervals.

STANDARD 6

Avoiding unsafe responses and promoting safe responses

Tier 1 (Universal) - **Essential**

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - **Essential**

Tier 3 (Specialist) - **Essential**

Findings from Domestic Homicide Reviews tell us that in the context of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse, there are certain practices that are considered inappropriate and are likely to increase the risk to victims-survivors and children¹⁰ because they:

- Place victims-survivors in an environment where they cannot speak openly for fear of punishment
- Collude with the abuser by sharing responsibility for change with the victims-survivors

To avoid unsafe responses to domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse, organisations should have a valid risk assessment in place ensuring there is minimal risk before proceeding with the below;

- Mediation
- Conciliation
- Family therapy
- Children's social care meetings where both victim-survivor and abuser may be invited to attend

6.1 Staff are aware of the risks when convening meetings involving both perpetrator and victim-survivor, and this should be avoided if possible as the nature of coercive control means the victim-survivor is unlikely to feel able to speak openly and freely.

6.2 Staff understand the potential for contact between the victim-survivor and the perpetrator, and there are systems to screen for domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse to avoid assessment or intervention services to victim-survivor and perpetrators together.

¹⁰ Common issues related to contact
76. the perpetrator interfering in information provided by the victim, [Key findings from analysis of domestic homicide reviews: October 2019 to September 2020 \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

STANDARD 7

Diversity and fair access to services

Tier 1 (Universal) - **Essential**

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - **Essential**

Tier 3 (Specialist) - **Essential**

7.1 Abide by the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) when supporting victims-survivors of domestic abuse & sexual assault and abuse to ensure that all protected characteristics of the individual are considered and additional factors which may require organisations to provide enhanced, bespoke support. These include;

- Age
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Mental health
- Substance use
- Immigration status
- Victims-survivors with care and support needs
- Victims-survivors with complex needs

7.2 In reference to the above point, organisations will proactively identify additional needs of victims-survivors and provide a service that is appropriate and accessible for that person.

7.3 Organisations will respond to domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse through a trauma-informed, person-centred approach. The Government released the [Working definition of trauma-informed practice](#) which is available to all agencies to use for more information.

7.4 Staff and individuals must consider Intersectionality when providing direct support to victims-survivors and take appropriate action to mitigate any additional barriers to support. *

*Intersectionality must be embedded throughout organisations. Organisations should recognise that social biases influence how society perceives victims-survivors of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse, and stereotypes often create barriers for care and assistance.¹¹

¹¹ [Intersectionality and domestic violence - Genesis Women's Shelter & Support \(genesishelter.org\)](#)

7.5 Cultural competence must be embedded throughout organisations. Organisations should have the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different to their own and be confident and competent in providing high quality and culturally appropriate care to all victims-survivors of exploitation and abuse. Please refer to the [Competencies, Training and Development Framework](#) for more information on Cultural Competency.

7.6 Organisations have robust frameworks in place to correctly identify where there is Honour Based Abuse (HBA), Forced Marriage (FM), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Non-Fatal Strangulation (NFS) or where there has been domestic abuse in relation to a suicide.

7.7 Organisations should be aware of the links between domestic abuse, sexual abuse and suicide and should incorporate into workplace policy. For more information, please refer to the [Domestic Abuse links to Suicide: Rapid Review, Fieldwork, and Quantitative Analysis Report](#) which was published by the University of Birmingham.

STANDARD 8

Working with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators

Tier 1 (Universal) - Recommended

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - Desired

Tier 3 (Specialist) - Essential

8.1 When working with perpetrators of domestic abuse, referred to as ‘perpetrators’ hereafter, it is advised that this work adheres to both the [Respect Standards](#) and [Home Office Standards for Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions](#).

8.2 Organisations and individuals should take care not to make inappropriate referrals or conduct inappropriate interventions with perpetrators of domestic abuse e.g. anger management and/or parental conflict.

8.3 Professionals and individuals should have an understanding that perpetration of abuse is not caused by substance use or other such factors. Although addressing a perpetrator’s wider, holistic needs can support with their engagement with interventions and their readiness for change, this does not constitute domestic abuse behaviour change work and should not be seen as a substitute.

8.4 Particular types of abuse within the context of domestic abuse should also be factored in when considering the most appropriate work to conduct with perpetrators. Examples include non-fatal strangulation/suffocation, Sexual Assault and Abuse, honour-based abuse, and stalking. Women perpetrators and those from the LGBTQ+ community may also require a specialist response.

Additional resources to consider in the context of working domestic abuse perpetrators:

[Research into ‘what works’ with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators: key lessons](#) published by Cordis Bright and [Who commits Domestic Abuse?](#) Published by Crest Advisory.

STANDARD 9 – Multi-agency working

Tier 1 (Universal) – Recommended

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - Essential

Tier 3 (Specialist) - Essential

9.1 Organisations providing direct services to victims-survivors should undertake multi-agency working with:

- Informed consent from victims-survivors (where possible) when there is an intention to share information
- Knowledge and engagement with multi-agency screening, MARAC, multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) and other relevant local partnerships.
- Clear referral pathways to other services which are up to date with availability of services
- Community Safety Partnerships, Children’s Safeguarding Partnerships, Adult’s Safeguarding Boards and Health and Wellbeing Boards should be utilised to develop, promote and ensure take up of appropriate high-quality multi-agency domestic violence and abuse training.

9.2 Organisations take a **public-health approach** to tackling abuse and take accountability for their role and responsibility in preventing abuse, protecting victims-survivors and pursuing and prosecuting perpetrators.

9.3 An appropriate lead is identified to represent each organisation in multi-agency strategic meetings to ensure that there is a joined up, collaborative approach to tackling abuse. Organisations take responsibility in informing the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) who the appropriate lead is and regularly informing them of any changes.

9.4 Organisations providing direct services (statutory and non-statutory) have systems in place to generate data and information on domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse, including:

- Number and nature of reported incidents
- Repeat victims-survivors, offenders, MARAC cases
- Anonymised demographic information
- Referral source
- Actions, outcomes and unmet need
- Voice of the victim-survivor and the child and their experience of services
- How information/feedback is used to improve the victim-survivor journey
- Barriers to pathways/multi-agency working for escalation/resolution

9.5 Organisations commit to pursuing agreed joint priorities and improving data quality through existing frameworks such as the Child Sexual Abuse Centre of Expertise Data improvement tool and the NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour framework.

STANDARD 10 – Commissioning and Service Design

This standard only applies to commissioners of domestic abuse & sexual assault and abuse services.

10.1 Organisations should refer to Home Office guidance for additional information on commissioning services which support women and girls, as listed below.

[The Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations](#)

[Violence against women and girls commissioning toolkit](#)

[Commissioning Framework for Child Sexual Abuse \(CSA\)](#)

[Victims Funding Strategy](#).

10.2 Co-production should be the aim for organisations when designing new services. Organisations should consult with victims-survivors wherever possible to ensure services are beneficial for the people they support.

10.3 Commissioners understand the levels of engagement and should aim for co-production and shared decision making where possible, especially when designing new services. Organisations must consult with victim-survivors to ensure services are beneficial for the people they support. Organisations should provide remuneration for the time provided by victims-survivors.

10.4 Commissioners should fund specialist services which provide bespoke, targeted support to victims-survivors delivered by agencies they trust in community settings for them to access. They should ensure that unheard or underrepresented voices are captured to ensure adequate provision of accessible services. Guidance to support this can be found through [Mapping the Maze](#), [CSA centre](#), through the findings of the [Reclaiming Voice: Minoritised Women and Sexual Violence](#) report and many others.

10.5 Commissioning organisations should consult and collaborate with other commissioners across the West Midlands to avoid duplication of services, fill gaps in provision and avoid postcode lottery.

10.6 Organisations should consider the provision of specialist domestic abuse services which are available to men, such as IDVAs, male refuges/safe houses, helplines, drop-in services based on needs assessments.

STANDARD 11 - Supporting children and young people

Tier 1 (Universal) - Recommended

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - Essential

Tier 3 (Specialist) - Essential

Domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse can affect anyone at any age; however, the response needed to support children and young people is different and must be considered throughout all organisations that come into contact with victims-survivors. The Home Office released the [Working together to safeguard children](#) guidance to support organisations in their response. Please refer to this for more information.

As per the Domestic Abuse Act, children are now considered to be victims-survivors of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of, the abuse.

11.1 Organisations have effective policies and procedures to safeguard children and young people.

11.2 Organisations have age-appropriate information for children and young people.

11.3 Organisations should strive to support children and young people into therapeutic support.

11.4 Organisations provide confidential spaces where children are not exposed to disclosures of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse by adults.

STANDARD 12 - Supporting men and boys

Tier 1 (Universal) - Recommended

Tier 2 (Intermediate) - Essential

Tier 3 (Specialist) - Essential

Whilst it is acknowledged that domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse are gendered crimes that predominantly affect women and girls, these crimes can affect anyone at any age. The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that in the year ending March 2022, around 3 in 100 men experienced domestic abuse¹² and just over 1 in 10 men experienced sexual assault¹³. As a result, specialist support must be available to men and boys.

For additional information on supporting men and boys, please refer to the Government's [Position statement on male victims of crime considered in the cross-government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls](#).

12.1 Where an organisation primarily exists to advocate for the needs of women but they are commissioned to provide support to male victims, a male worker should be offered where possible to overcome the perceived or actual discrimination that may otherwise occur against men accessing their support. Organisations that exist more generally to support victims or the public do not need to take this precaution.

12.2 Organisations should take a gender inclusive approach to communications such as posters, leaflets, imagery, website content and information.

12.3 Organisations must include recognition of male victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse within any internal policies and external communication around services.

Audit and Quality Assurance

Organisations are required to complete a self-assessment audit against the standards. Organisations are required to send the completed audit document to the OPCC who will hold the responsibility of collecting responses. The OPCC advise that this is completed every 3 years as best practice.

The accompanying audit document can be found on the OPCC website, alternatively organisations can contact their local authority domestic abuse lead.

Appendix

Legislation, National and Local Guidance, Frameworks

Legislation

[Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)

[The Data Protection Act 2018](#)

[The Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

[The Online Safety Bill](#)

[The Police, Crime and Sentencing Act 2022](#)

[The Victims and Prisoners Bill](#)

[Worker Protection \(Amendment of Equality Act 2010\) Bill](#)

Strategies

End-to-end progress Report 2022
End-to-End Rape Review 2021
NHSE Strategic direction for sexual assault and abuse services
Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2021
Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan
Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
Victims Funding Strategy

National Standards and Guidance

Child Sexual Abuse Centre of Expertise Data improvement tool
Commissioning Framework for Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)
Developing and leading trauma-informed practice
Domestic Abuse: A toolkit for employers.
Home Office Standards for Domestic Abuse perpetrator interventions
Honour-based abuse – advice for first responders
Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation
National Framework for working with Independent Sexual Violence Advisors and support services
National operating model for the investigation of rape and other sexual offences
NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour framework
Position statement on male victims of crime considered in the cross-government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls
Public health approaches to reducing violence
Sector Sustainability Shared Standards
Separate and single-sex service providers: a guide on the Equality Act sex and gender reassignment provisions
The Respect Standards - Accreditation framework for safe, effective, and survivor focused work with perpetrators of Domestic Abuse in the UK
The Violence Against Women and Girls National Statement of Expectations
Trauma-informed approaches to supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage
Violence against women and girls commissioning toolkit
Women's Aid Domestic Abuse standards
Working definition of trauma-informed practice
Working together to safeguard children
Workplace support for victims of Domestic Abuse

Local Standards, Strategies and Frameworks

[Competencies, Training and Development Framework for Tackling Exploitation and Abuse](#)
[West Midlands Sexual Assault and Abuse strategy](#)

Research

[Domestic Abuse links to Suicide: Rapid Review, Fieldwork, and Quantitative Analysis Report](#)
[Reclaiming Voice: Minoritised Women and Sexual Violence](#)
[Research into 'what works' with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators: key lessons](#)
[Who commits Domestic Abuse?](#)

Definitions

Domestic Abuse Definition

As per [The Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#):

'Abusive behaviour' is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

For the definition to apply, both parties must be aged 16 or over and 'personally connected'. This is defined in the act as parties who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- are relatives

As per the act, children are also considered to be victims-survivors of Domestic Abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse.

Sexual Assault and Abuse Definition

West Midlands Definition of Sexual Assault and Abuse (Sexual Violence):

'Sexual violence' and/or 'sexual abuse' can both be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature that takes place without consent or without understanding. It encompasses a broad range of activities, physical, visual and verbal, that are: of a sexual nature; take place without consent or without understanding; are experienced, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault and that take away the ability to control intimate contact. Whilst sexual violence has been recognised as a cause and a consequence of gender inequality disproportionately affecting women and girls, we recognise there are heterosexual male victims, and victims within the LGBT+ community.'

Understanding Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Abuse

NB: The below captures most domestic abuse and sexual assault and abuse but does not include other abuse/crimes that can be committed during said abuse, nor is it an all-encompassing list of every harm (e.g. GBH, ABH, fraud).

Domestic Abuse

These standards respond to domestic abuse in the context of:

Controlling or coercive behaviour – This is defined as acts designed to make a person feel inferior and/or dependent by keeping them apart from friends, help and support. It can include taking advantage of their money and things they have, stopping their independence, and controlling what they want to do. It can also be an act of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim-survivor.

Violent or threatening behaviour - conduct and/or behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, including but not limited to, verbal and/or physical aggression, attack, threats, harassment, intimidation and other disruptive behaviour in any form, or by any media, which causes or could cause a reasonable person to fear physical harm by any individual(s) or group(s) against any person(s) or property.

Physical abuse - any intentional act causing injury, trauma, bodily harm or other physical suffering to another person or animal by way of bodily contact.

Psychological abuse – Psychological abuse involves the regular and deliberate use of a range of words and non-physical actions used with the purpose to manipulate, hurt, weaken or frighten a person mentally and emotionally; and/or distort, confuse or influence a person's thoughts and actions within their everyday lives, changing their sense of self and harming their wellbeing.

Economic abuse - Any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or obtain goods/services.

Stalking and/or harassment – This is defined as someone who displays unwanted, repetitive behaviour to another person and causes them to feel scared, distressed or threatened.

Gas-lighting – This is where someone intentionally manipulates another person into doubting their own perceptions, experiences or understanding of events

Honour based abuse - a collection of practices which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups in order to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour.

Forced marriage - A forced marriage is where one or both people do not, or cannot, consent (agree) to the marriage.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) - Female genital mutilation comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Tool (DASH) - The purpose of the DASH risk checklist is to give a consistent and simple tool for practitioners who work with adult victims of domestic abuse in order to help them identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a MARAC meeting in order to manage their risk.

Multi-agency Referral Form (MARF) – The usual process for submitting safeguarding concerns (via portal or email) to Child and Adult Safeguarding services. This form should always be completed by all agencies when making a referral. This is to allow the sharing of information with other agencies and secure the appropriate response. Please check corresponding Safeguarding Adult, Child or joint partnership websites for further details.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) - The main purpose of independent domestic violence advisors (IDVA) is to address the safety of victims at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members to secure their safety and the safety of their children. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans. The local IDVA services for the West Midlands can be found [here](#).

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) brings key agencies and professionals together to share better quality information, at an early stage, helping analysis and decision-making, to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults more effectively.

Sexual Assault and Abuse

These standards respond to Sexual Assault and Abuse in the context of:

Sexual abuse – is defined as sexual behaviour or a sexual act forced upon a woman, man or child without their consent.

Any non-consensual sexual activity within any context – Non-consensual means where a person has not given their agreement/permission for an act to take place. Sexual activity may include; physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing.

Any penetrative or non-penetrative offence –

A penetrative offence (rape) is defined as person (A) intentionally penetrating the vagina or anus of person (B) with a part of his body or anything else in a sexual manner when the other person has not consented to this. Person (A) does not reasonably believe that (B) consents.

A non-penetrative offence (sexual assault) is defined as person (A) intentionally touching person (B) in a sexual manner when they did not consent to the touching. Person (A) does not reasonably believe that (B) consents.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) – This is similar to sexual abuse which is defined above; however, it involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) - Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in *exchange* for something the victim-survivor needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim-survivor may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Sexual exploitation and grooming – Grooming is when a person builds a relationship with a child, young person or an adult who's at risk so they can abuse them and manipulate them into doing things. The abuse is usually sexual or financial, but it can also include other illegal acts.

Trafficking – This is defined as the recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. It usually involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

Sexual coercion – This is defined as unwanted sexual activity that happens when you are pressured, tricked, threatened, or forced in a nonphysical way.

Sexting – This is defined as sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or videos, primarily between mobile phones.

Sexual abuse via social media and online technology - Sexual abuse on social media platforms may take various forms, including:

- Threatening to distribute or actually distributing intimate or sexual images of a victim-survivor without their consent
- Sending unrequested and unsolicited nude images
- Pressuring a victim-survivor to send sexually explicit images, emails, chats, or texts
- Sharing unsolicited pornographic images or videos with a victim-survivor
- Taking sexually explicit content of the victim-survivor without their consent

Sexual harassment – This is when someone carries out unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person that makes them feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated.

Upskirting – This is when someone uses equipment like a camera or mobile phone to take photos or videos underneath a person's clothes, without their permission.

Image based sexual abuse (revenge porn) – This is when someone shares sexually explicit images or videos of another person without their consent, and with the aim of causing them distress or harm.

Female Genital Mutilation (as a form of VAWG with the impact of SAA) – Definition explained above.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) - Statutory service with provision for examination of sexual assault by health and forensic professionals either in conjunction with a police report or as a self-referral. The local SARC services for West Midlands can be found [here](#).

Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) - An ISVA is an adviser who works and supports individuals who have experienced sexual assault and abuse irrespective of whether they have reported to the police. The nature of the support that an ISVA provides will vary from case to case and will depend on the needs of the individual and their circumstances. ISVAs provide impartial information to the victim-survivor about all their options, such as reporting to the police, accessing Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) services, and specialist support such as therapy and counselling. ISVAs also provide information on other services that victims-survivors may require, for example in relation to health and social care, housing, or benefits. The local ISVA services for the West Midlands can be found [here](#).