



Home Office

Domestic Abuse

Statutory Guidance

July 2022



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Ministerial Foreword

Domestic abuse is cruel and complex, and can affect anyone, leaving physical and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. The 2019 to 2020 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates that 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in the previous year, the majority of whom were female.¹

We know that far too many individuals have their lives destroyed by domestic abuse. However, for so many, their experience of abuse has been stigmatised, diminished, or worse still, ignored. We also know domestic abuse has a devastating impact on children and young people. Growing up in a household of fear and intimidation can impact their health, wellbeing, and development, with lasting effects into adulthood. We need to build a society that has zero tolerance towards domestic abuse, and actively empowers victims, communities, and professionals to confront and challenge it, and provide victims of domestic abuse, including children, with the support they deserve. That is why the Government is committed to transforming the response to this terrible crime, seen through the introduction of the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ('the 2021 Act') and this accompanying statutory guidance. The 2021 Act is expected to help millions by strengthening the response across all agencies - from the police and courts to local authorities and service providers. It provides further protections for those who experience domestic abuse, and enhances measures in place to bring perpetrators to justice.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sex, gender reassignment, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, or background. The 2021 Act introduces a statutory definition of domestic abuse, and together with this statutory guidance, provides clear case studies of what abuse looks like. Too often domestic abuse is spoken about in relation to those who are 'high risk' cases, but for many victims, the abuse they suffer is secret, it is subtle, and it is sustained.

This guidance has been subject to extensive engagement with experts from the sector, independent Commissioners, academics, and those on the frontline. We especially acknowledge and thank the organisations within the domestic abuse sector who collaborated with officials in drafting this guidance, providing feedback and looking at each section in detail in the development stages. We also thank everyone who responded during the consultation stage sharing their comments, insights and experiences to assist in finalising this document.

For as long as domestic abuse exists, support for victims must exist, and for those working to protect victims, this guidance will help ensure that we are all playing our part in tackling this abhorrent crime.

The Right Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department

¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS). [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandcare/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales-2019to2020): Data year ending March 2020.

Executive Summary

Purpose and legal status

This statutory guidance is issued under section 84 of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) ('the 2021 Act'). It is intended to increase awareness and inform the response to domestic abuse. It also conveys standards and promotes best practice.

Section 84(4) of the 2021 Act requires persons exercising public functions, to whom the guidance relates, to have regard to the guidance in the exercise of those functions. Some organisations may also have specific statutory duties to safeguard victims of domestic abuse. This guidance should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant guidance and codes of practice, several of which are signposted within the document.

This guidance focuses on support for victims. Not everyone who has experienced, or is experiencing, domestic abuse chooses to describe themselves as a 'victim' and other terms may be preferred such as 'survivor'. We recognise both terms, however, the guidance predominantly uses the term 'victim' to be consistent with the terminology of the 2021 Act.

Audience

This statutory guidance is aimed at organisations working with victims, perpetrators and commissioning services, including the police, local authorities, and the NHS. It is also of relevance to organisations dealing with consequences of domestic abuse such as employers and financial institutions. A non-exhaustive list of who this guidance is intended for is set out below:

- English and Welsh local authorities
- Police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)
- The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) and Cafcass Cymru
- Services for forms of violence against women and girls including any specialist domestic abuse services (including services serving men and boys)
- Local housing and homelessness teams, registered social landlords
- Early years, childcare, schools, colleges, and higher education settings
- Adult social care and children's social care providers
- NHS England and NHS Improvement (from 2022, NHS England)

- Clinical Commissioning Groups (from July 2022, Integrated Care Boards)
- Integrated Care Partnerships (from July 2022)
- NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts
- Employers
- HM Prison and Probation Services
- HM Courts and Tribunals Service
- Youth Offending services
- Jobcentre Plus
- Financial services (banks, building societies etc.)
- Community and faith groups (including faith leaders)

The guidance applies to England. It applies to Wales insofar as it relates to matters in Wales that are reserved to the UK Government – this is primarily policing, and criminal, civil and family justice. In Wales, it is aimed at persons exercising public functions relating to these matters and devolved Welsh authorities must have regard to this guidance in respect to these matters.

All organisations in Wales should refer to the relevant Welsh legislation and associated guidance in respect to devolved matters, such as the [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) ('the 2015 Act') and its associated guidance.

We expect those carrying out devolved and non-devolved functions to continue to work together to implement the purposes of both the 2015 Act and the 2021 Act where relevant and appropriate.

Box 1.1: Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance

As per section 84(2) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, this guidance sets out: (a) the effect of sections 1 and 2, which define “domestic abuse” and “personally connected” including guidance as to particular kinds of behaviour that amount to domestic abuse; and (b) the effect of domestic abuse on children.

Under section 84(4), a person exercising public functions to whom guidance is issued must have regard to it in the exercise of those functions. Beyond this, the guidance provides wider information about research and existing operational duties, frameworks and structures to help inform professionals’ response to domestic abuse, support multi-agency working, and encourage best practice.

While the whole guidance should be followed, please note that where:

- a. 'must' or 'has/have a duty to' is used, it reflects legal obligations, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and other legislation.
- b. 'should', 'may', 'can', or 'could' are used, the guidance is to be followed wherever possible, and indicates best practice.

Structure

The guidance is broken down into seven chapters: [Objectives](#); [Understanding Domestic Abuse](#); [Recognising Domestic Abuse](#); [Impact of Domestic Abuse](#); [Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#); [Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#); and [Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#). Each chapter includes a chapter summary, setting out its purpose and content.

Case studies help illustrate some of the subject matter described. The case studies that concern the experiences of victims have been anonymised to help protect their identities. They present examples and are not intended to be exhaustive or representative of the experiences of abuse that can be encountered by any group of individuals, or of any form of abuse that they relate to.

Annexes are included at the end of the guidance. These signpost the range of support available for victims ([Annex A](#)), define acronyms used within the document ([Annex B](#)), highlight further guidance available to support frontline professionals ([Annex C](#)), and summarise different protective orders which can be issued ([Annex D](#)).

Related material

The Government has published a refreshed [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Strategy](#) and a complementary [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#), through these aiming to transform the whole of society's response to the issue of violence against women and girls (VAWG)², and help prevent and reduce VAWG crimes including domestic abuse. The Welsh Government has published a refreshed [National Strategy to tackle Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(VAWDASV\)](#) in line with the statutory duty created under the 2015 Act which also seeks to tackle cause and effect.

The [Supporting Male Victims](#) Position Statement, [VAWG National Statement of Expectations](#) and [VAWG Commissioning Toolkit](#) have also been refreshed. The Supporting Male Victims Position Statement (2022) is an updated iteration of the Male Victims Position Statement (2019). It provides a focus on the additional challenges that can be faced by male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government Tackling VAWG Strategy and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, and outlines the continued commitment to better enable male victims to come forward and receive the support they

² The term 'violence against women and girls' refers to acts of violence or abuse that we know disproportionately affect women and girls. Crimes and behaviours covered by this term include rape and other sexual offences, domestic abuse, stalking, 'honour'-based abuse (including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and 'honour' killings), as well as many others, including offences committed online. While the term 'violence against women and girls' is used, this refers to all victims of these offences.

need. The National Statement of Expectations, and accompanying VAWG Commissioning Toolkit, have also been updated to provide clear and consistent guidance for local areas on how to commission victim support services, and to help ensure their response to VAWG is as collaborative, robust, and effective as it can be.

As part of developing the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance, the Welsh Government and the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner have been consulted and we thank them for their contributions. We thank the domestic abuse sector for their engagement in the consultation and sharing of best practice ways of working which has informed this guidance. We also thank the many victims and survivors who shared lived experiences and testimonials which were instrumental in the development of this guidance.

Chapter 1 – Objectives

This chapter covers:

- The objectives of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – promoting awareness, protecting and supporting victims, holding perpetrators to account, transforming the justice response and improving performance.
- The objectives of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance – to provide clear information on what domestic abuse is, provide and signpost support to those organisations who need to respond, and convey standards and best practice for agency and multi-agency response.

Objectives of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The prevention of domestic abuse and the protection of all victims lies at the heart of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) ('the 2021 Act') and its wider programme of work. The measures in the 2021 Act³ seek to:

- **promote awareness** - putting domestic abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, by introducing a statutory definition which includes economic abuse and recognising children as victims in their own right;
- **protect and support victims** - establishing in law the office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC), introducing a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DAPN) and Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO), and placing a new duty on tier one local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse, in refuges and other safe accommodation;
- **hold perpetrators to account** - extending the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse, extending the offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress to cover threats to disclose such material, creating a new offence of non-fatal strangulation or suffocation of another person, clarifying by restating in statute the general position that a person may not consent to the infliction of serious harm and, by extension, is unable to consent to their own death;
- **transform the justice response** - helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal courts through the use of video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by the perpetrator; and
- **improve performance** - driving consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse including by putting the guidance for the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) on a statutory footing and providing for a

³ Factsheets have been published providing more information about the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets>.

statutory code of practice relating to the processing of domestic abuse data for immigration purposes.

The measures of the 2021 Act will come into effect at different points following the completion of steps required for their implementation. The [commencement schedule](#) for provisions of the legislation has been published on GOV.UK. At the time of issuing this guidance not all provisions of the 2021 Act are in legal force. Those with a duty to give regard to this guidance, and others, should also refer to the commencement schedule.

Objectives of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance

- 1. Provide clear information on what domestic abuse is and how to identify it,** including the behaviours that can amount to domestic abuse and the impact on adult and child victims. Individuals may not be aware that they are a victim of domestic abuse, they might blame themselves, fear the consequences of leaving the perpetrator, not know where they can seek help, or fear that they will experience stigma and shame if they do try to seek help. This guidance aims to provide clear information on what domestic abuse is and how to identify it.
- 2. Provide guidance and support to frontline professionals, and other organisations, including signposting to further resources.** The guidance will support frontline professionals who have responsibilities to safeguard victims of domestic abuse. It outlines some of the strategic and operational frameworks key to providing a response, and the commissioning of domestic abuse services. It also signposts frontline professionals and wider organisations to other relevant resources relating to domestic abuse.
- 3. Convey standards and promote best practice for agency and multi-agency response.** There is a significant amount of work underway to improve the response of frontline staff to domestic abuse for all agencies, and to promote multi-agency responses and best practices. Tackling domestic abuse requires a whole system approach.

Chapter 2 – Understanding Domestic Abuse

This chapter covers:

- Background on domestic abuse, and our understanding of it, as set out in data and evidence informed by feedback from victims.
- The statutory definition of domestic abuse introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, set out in detail.
- Key ‘types’ of abuse, expressed as different relationship contexts, including: intimate partner abuse, abuse within teenage relationships, abuse by family members and child-to-parent abuse.

Background

1. Domestic abuse is a high harm, high volume crime that remains largely hidden. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)⁴ for the year ending March 2020 estimated that 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 had experienced domestic abuse in the previous year.⁵ Childhood Local Data on Risks and Needs estimated that, between 2019 and 2020, approximately 1 in 15 children under the age of 17 live in households where a parent is a victim of domestic abuse.⁶
2. The police recorded over 1.5 million domestic abuse related incidents and crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2021.⁷ This is an increase of 6% from the previous year. Domestic abuse related incidents cover reports where, after initial investigation, the police have concluded that no notifiable crime was committed. Domestic abuse related crimes are defined as any incidence of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional) towards another “personally connected” person, where it has been identified that an offence has taken place.
3. While domestic abuse is not itself a specific criminal offence, criminal offences may be committed by perpetrators. Related offences could include but are not limited to

⁴ The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a nationally representative face-to-face victimisation survey, in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a range of crimes in the 12 months prior to the interview. This includes self-completion modules on certain topics, including domestic abuse.

⁵ ONS. [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-in-england-and-wales-overview). Data year ending March 2020.

⁶ Children’s Commissioner. CHILDREN – [Local and national data on childhood vulnerability](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/local-and-national-data-on-childhood-vulnerability). Data from 2017 to 2019.

⁷ ONS. [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-in-england-and-wales-overview). Data year ending March 2021.

controlling or coercive behaviour⁸, harassment, stalking, criminal damage, physical assault, sexual assault, rape and murder.

4. Anyone can be affected by domestic abuse – regardless of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief. In addition, domestic abuse can manifest itself in different ways within different communities.
5. Whilst both men and women can be affected by domestic abuse, females are disproportionately the victims. The latest CSEW data for the year ending March 2020 estimates that 1.6 million females and 757,000 males aged 16 to 74 experienced domestic abuse in the previous year.⁹ According to this data, around one in four women aged 16 to 74 had been a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime, compared with around one in seven men.¹⁰
6. The majority of domestic homicide victims are women.¹¹ Data for the period March 2018 to 2020 showed that 276 women were victims of domestic homicide and in 97% of cases the suspect was male.¹² Over the same period, 86 men were killed in domestic homicides. In 62% of the cases the suspected perpetrator of these homicides was male, and in 38% of the cases the suspect was female.¹³
7. Domestic abuse remains under reported. There can be many barriers to disclosing abuse, seeking criminal justice outcomes, and accessing services. Consideration is given to this in '[Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)'.
8. The CSEW data can be taken to provide estimates of the prevalence of domestic abuse in England and Wales. It is clear that the scale of domestic abuse is vast and its impact is significant. [Research published by the Home Office](#) estimated the social and economic costs of domestic abuse to be in the region of £66 billion for victims identified in England and Wales within the year 2016 to 2017. Physical and emotional harms (the fear, anxiety and depression experienced by victims as a result of domestic abuse) were estimated to account for the overwhelming majority of the overall costs. The impact on individual victims is severe and can be wide-ranging and long-lasting. Further detail is set out in '[Chapter 4 – Impact of Domestic Abuse](#)'.

Statutory definition

9. Sections 1 to 3 of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) ('the 2021 Act') create a statutory definition of domestic abuse. **This definition is set out in Box 2.1 below.**

⁸ Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship may amount to a criminal offence under section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015.

⁹ ONS. [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2020.

¹⁰ ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2020.

¹¹ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales](#): Data year ending March 2020.

¹² ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data from 2017 to 2019.

¹³ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): 1.1 Domestic homicide; Data from 2017-2019.

10. In the definition person “A” refers to the perpetrator of the abuse, and person “B” refers to the victim of the abuse. The term ‘victim’ is used in the 2021 Act to denote someone who has experienced domestic abuse. This includes children who have seen, heard, or experienced the effects of domestic abuse, and are related to either the victim of the abusive behaviour, or the perpetrator (section 3 of the 2021 Act).
11. Section 1(3) of the 2021 Act provides for what constitutes behaviour that is abusive. This behaviour might consist of a single incident or a course of conduct. Section 1(3)(c) refers to controlling or coercive behaviour. This behaviour might amount to an offence under section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. In order for the offence to be committed the behaviour must satisfy the test set out in section 76(1), this means it must be repeated or continuous and that the other elements of the criminal offence in the section must be made out.
12. Section 1(5) provides that, for the purposes of the 2021 Act, A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person – for example B’s child, other family member, friend or colleague.
13. Section 2 of the 2021 Act provides the definition of “personally connected” and this includes those who would constitute a “relative” of the victim. The definition of “relative” has the meaning given under section 63(1) of the [Family Law Act 1996](#) (‘the 1996 Act’) which includes immediate biological family, stepfamily and extended family of an individual including such family members of their present or former spouse, civil partner or cohabiting partner.
14. “A” and “B” do not need to be living together, or co-habiting, to be “personally connected” under the 2021 Act.
15. Section 2(3) of the 2021 Act, for the purposes of the definition of “personally connected”, defines a “child” as a person under the age of 18 years. This will include a person aged 16 or 17.
16. Section 3 provides that a child (a person under the age of 18 years), is for the purposes of the 2021 Act, recognised as a victim of domestic abuse if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, and is related to “A” or “B”.
17. The 2021 Act does not create a single criminal offence of domestic abuse, and frontline responders should continue to consider the full range of existing legislation and safeguards to protect children. Offences to be considered could include common assault, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, and causing, or allowing, death or serious harm, or child cruelty, neglect, and violence. This last offence, under section 1 of the [Children and Young Person Act 1933](#)¹⁴ was amended in 2015, to include causing a child emotional or psychological suffering, including through exposure to domestic abuse. Pursuant to section 31(9) of the [Children Act 1989](#) “harm” means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development of the child as a result of seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person. “Development” means physical,

¹⁴ Section 1 of the Children and Young Person Act 1933 concerns cruelty to persons under sixteen.

intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development; “ill treatment” includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

Box 2.1: Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – Part 1 – Definition of domestic abuse

Section 1: Definition of “domestic abuse”

- (1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—
 - (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are “personally connected” to each other, and
 - (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—
 - (a) physical or sexual abuse;
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
 - (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));
 - (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

- (4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to —
 - (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
 - (b) obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act, A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

(6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

(7) For the meaning of “personally connected”, see section 2.

Section 2: Definition of “personally connected”

- (1) Two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies —
 - (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
 - (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
 - (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));
- (g) they are relatives.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if —

- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or;
- (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

(3) In this section —

- “child” means a person under the age of 18 years;
- “civil partnership agreement” has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

Section 3: Children as victims of domestic abuse

(1) This section applies where behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is domestic abuse.

(2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who —

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if —

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section —

- “child” means person under the age of 18 years;
- “parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);
- “relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

Types of domestic abuse

18. To deliver an effective response, professionals and agencies should be aware of the different types of domestic abuse.

Intimate partner abuse

19. Domestic abuse most commonly takes place in intimate partner relationships, including same sex relationships.¹⁵ Intimate relationships can take different forms, partners do not need to be married or in a civil partnership and abuse can occur between non-cohabiting intimate partners. As with all forms of abuse, abuse in intimate relationships can vary in severity and frequency, ranging from a one-off occurrence to a continued pattern of behaviour.
20. Abuse can continue or intensify when a relationship has ended or is in the process of ending. This can be a very dangerous time for a victim including an increased risk to their physical safety. It is a highly critical period for ensuring support for victims, as they may consider returning to perpetrators during the period immediately after fleeing or ending the relationship. Separation can raise both the likelihood and consequences of risk because of the perpetrator's perceived lack of control.
21. Post-separation abuse may involve a range of abusive behaviour, see '[Chapter 3 – Recognising Domestic Abuse](#)' for further detail. It may be facilitated by technology and without effective intervention it can be ongoing and may escalate. In the year ending March 2021, 57 women and 10 men were recorded as being victims of homicide by a current or ex-partner.¹⁶ According to the Femicide Census, 38% of the women killed by their ex-partner or ex-spouse from 2009 to 2018 were killed within the first month of separation and 89% in the first year.^{17 18}

Teenage relationship abuse

22. Young people can experience domestic abuse within their relationships. Teenagers may not self-identify as victims. They may perceive their relationships to be 'casual', for example engaging in multiple romantic and sexual partners through dating apps. Those who engage in abusive behaviour may seek to minimise or deny the abuse by stating that they were not in a relationship.
23. Teenage relationship abuse is not a term that is defined by the 2021 Act, or elsewhere in law. However, if the victim and perpetrator are at least 16 years old, abuse in their relationship can fall under the statutory definition of domestic abuse. Whilst young people under the age of 16 can experience abuse in a relationship, it would be considered child abuse as a matter of law. Abusive behaviours by one young person toward another, where each are aged between 16 and 18 could be both child abuse and domestic abuse as a matter of law. Ultimately, in responding to cases of abuse involving those under 18, child safeguarding procedures should be followed. See the

¹⁵ ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data from year ending March 2020.

¹⁶ ONS. [Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2021.

¹⁷ Femicide Census: [UK Femicides 2009-2018](#).

¹⁸ To note that there is no agreed definition of 'femicide'. For the Femicide Census, 'femicide' relates to any killing of women and girls by men. The Census relies on the media and information that is publicly available and accessible, and therefore may represent an incomplete picture of all 'femicides'.

section '[Multi-agency working to safeguard children](#)' in '[Chapter 7 – Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)' for further detail.

24. Abusive behaviours within relationships between young people can include similar incidents or patterns of behaviours as adult relationships. For teenagers in particular, abuse to harass or control victims can occur through using technology, this includes social media, or location-based tracking apps, such as Find My Friends. Young people's lives are often heavily online-based and perpetrators of abuse may exploit this, demanding access to passwords and monitoring online activity. Young people may also experience intimate image abuse within their relationships, including threats to expose intimate images.¹⁹
25. Teenage relationship abuse often occurs outside of a domestic setting. Victims may feel that domestic abuse occurs only between adults who are cohabiting or married. Teenage victims may find it difficult to identify abusive behaviour, for instance, controlling or jealous behaviour may be misconstrued as love.
26. Domestic abuse in teenage relationships can be just as severe and has the potential to be as life threatening as abuse in adult relationships. Young people who experience domestic abuse do so at a particularly vulnerable point in their lives.²⁰ They may experience a complex transition from childhood to adulthood which impacts on behaviour and decision making. It may impact on the way that they respond to abuse or if and how they engage with services.
27. Due to the stigma attached to LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans) identities, young people from the LGBT community may lack relevant and accurate information on healthy relationships, which may inform behaviour and decision making. LGBT young people may face unique obstacles to seeking help, especially in a context of a first relationship or when first coming out as they may be unable to confide in their peers or family, owing to the reaction they might receive due to their sexuality or gender identity.²¹ See '[Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)' for further information. In addition, for more information on responding see the section '[Responding to children and young people](#)'.

Abuse by family members

28. Domestic abuse may also be perpetrated by a family member: by children, grandchildren, parents, those with "parental responsibility", siblings, or extended families including in-laws.²² The definition of "personally connected" at section 2 of the 2021 Act makes reference to relatives and relative has the meaning given by section 63 of the Family Law Act 1996 ('the 1996 Act'), as explained in the '[Statutory definition](#)'

¹⁹ Threats to disclose private sexual photographs and films, without the consent of the relevant individual, and with the intent to cause distress, has been made a specific offence under section 69 of the 2021 Act. For further information, see the section '[Technology-facilitated abuse](#)'.

²⁰ SafeLives. [Safe Young Lives: Young People and domestic abuse](#). 2017.

²¹ Magic, J, Kelly, P. [LGBT+ people's experiences of domestic abuse: a report on Galop's domestic abuse advocacy service](#): Galop: 2017.

²² As will be reflected in the updated child-to-parent abuse guidance, while this statutory definition of domestic abuse applies to perpetrators aged 16 or above, children under 16 can engage in abusive behaviours.

section of this guidance. Abuse may be perpetrated towards a victim by more than one relative.

29. Abuse within a family set up can encompass a number of different harmful behaviours. Abuse may be perpetrated as a perceived means to protect or defend the 'honour' of an individual, family or community against alleged or perceived breaches of the family or community's code of behaviour. It can therefore include 'honour'-based abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and other harmful practices such as reproductive coercion (and as part of this, forced abortion). See '[Chapter 3 – Recognising Domestic Abuse](#)' for further detail on these forms of abuse.
30. Young people may be at an increased risk of abuse perpetrated by family members.²³ Young people may be inherently more vulnerable because it is harder for them to distinguish between normal and abusive behaviours, and this may especially be the case where the perpetrator is a trusted family member. A young person may find it more difficult to report or disclose abuse by an adult. There may be no safe channel for disclosure, young people may fear the repercussions of disclosure or may not want other family members to get into trouble. There may be an increased risk of abuse by family members for young LGBT people. Research by Galop suggests that young LGBT people (aged 13 to 24) disclose disproportionately higher levels of abuse from immediate family members compared to other age groups.²⁴
31. In responding to abuse by family members, services should consider the ways in which the patterns of abuse may differ from, or in cases relate to, patterns of abuse found in cases of intimate partner abuse. Services should ensure assessment procedures are used appropriately to identify risk. For example, professionals should be aware that family members are not always protective figures for those who experience intimate partner abuse, as in some circumstances family members may constitute a risk themselves and be complicit in abuse.

Child-to-parent abuse

32. Abuse within the family includes child-to-parent abuse, also commonly referred to as Adolescent to Parent Violence/Abuse (APV/A) and Child and Adolescent to Parental Violence and Abuse (CAPVA). Child-to-parent abuse can involve children of all ages, including adult children, and abuse toward siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles as well as other family members such as those acting as kinship carers. If the child is 16 years of age or over, the abuse falls under the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act.
33. There is no specific legal definition of child-to-parent abuse but it is generally accepted to involve some of the patterns of behaviour that can be found in other relationship contexts. Behaviours can encompass, but are not limited to, humiliating and belittling

²³ ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data from year ending March 2020.

²⁴ The research is based on analysis of 626 LGBT+ victims who received advocacy support from Galop's domestic abuse service in Greater London. Magic, J, Kelly, P. [LGBT+ people's experiences of domestic abuse: a report on Galop's domestic abuse advocacy service](#): Galop: 2017.

language, violence and threats, jealous and controlling behaviours, damage to property, stealing and heightened sexualised behaviours. Child-to-parent abuse appears gendered, with the majority of cases being perpetrated by sons against their mothers, although men and boys are victims too.²⁵

34. Like other forms of abuse, child-to-parent abuse is characterised by shame and stigma which could mean parents are less likely to report the abuse to the police. Parents may fear being blamed, disbelieved, or conversely having their child taken away from them or criminalised leaving them reluctant to seek help. Recorded incidents likely represent only a small number of real cases as families facing crisis point make the difficult decision to disclose their abuse. Victims of this type of abuse should also receive appropriate domestic abuse response and support.
35. The Home Office intends to update the guidance on child-to-parent abuse. For more information on responding to children see '[Chapter 6 – Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)'.

Box 2.2: Case Study

Case Study

Between 2017-2019, Caroline experienced escalating abusive behaviours from her adolescent daughter, including physical and verbal attacks, as well as threats to kill. During this time, Caroline struggled to find help and support from services and statutory agencies.

When Caroline's youngest son was assaulted by her daughter, she made the decision that she could not remain at home safely with the family but was met with the threat of abandonment prosecution by her local authority. Despite the police also raising concerns, social care services stated she was to remain at home, leaving the family to deal with high-risk incidents.

Caroline was forced to home educate her daughter as she had stopped attending school. Throughout this time, her daughter's abusive behaviour was increasing and Caroline and her family were living in constant fear. Caroline had to give up her job as she could not leave her daughter at home alone for fear of further risk to the family. Caroline's requests for more support, and for her daughter to be voluntarily accommodated by the local authority under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, were ignored.

Caroline's daughter's behaviour was a daily battlefield of physical and verbal attacks. She could not leave her other children in the same room with her and had to install CCTV. Eventually provision at a care home was offered to Caroline's daughter for two nights a week, giving the family some respite. However, she soon stopped attending when told she did not have to.

²⁵ Baker, V, Bonnick, H. [Understanding CAPVA: A rapid literature review on child and adolescent to parent violence and abuse for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office](#): Respect: 2021.

Events escalated over a five-day period in 2019. Caroline's daughter's GP raised urgent concerns as she had said she had planned to kill her mother. A mental health assessment suggested no mental health problems, but professionals raised extreme concerns for the family's safety and welfare. The police also raised concerns, but support was not offered from social care services. At one point the family were in a crisis situation for over 12 hours.

Caroline's daughter was arrested but Caroline was still initially told she had to come home as she was too high risk to be accommodated and as Caroline had "parental responsibility" it was up to her to care for her. After a further seven days the local authority agreed to her daughter becoming a looked after child under a voluntary accommodated section 20 placement. The situation could have been avoided had Caroline and her family been listened to at the earliest opportunity, support offered, and therapeutic work put into place. Instead, she was faced with blame, judgement and the seriousness ignored, leaving her and her family at high risk of harm.

Chapter 3 – Recognising Domestic Abuse

This chapter covers:

- Descriptions and examples of a range of abusive behaviours to help with identifying domestic abuse, including physical abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, sexual abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour, harassment or stalking, economic abuse, verbal abuse, technology-facilitated abuse, abuse relating to faith, and 'honour'-based abuse.
- Different tactics that may be used by perpetrators.

36. Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours. It can but does not have to involve physical acts of violence and can include threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, psychological, sexual and/or economic abuse. Domestic abuse can involve abuse facilitated and perpetrated online or offline. It is widely recognised that the perpetrator's desire to exercise power and control over the victim is at the centre of abusive behaviours. Many victims will experience abusive behaviours simultaneously, perpetrators may demonstrate a wide range and use different tactics to gain power and control.

Physical abuse, violent or threatening behaviour

37. Physical abuse and violent or threatening behaviour can involve but is not limited to:

- Being, or threatened to be, kicked, punched, pinched, pushed, dragged, shoved, slapped, scratched, strangled, spat on and bitten;
- Use, or threats of use, of weapons including knives and irons;
- Being, or threatened to be, burned, scalded, poisoned, or drowned;
- Objects being thrown at or in the direction of the victim;
- Violence, or threats of physical abuse or violence, against family members;
- Causing harm by damaging or denying access to medical aids or equipment – for example a deaf person may be prevented from communicating in sign language or may have their hearing aids removed; and
- Harming someone whilst performing 'caring' duties, which are often performed by relatives. This is especially relevant for individuals who are heavily dependent on others, such as disabled and older people and may involve force feeding, over-medication, withdrawal of medicine or denying access to medical care.

38. Section 70 of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) ('the 2021 Act') amends Part 5 of the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#) to create an offence of non-fatal strangulation. Non-fatal strangulation can be used as a form of assault in domestic abuse and a history of strangulation can increase the risk of an eventual fatality.²⁶ Visible marks are not always present; the absence of marks should not undermine an account of non-fatal strangulation.
39. Non-fatal strangulation is often used to instil fear and exert power and control.²⁷ Victims who experience non-fatal strangulation may believe at the time that they will die as a result.²⁸ Loss of consciousness, even temporary, can cause brain damage, this includes long-term neurological damage such as memory loss and facial droop. In addition, loss of consciousness can create an increased risk of miscarriage and stroke.
40. The occurrence of non-fatal strangulation in a sexual context is also addressed within the 2021 Act, see the section on '[Sexual abuse](#)'.²⁹

Sexual abuse

41. Victims of domestic abuse may experience behaviour that is sexually abusive.³⁰ This abuse can involve:
- Rape and sexual assaults;
 - Being pressured into sex, or sexual acts, including with other people;
 - Being forced to take part in sexual acts because of threats to others, including children;
 - Unwanted sexual contact or demands;
 - 'Corrective' rape (the practice of raping someone with the aim of 'curing' them of being LGBT);
 - Intentional exposure to HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) or sexually transmitted infections;
 - Being pressurised or being tricked into having unsafe sex, including deception over the use of birth control;
 - Forced involvement in making or watching pornography; and
 - Hurting a victim during sex including non-fatal strangulation.

²⁶ Glass, N, et al. [Non-fatal strangulation is an important risk factor for homicide of women](#): J Emerg Med: 2008 Oct; 35(3):329-335.

²⁷ See [Strangulation and suffocation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

²⁸ Williams, R, Monkton-Smith, J. [Non-fatal Strangulation: A summary report on data collected from SUTDA survey. Stand up to domestic abuse](#): 2020.

²⁹ The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 commencement schedule sets out the actual and planned timing for commencement of the provisions of the Act: [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 commencement schedule - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

³⁰ The year ending March 2020 Crime Survey shows that, since the age of 16, an estimated 4% of adults aged 16 to 74 had been victims of domestic abuse related sexual assault since the age of 16. Women were more likely to report being victims; with 7.3% of women and 0.7% of men reporting domestic abuse related sexual assault in their lifetime. ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics](#): Data year ending March 2020.

42. Sexual abuse can coexist with sexual exploitation. Forced sex acts may involve activities such as being forced to perform pornography or to strip in person, via webcam or live streaming platform. Perpetrators may force or coerce a victim into exchanging sex for drugs, alcohol, or money, or coerce them into committing a crime, such as theft, to pay, for example, for the perpetrator's drugs or alcohol.
43. "Rough sex", including sadomasochistic activity, can involve the infliction of pain or violence, simulated or otherwise with the aim of providing sexual gratification for the parties involved. This type of activity can encompass a wide range of behaviours. Although it may occur in private and be consensual, section 71 of the 2021 Act, which states that the infliction of serious harm resulting in actual bodily harm (ABH) or other more serious injury³¹, means that the person responsible for those injuries will be liable to a criminal prosecution, irrespective of whether consent had been given by the person in receipt of the injuries or not. The matter of consent may be challenging, as victims of domestic abuse may be unable to recognise where they have been coerced into providing consent.
44. Non-consensual or harmful non-fatal strangulation can arise in a sexual context. Section 70 of the 2021 Act makes a change to the Serious Crime Act 2015 to provide that a person commits the offence of strangulation or suffocation if they intentionally strangle another person or do any other act that affects another person's ability to breathe. These actions constitute battery. Whilst it is a defence for the person accused to show that the other person consented, this does not apply where that other person suffers serious harm as a result of the strangulation or any other act, and the person accused intended to cause that other person harm or were reckless as to whether that other person would suffer serious harm.
45. Victims of domestic abuse can also be the subject of reproductive coercion, which can involve:
- restricting a partner's access to birth control;
 - refusing to use a birth control method;
 - deception regarding the use of birth control including falsely claiming to be using contraception; and
 - forcing a partner to get an abortion, IVF or other related procedure; or denying access to such procedures.
46. Reproductive coercion can take less overt forms – for instance, a perpetrator may not actively force the victim to have an abortion, but the general cycle of abuse may leave her feeling she has no choice. Women from ethnic minority groups may be more likely to experience reproductive coercion, including forced abortion for 'honour'-based

³¹ Causing death is already an offence.

practices, however, there is at present limited research.³² Further information on coercion is included in the '[Controlling or coercive behaviour](#)' section.

Controlling or coercive behaviour

47. Controlling or coercive behaviour can amount to an offence under [section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015](#). The offence carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment. It is only applicable where:

- The victim and perpetrator are “personally connected” at the time the behaviour takes place;
- The behaviour has had a serious effect on the victim, meaning that it has caused the victim to fear violence will be used against them on two or more occasions, or it has had a substantial adverse effect on the victim’s usual day to day activities; and
- The behaviour takes place repeatedly or continuously.

48. The perpetrator must have known that their behaviour would have a serious effect on the victim, or the behaviour must have been such that he or she ought to have known it would have that effect. Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 sets out in full the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour.

49. Section 68 of the 2021 Act will amend the definition of “personally connected” in section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. It will remove the “living together” requirement. This means that the offence will apply to partners, ex-partners, or family members, regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together. It will therefore apply in contexts where controlling or coercive behaviour by an intimate partner takes place post-separation or is perpetrated by a family member who does not live with the victim.³³

50. Controlling or coercive behaviour also forms part of the definition of domestic abuse at section 1(3)(c) of the 2021 Act. The following examples are within the range of behaviours that might be considered controlling or coercive behaviour. This list is not exhaustive:

- Controlling or monitoring the victim's daily activities and behaviour, including making them account for their time, dictating what they can wear, what and when they can eat, when and where they may sleep;
- Controlling a victim’s access to finances, including monitoring their accounts or coercing them into sharing their passwords to bank accounts in order to facilitate economic abuse;

³² See The Halo Project. “[Definition of Honour Based Violence](#)”; SafeLives. [Spotlight Report #Hidden Victims: Your choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse](#): 2017.

³³ This amendment to the controlling or coercive behaviour offence is planned to come into force later in 2022 and the relevant guidance and training material for frontline agencies will be updated. Statutory guidance issued by the Government under section 77 of the 2015 Act, outlining what constitutes controlling or coercive behaviour, will also be updated.

- Isolating the victim from family, friends and professionals who may be trying to support them, intercepting messages or phone calls;
- Refusing to interpret and/or hindering access to communication;
- Preventing the victim from taking medication, or accessing medical equipment and assistive aids, over-medicating them, or preventing the victim from accessing health or social care (especially relevant for disabled victims or those with long-term health conditions);
- Using substances to control a victim through dependency, or controlling their access to substances;
- Using children to control the victim, e.g. threatening to take the children away;
- Using animals to control or coerce a victim, e.g. harming or threatening to harm, or give away, pets or assistance dogs;
- Threats to expose sensitive information (e.g. sexual activity or sexual orientation) or make false allegations to family members, religious or local community including via photos or the internet;
- Intimidation and threats of disclosure of sexual orientation and/or gender identity to family, friends, work colleagues, community and others;
- Intimidation and threats of disclosure of health status or an impairment to family, friends, work colleagues and wider community – particularly where this may carry a stigma in the community;
- Preventing the victim from learning a language or making friends outside of their ethnic or cultural background;
- Threatening precarious immigration status against the victim, withholding documents, giving false information to a victim about their visa or visa application, e.g. using immigration law to threaten the victim with potential deportation;
- Using the victim's health status to induce fear and restrict their freedom of movement;
- Threats of institutionalisation (particularly for disabled or elderly victims); and
- Physical violence, violent or threatening behaviour, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, economic abuse and verbal abuse (as further detailed in this chapter).

51. Controlling or coercive behaviour is a pattern of behaviour often perpetrated alongside other forms of abuse. A victim may not be aware of the abusive behaviours or be prepared to make a disclosure. In supporting victims to address controlling or coercive behaviour, agencies should give consideration to the cumulative impact of a

perpetrator's behaviours (including those that may seem harmless) and the pattern of behaviour within the context of the relationship.

52. Controlling or coercive behaviour should be dealt with as part of safeguarding and public protection procedures. Professionals should be aware of the impact of this behaviour on victims, including children and young people.

Box 3.1: Case Study

53. Coercive or controlling behaviour is common in domestic abuse and can act as a driver for many of the other behaviours, as illustrated in the case study below.

Case Study

Susan had been with her partner for almost 20 years and he had been abusive towards her from early on. She was forced to borrow money from close family as he emptied her account as soon as her wages went in every month. Her partner was incredibly jealous whenever she left the house, even to go to work. He would insist on driving her to the front door of her workplace and picking her up from exactly the same place. "He'd sexually abused me from early on in our relationship. I think I'd just really become numb to it. He was always angry and rude with me; he'd often hit or kick me and several times burned me and tried to strangle me. He thought I was seeing other people at work. Because of my job I had to take time off if he'd beaten me up really bad. I didn't want anyone to know. But sometimes I would use the old lines that I'd accidentally fallen down the stairs or walked into a door. Silly things. Maybe they all knew. But no one ever said."

Because she was dependent on her partner to get to work this often meant he refused to take her or she was late and, coupled with the time off she had when she'd been physically assaulted, this caused problems with her employer. Eventually they said that she had to leave as she was too unreliable to be part of the team. "This was my life, what I'd always wanted to do. And a break from everything back home. I was completely floored when I lost it all. Plus, it meant we couldn't pay for the house or anything. My ex completely lost it when he realised what this meant."

Following a further attack where Susan was stabbed with a kitchen knife and feared for her life, she called the police. She then moved to a refuge.

54. The statutory guidance on controlling or coercive behaviour, once updated, will provide greater detail on recognising this form of abuse.

Harassment or Stalking

55. Where harassment or stalking occurs, and the perpetrator and victim are 16 or over and "personally connected", this behaviour falls within the scope of the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act. For example, it may constitute physical

abuse, threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, or emotional or psychological abuse.

56. There is no statutory definition of harassment but it includes repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a victim, in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear. It is generally acknowledged that harassment involves behaviour that is intended to cause a person alarm or distress or to cause them to fear violence when the perpetrator knows or ought to know that their conduct amounts to harassment. Where there is evidence to show that such conduct has occurred on more than one occasion, the perpetrator could be prosecuted under the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#) ('the 1997 Act').
57. The perpetrator's behaviour may follow a pattern, such as sending messages which the recipient finds alarming or distressing, or which causes them to fear violence. Alternatively, the perpetrator's behaviour may differ on each occasion, for example they could use a variety of means to harass the victim such as sending threatening messages (for example via text or social media) or emails, making abusive phone calls, damaging property or falsely reporting a person to the police when they have done nothing wrong.
58. Similarly, there is no statutory definition of stalking. Examples of the type of behaviour considered in particular circumstances to be acts, or omissions, associated with stalking are set out in section 2A of the 1997 Act. This list is not exhaustive, nor does the offence require a personal connection, which means it is wider than, and differs from, domestic abuse:
- Following a person;
 - Contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means;
 - Publishing any statement or other material —
 - i. relating or purporting to relate to a person, or
 - ii. purporting to originate from a person;
 - Monitoring the use by a person of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication;
 - Loitering in any place (whether public or private);
 - Interfering with any property in the possession of a person; and
 - Watching or spying on a person.
59. The police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have also adopted the following description, which appears in the [statutory guidance on Stalking Protection Orders](#), issued under the Stalking Protection Act 2019: stalking is a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress to the victim.

60. Stalking behaviours may vary but are often motivated by obsession and their behaviour shares a consistent set of characteristics involving Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted and/or Repeated (FOUR) behaviours, online and/or offline. Victims of domestic abuse may be vulnerable to stalkers, particularly when a relationship has ended.
61. There is no ‘typical’ stalking perpetrator or stalking victim. This crime disproportionately affects women and girls, but it is important to recognise that men and boys are victims too, and that both men and women can be perpetrators. CSEW data for the year ending March 2020 found that since the age of 16, 9% of women and 3% of men aged 16 to 74 had experienced domestic stalking.³⁴ Stalking affects people of all ages, and victims come from a wide range of backgrounds – it is not restricted to public figures and celebrities.
62. More information on stalking can be found in Annex A of the [statutory guidance on Stalking Protection Orders](#). Stalking behaviour may on the surface appear ‘harmless’, particularly if it is considered in isolation rather than as part of a wider pattern of potentially abusive and harmful behaviour. The context of the behaviour, including the motivations behind the behaviour and the impact on the victims should be considered.

Economic abuse

63. Economic abuse refers to behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect³⁵ on an individual’s ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or to obtain goods or services.³⁶ This can include an individual’s ability to acquire food or clothes, or access transportation or utilities. These behaviours can include an attempt to control through restriction, exploitation and/or sabotage.
64. Economic abuse can also amount to the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour, under section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, where it takes place repeatedly or continuously, the victim and the perpetrator are “personally connected” and the behaviour has a serious effect on the victim. This means that the behaviour causes the victim to fear violence will be used against them on two or more occasions, or it has a substantial adverse effect on the victim’s usual day to day activities and the perpetrator knows, or ought to know, that it will have a serious effect on the victim.

³⁴ ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2020.

³⁵ Economic abuse can be prosecuted under the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 (‘the 2015 Act’). As defined in the 2015 Act, the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour states that:

An offence is committed by ‘A’ if:

- A repeatedly or continuously engages in behaviour towards another person, ‘B’, that is controlling or coercive;
- At the time of the behaviour, A and B are “personally connected”;
- The behaviour has a serious effect on B; and
- A knows or ought to know that the behaviour will have a serious effect on B.

Once in force, section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 will amend the definition of “personally connected” in section 76 of the 2015 Act to remove the “living together” requirement, which means that the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour will apply to partners, ex-partners or family members, regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together.

³⁶ See Adams, AE, Sullivan, CM, Bybee, D, Greeson, MR. [Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse: Violence Against Women](#): 2008: 14(5):563-588.

65. Examples of economic abuse might include the following:

- Controlling the family income;
- Not allowing a victim to earn or spend any money unless ‘permitted’;
- Denying the victim food or only allowing them to eat a particular type of food;
- Running up bills and debts such as credit or store cards in a victim’s name, including without them knowing;
- Refusing to contribute to household income or costs;
- Deliberately forcing a victim to go to the family courts so they incur additional legal fees;
- Interfering with or preventing a victim from regularising their immigration status so that they are economically dependent on the perpetrator;
- Preventing a victim from claiming welfare benefits, or forcing someone to commit benefit fraud or misappropriating such benefits;
- Interfering with a victim’s education, training, employment and career so that they are economically dependent on the perpetrator;
- Not allowing a victim access to mobile phone/car/utilities;
- Damaging the victim’s property;
- Not allowing a victim to buy pet food or access veterinary care for their pet;
- Coercing the victim into signing over property or assets;
- Refusing to make agreed or required payments, for example mortgage repayments or child maintenance payments; and
- Deliberately frustrating the sale of shared assets, or the closure of joint accounts or mortgages.

66. Economic abuse can make a victim economically dependent on the perpetrator, and/or create economic instability, thereby limiting their ability to escape and access safety. This can result in a victim staying with a perpetrator and experiencing more abuse and harm as a result. Some forms of economic abuse may take place or persist after the victim has separated from the perpetrator. Children can experience the effects of economic abuse; this includes where it creates an environment where they lack essentials, and which may in cases escalate to severe forms of deprivation or child poverty.

67. A nationally representative survey on the impact of economic abuse highlighted that 57% of victims of economic abuse were in or had been in debt, 26% had a negatively impacted credit score, and 25% had experienced abuse related to spending and credit,

such as having debt put in their name without their knowledge, or due to coercion.³⁷ The organisation Surviving Economic Abuse, in partnership with Money Advice Plus, has created a [guide to understanding economic abuse for victims](#).

Emotional or psychological abuse

68. Domestic abuse often involves emotional or psychological abuse. Some of these behaviours will also be controlling or coercive behaviour. Emotional or psychological abuse can include:

- Manipulating a person's anxieties or beliefs or abusing a position of trust;
- Hostile behaviours or silent treatment as part of a pattern of behaviour to make the victim feel fearful;
- Being insulted, including in front of others. This includes insulting someone about their race, sex or gender identity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, disability, age, faith or belief or undermining an individual's ability to parent or ability to work;
- Repeatedly being belittled;
- Keeping a victim awake/preventing them from sleeping;
- Using violence or threats towards assistance dogs and pets to intimidate the victim and cause distress, including threatening to harm the animal as well as controlling how the owner is able to care for the animal;
- Threatening to harm third parties (for example family, friends or colleagues);
- Using social media sites to intimidate the victim; and
- Persuading a victim to doubt their own sanity or mind (including 'gaslighting').

Verbal abuse

69. Verbal abuse may amount to emotional or psychological abuse, threatening behaviour, or controlling or coercive behaviour. Examples include:

- Repeated yelling and shouting;
- Abusive, insulting, threatening or degrading language;
- Verbal humiliation either in private or in company;
- Being laughed at and being made fun of; and
- Discriminating against someone or mocking them about their disability, sex or gender identity, gender reassignment, religion or faith belief, sexual orientation, age, physical appearance etc.

³⁷ Butt, E. [Know economic abuse: 2020 Report](#): Refuge: 2020.

Technology-facilitated abuse

70. Perpetrators can use technology, including social media to abuse victims. This can happen during and after the relationship. A representative survey conducted by Refuge found that one in six women experiencing at least one behaviour suggestive of online abuse or harassment, reported that the abusive behaviour was perpetrated by a current or ex-partner.³⁸ Some examples of technology-facilitated abuse include:

- Placing false or malicious information about a victim on their or others' social media;
- Setting up false social media accounts in the name of the victim;
- 'Trolling' with abusive, offensive or deliberately provocative messages via social media platforms or online forums;
- Image-based abuse – for example, the creation of false/digitally altered images and the non-consensual distribution, or threat thereof, of private sexual photographs and films with the intent to cause the person depicted distress ('revenge porn');
- 'Upskirting' which involves someone taking a picture under another person's clothing without their knowledge;
- Hacking into, monitoring or controlling email accounts, social media profiles and phone calls;
- Blocking the victim from using their online accounts, responding in the victim's place or creating false online accounts;
- Use of spyware or GPS locators on items such as phones, computers, wearable technology, cars, motorbikes and pets;
- Hacking internet enabled devices such as PlayStations or iPads to gain access to accounts or trace information such as a person's location;
- Using personal devices such as smart watches or smart home devices (such as Amazon Alexa, Google Home Hubs, etc) to monitor, control or frighten; and
- Use of hidden cameras.

71. Section 69 of the 2021 Act, amended the offence under section 33 of the [Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015](#), of disclosing a private sexual photograph or film with intent to cause distress to an individual who appears in the photograph or film, so as to include threats to disclose such photographs and films. This means it is a criminal offence for an individual to threaten to share intimate images without the consent of the individual depicted, with the intent to cause distress.

72. Threats to share intimate or sexual images and films may be used as a part of a pattern of behaviour to control, coerce or distress the victim during a relationship with a

³⁸ Refuge. 2021. [Unsocial Spaces: Make online spaces safer for women and girls](#).

perpetrator and following separation. A survey undertaken by Refuge³⁹ found that one in 14 adults in England and Wales have experienced threats to share intimate images or videos – equivalent to 4.4 million people.

73. The same survey found that threats to share intimate images are most prevalent amongst young people (aged 18 to 34), with one in seven young women, and one in nine young men experiencing such threats. ‘Revenge porn’ and forms of abuse carried out online can have a significant and long-term impact on a victim. This includes re-traumatisation and is in part due to long-lasting privacy violations. Victims may need to be supported in taking action to report and remove material published online.
74. Whilst technology can be used as a means of perpetuating abuse, it can also be used by victims when reporting it. There are several live chat functions run by service providers to facilitate reporting and discrete online tools and live sessions for victims to receive advice anonymously, should they choose to.
75. The Government is taking steps to further protect victims of abuse facilitated by technology through the Online Safety Bill.⁴⁰ This legislation will put in place strengthened measures for technology firms to safeguard online service users.
76. Refuge provide [guidance on technology facilitated abuse and technology safety resources](#) to support victims of abuse and professionals working with victims.

Abuse relating to faith

77. Whilst an individual’s faith can be a source of support and comfort to victims, domestic abuse can occur in relation to it, and through using, manipulating, or exploiting it. This abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on victims, and might include, but is not limited to, the following examples:
- Manipulation and exploitation through the influence of religion;
 - Requirements for secrecy and silence;
 - Marital rape and the use of religious scripture to justify that;
 - Coercion to conform or control through the use of sacred or religious texts/teaching e.g. theological justifications for sexual coercion or abuse;
 - Causing harm, isolation and/or neglect to get rid of an ‘evil force’ or ‘spirit’ that is believed to have possessed the victim; and
 - Requirement of obedience to the perpetrator of domestic abuse, owing to religion or faith, or their ‘divine’ position.

³⁹ Refuge. [The Naked Threat: It’s time to change the law to protect survivors from image-based abuse](#): 2020.

⁴⁰ See [Online Safety Bill: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

78. Domestic abuse can also involve preventing a victim from practising their faith or religious obligations. This may include the perpetrator:

- Forcing the victim to act or behave in ways which contradict religious beliefs and or spiritual rituals and practice (e.g. forcing the victim to transgress religious dietary observations);
- Preventing the victim from performing acts of worship, prayers and/or attending communal worship;
- Forcing sexual acts which contradict religious observance and or religious law (e.g. during and after menstruation or pre-marital sex); and
- Forcing or limiting access to abortion, birth control or sterilisation when this will contravene religious observance.

Religious marriage and divorce

79. Religious-only marriages, being unregistered marriages that are conducted in accordance with the rites of a particular religion but without legal status, can be used by perpetrators to:

- Actively discourage or prevent the marriage being registered in English and Welsh law ensuring that victims are denied their legal rights and protection in the event of a breakdown in the marriage. Many women are unaware that their marriage does not have legal status because they are coerced or deceived into thinking their marriage is legal. This along with an insecure immigration status of the victim can act as a powerful tool for coercion and control.
- Coerce or trick women into being part of a polygamous marriage where the husband believes he can have more than one wife at the same time.

80. A perpetrator may coerce a victim to enter into a marriage, through the use of faith or in the context of values held within a religious community, and young people can be at increased risk of pressure to marry. Although this may be on the grounds of purported religious motivations, no major faith condones forced marriage. Some beliefs or practices within traditions may be misappropriated or exploited. For further information see the '[Forced Marriage](#)' section.

81. A form of domestic abuse may include the withholding of a religious divorce, as a means to control and intimidate victims. This can be present in different forms under different faiths. In some cases, it will be accompanied by other manifestations of abuse within the marriage. Abuse relating to faith can amount to psychological or emotional abuse and to coercive or controlling behaviour.

82. In Judaism this concerns the Get⁴¹ and instances whereby a recalcitrant husband may refuse to give his wife a Jewish bill of divorce (or a wife may unreasonably refuse to accept a Jewish bill of divorce).
83. The ability to refuse to give a Get has been recognised as a specific issue providing abusive husbands with power and control and will sometimes be used to exert leverage in relation to other aspects of the divorce. The refusal will have a significant impact on the wife's wider living conditions: she will often be severely restricted in her social and personal life.⁴² It affects her ability to re-marry and directly affects the status of any children she may have in the future. In such cases, women are able to consult at the earliest opportunity their Beth Din on the matter of issuing the Get. Batei Din, as religious court authorities, are able to advise couples on the position in Jewish law for dissolution of the religious marriage.
84. In Islam this can involve a husband refusing to grant his wife a religious divorce, talaq,⁴³ which is the annulment of a nikkah,⁴⁴ as a way of prolonging the process of divorce. The threat of talaq being uttered and the arbitrary use of this by perpetrators may also be cited by some victims. Whilst Islamic law enables women to obtain a religious divorce of their own accord, they may find that they are prevented from doing so, and victims may fear the repercussions of seeking to do so or fear being disowned by family or community members.
85. In some Christian traditions, divorce is either highly discouraged or not recognised at all. In some traditions, separating from an abuser may be tolerated, but divorce is not recognised and therefore any consequent remarriage is not recognised by the Church. In some cases, without the community's acceptance of the divorce, a victim may be left to remain in the marriage or be isolated by the community and prevented from participating in the Church.
86. Safeguarding remains the highest priority in all cases. Victims of all faiths should be encouraged by professionals and services they engage with to take steps to protect themselves from harm.

⁴¹ 'Get' – a Jewish bill of divorce. Without such a document, a couple remain married religiously, even if they have been divorced in the civil courts. Jewish couples have their marriages registered civilly at the time of their religious marriage. However, divorce is a twin track process, involving a civil divorce and a religious one (a 'Get'). In Orthodox Judaism, a Get must be given and received with consent. If the husband does not consent, the wife is unable to remarry under Orthodox Jewish auspices and any children she has in a future relationship will face severe restrictions as to whom they are able to marry.

⁴² 'Aguna' - a woman denied a Get is known as an 'Aguna' (chained woman). She is prohibited from having intimate relations with a man other than her husband and cannot remarry under Orthodox Jewish auspices. Any children of a future relationship she may have are affected with a status in Jewish law known as 'Mamzer', meaning that they face severe restrictions as to whom they can marry. This situation can continue indefinitely through subsequent generations.

⁴³ 'Talaq' translated as "repudiation" or simply "divorce". Under Islamic law it refers to the husband's right to dissolve the marriage by simply announcing to his wife that he repudiates her.

⁴⁴ 'Nikkah' – under Islamic law, a contract of marriage between a man and woman.

‘Honour’-based abuse

87. ‘Honour’-based abuse⁴⁵ is a crime or incident which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the perceived honour of the family and/or community, or in response to individuals trying to break away from constraining ‘norms’ of behaviour that their family or community is trying to impose.
88. ‘Honour’-based abuse can include physical, emotional or psychological abuse and occur in specific contexts, not all of which represent domestic abuse under the 2021 Act, for example in cases where the victim and perpetrator are not “personally connected”. However, ‘honour’-based abuse is typically carried out by a member or members of the family or extended family and is likely to involve behaviours specified in the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act. Perpetrators may use a range of tactics against the victim, this can include restrictions to their freedom, isolation, physical abuse, and threats to kill. For more information on abuse carried out by a family member(s), please see the [‘Abuse by family members’](#) section in [‘Chapter 2 – Understanding Domestic Abuse’](#).
89. There is currently no reliable measure of the prevalence of ‘honour’-based abuse; police recorded crime data shows that in the year ending March 2021 there were 2,383 ‘honour’-based abuse related offences in England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police).⁴⁶ This represents an increase of 18% compared to the year ending March 2020. However, this increase could in part reflect wider factors such as general improvements in crime recording and identification of ‘honour’-based abuse. Of the 2,725 offences recorded by the police in the year ending March 2021, there were 78 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) offences and 125 forced marriage offences.⁴⁷
90. This type of abuse can happen to anyone. It has in cases been identified with close-knit or closed communities with a strong culture of ‘honour’ and ‘shame’, such as some minority groups, or closed ethnic/religious groups and other particularly isolated social groups.⁴⁸ Victims from such groups and communities may face additional barriers in reporting the abuse or accessing support services. ‘Honour’-based abuse has been identified to stem from traditional notions of patriarchy and gender roles.⁴⁹ However, victims may be female or male and those at risk can include individuals who are LGBT. Conversion therapy and the so-called corrective rape of LGBT victims may be a form of ‘honour’-based abuse.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ The term ‘honour’-based abuse is used here, as is a widely recognised term, and in order to delineate this type of abuse, with the unique issues which arise with it, to enable an effective response from statutory agencies. It is important here to emphasise that there is no honour in abuse and that is why the term ‘so-called ‘honour’-based abuse’ is also often used.

⁴⁶ Greater Manchester Police were unable to provide data for year ending March 2020 following the implementation of a new IT system in July 2019.

⁴⁷ ONS. [Statistics on so called ‘honour-based’ abuse offences, England and Wales, 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2021.

⁴⁸ SafeLives. [Spotlight Report #Hidden Victims: Your choice: ‘honour’-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse](#): 2017.

⁴⁹ Mayeda, D, Vijaykumar, R. [A Review of the Literature on Honor-based Violence](#). Sociology Compass: 2016: 10(5): 353– 363.

⁵⁰ The Government will be introducing a ban on conversion therapy in law. The detail of the legislative provisions will be set out in the draft Bill when it is published.

91. Forced marriage and FGM are potential forms of 'honour'-based abuse. More information about forced marriage and FGM can be found in the [multi-agency statutory guidance and practice guidelines on forced marriage](#) and the [multi-agency statutory guidance on FGM](#).

Forced Marriage

92. Forced marriage is an offence under section 121 of the [Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) ('the 2014 Act'). Forced marriage typically occurs in the context of 'honour'-based abuse, and involves the use of violence, threats or any other form of coercion against a person with the intention or belief that the conduct may cause a person to enter into a marriage without consent. This includes non-binding traditional, or unofficial marriages. Forced marriage is recognised as a form of domestic abuse - if carried out by someone with a personal connection to the victim and where both parties are at least 16 years old.

93. Usually someone must use violence, threats or another form of coercion to carry out the offence of forced marriage. However, if a person is unable to consent to marry, under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, any conduct aimed at causing them to marry may be forced marriage, even if it is not violence, threats or another form of coercion. In all cases, forcing someone into marriage could include making arrangements; the offence could be considered to have occurred even where the marriage does not end up taking place.

94. Victims of forced marriage can be of any age, and many are under 18. Young victims may for example be coerced to marry under the threat of physical violence or the fear of dishonouring their families.

95. In addition, once the provisions of the [Marriage and Civil Partnership \(Minimum Age\) Act 2022](#) are brought into force, it will be deemed a forced marriage, and thus illegal, for someone to cause a child under the age of 18 to enter into a marriage in any circumstance, even if the person does not use violence, threats or another form of coercion to do so.

96. The Government's Forced Marriage Unit can provide advice and support to individuals who are at risk of, or who have experienced, forced marriage, and to the professionals and others seeking to help them. [Guidance on forced marriage](#) is published on GOV.UK.

97. On forced marriage, the multi-agency practice guidelines have specific sections for children's social care and education professionals and teachers, providing clear advice to practitioners to help inform an effective response to safeguard children who may be at risk of forced marriage. This guidance is referenced in [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).⁵¹ The multi-agency practice guidelines make clear throughout the

⁵¹ In Wales, guidance for local authorities and governing bodies on arrangements for safeguarding children is under [Keeping Learners Safe](#).

importance of the ‘one chance rule’: that someone may only have one opportunity to speak to a victim or potential victim and may possibly only have one chance to save a life.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

98. FGM is a form of violence against women and girls which is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality.⁵² It typically occurs within the context of ‘honour’-based abuse. As FGM is generally inflicted upon children, the Government considers it to be a type of child abuse.⁵³ However, it is also carried out on women for a variety of reasons such as giving a woman social acceptance before marriage or ensuring her chastity. Whilst FGM may be an isolated incident of abuse within a family, it can be associated with other behaviours that discriminate against, limit or harm women and girls. These may include other forms of ‘honour’-based abuse and domestic abuse. A Female Genital Mutilation Protection Order (FGMPO)⁵⁴ is a civil order which may be made for the purposes of protecting a girl or woman against the commission of an FGM offence – that is, protecting against the risk of FGM or providing protection where an FGM offence has been committed. Further information can be found in the [statutory guidance on FGM](#) and in the [FGM resource pack](#).

Perpetrator tactics

99. There is never any justification for perpetrating domestic abuse and although the perpetrator and others may blame the victim for causing their behaviour, it is never the victim’s fault. Some perpetrators do not recognise that their behaviour constitutes domestic abuse, however, all perpetrators are responsible for their behaviour and should be held accountable for it.

100. A desire to exert power and control is commonly recognised as the key motive for perpetrators. Younger males are more likely to be perpetrators and there are multiple complex risk factors that can influence whether someone may perpetrate domestic abuse.⁵⁵ Research highlights individual, interpersonal and community level risk factors, such as experience of child abuse, exposure to violence at home, neighbourhood deprivation and societal or cultural norms that condone violence and gender inequality.⁵⁶ It is important to acknowledge that simply because an individual is exposed to any one of these risk factors, it does not necessarily mean they will experience or carry out domestic abuse.

⁵² World Health Organisation. [Female genital mutilation](#): 2020.

⁵³ NHS Digital. [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\) Annual Report – April 2020 to March 2021](#) (experimental statistics report): 2021. To note that only 40% of individual women and girls have a known age when FGM was undertaken.

⁵⁴ [Get a female genital mutilation protection order - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

⁵⁵ ONS. [Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

⁵⁶ See Home Office. 2022. [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan – CP 639 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) for a breakdown of risk factors.

101. An evaluation of a programme focusing on high-risk, high-harm perpetrators, Drive⁵⁷, shows that 22% of service users at intake reported housing needs. Just under one fifth of service users had employment difficulties or misused alcohol. Around one in seven reported having mental health difficulties, with some service users having needs across multiple categories.⁵⁸ In many cases it cannot be fully determined what has caused an individual to choose to engage in abusive behaviours. Therefore, there remains a limited understanding of perpetrators, and their motivation should not be considered to be limited to the reasons listed although these factors, amongst others, can be relevant in regard to identifying the interventions that may be required.
102. Perpetrators may manipulate victims and/or those around them to hide or normalise abusive behaviours. Domestic abuse perpetrators can be particularly adept at manipulating professionals, agencies and systems and may use a range of tactics to perpetuate contact with, and exert control over, the victim. Perpetrators may seek to minimise allegations, normalise the behaviour and discredit reports of abuse.
103. Mixed methods research published by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Refuge suggests that perpetrators of domestic abuse may also target and undermine parents' relationships with their children, using power and control dynamics, for example using vexatious applications to the family court to prolong proceedings.⁵⁹ Perpetrators can also use contact with children as a form of abuse.
104. Perpetrators may also seek to take advantage of, or manipulate, victims because of their protected characteristics or personal circumstances to prevent them from speaking out or accessing support. For more information, see '[Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)'.
105. Perpetrator behaviours can potentially include:
- Disguised compliance, missing or cancelling appointments, non-attendance, playing different professionals off against one another;
 - Making false or vexatious allegations against victims and convincing professionals that their controlling tactics are for the victim's own safety and/or for the safety of their children;
 - Using the courts to continue abuse, for example not turning up to court dates, sending unnecessary and repeated legal letters and making threats around contact;
 - Making counter-allegations against the victim;

⁵⁷ [Drive Project](#) developed, by Respect, SafeLives and Social Finance, out of a need to address perpetrators repeatedly offending with either the same or new victims.

⁵⁸ Hester, M, et al. [Evaluation of the Drive Project – A Three-year Pilot to Address High-Risk, High-harm Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse](#): University of Bristol: 2020.

⁵⁹ Radford, L, et al. [Meeting the needs of children living with domestic violence in London](#): London: NSPCC/Refuge/City Bridge Trust: 2011.

- Exploiting interpretations of religion or faith to maintain control of victims and perpetuate harm;
- Using children as a form of control – e.g. access visits, seeking to manipulate children’s feelings towards ex-partner (the victim);
- Attempting to frustrate or interfere with a police investigation, including attempting to undermine the victim’s statements by claiming they are mentally ill;
- Use of family members, new partners, or others to indirectly communicate with or threaten the victim, especially in cases where the perpetrator is under investigation, subject to a protection order or detained;
- Use of false profiles on social media or other technology platforms;
- Telling the victim that they will not be believed because they have mental health issues, learning difficulties or disabilities, or issues with substance abuse;
- Threatening to ‘out’ the victim as a form of coercive control, telling the victim that they will not be believed because they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans, or manipulating the victim’s knowledge of what support is available for LGBT people and using myths and stereotypes around LGBT domestic abuse to make professionals believe that abuse between same-sex couples does not exist⁶⁰;
- Threatening to remove care or not undertake caring responsibilities where the victim is reliant on this, threatening the victim around the withdrawal of medicines;
- Exploiting the communication support needs of the victim or manipulating the victim’s knowledge of what support is available and making professionals believe that the victim does not have capacity to report accurately or that reports are not credible due to communication difficulty;
- Using threats to manipulate the victim, for example, by telling the victim they will not be believed by the police or other agencies, that they will inform social services, that their children will be taken away;
- Seeking to control the victim’s finances, ability to access funds or obtain an income; and
- Manipulating the victim’s immigration status as a form of coercive control, including withholding ID, passports and visas from the victim, lying about their status, purposely letting a victim’s visa lapse or failing to act on sponsorship duties for immigration purposes.

106. Factors such as alcohol and drugs misuse can increase the likelihood and severity of domestic abuse.⁶¹ However, there is not a causal relationship between substance

⁶⁰ Galop. [Myths and Stereotypes About Partner Abuse Among LGBT People](#): 2019.

⁶¹ See Guedes, A., Bott, S., Garcia-Moreno, C., Colombini, M., 2016. Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children. *Global Health Action*, 9(1); Capaldi, D. Knoble, N. Shortt, J. Hyon, K., 2012. A systematic review of risk factors for intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*. Volume 2, Issue 3, pp 231-280.

misuse and domestic abuse. Substances can act to disinhibit, rather than act as a cause of violence and abuse. Many people believe that alcohol and/or drugs increase aggression and physical violence and therefore perpetrators are likely to use this as an excuse for their abusive behaviour.

107. Given the frequent coexistence of domestic abuse, drugs and alcohol, it is important that responding agencies understand the subtle ways in which a perpetrator may use the victim's substance use as an explanation or a moral justification for their abuse.⁶² Some of the ways in which a perpetrator may use reliance on or abuse of substances include:

- Perpetrators may use the disinhibiting effects of substances as an excuse for their violence and abuse, e.g. 'I'm not usually like that, but I was off my head';
- Alcohol in particular can act as a pre-emptive justification for violence towards a victim. A perpetrator may drink when already frustrated or angry at their victim and then use the alcohol to wind themselves up towards violence – should they then act violently they will have a ready-made excuse for their behaviour;
- A victim's substance use can be presented as an excuse for violence by the perpetrator or to undermine a victim's credibility;
- Perpetrators may also –
 - control or withhold substances as a means of abuse;
 - force victims to use substances against their will, or by administering them without their knowledge;
 - sabotage victims undergoing treatment for substance use; and
 - force or coerce a victim into exchanging sex for drugs, alcohol, or money, or committing a crime, such as theft, to pay for the perpetrator's drugs or alcohol.

108. Addressing a perpetrator's drug or alcohol use alone is unlikely to reduce or solve the problem of their abusive behaviour. It is important that alongside any alcohol or drugs treatment programmes for perpetrators, addressing the causes of the substance abuse, interventions also address the complex dynamics of power and control which underpin domestic abuse, for example, through domestic abuse perpetrator programmes. For more information, see the section on '[Addressing the behaviour of the perpetrator](#)' in '[Chapter 7 – Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)'.

⁶² Against Violence and Abuse (AVA). [Stella Project Toolkit: Domestic Abuse and Substance Use](#): 2007.

Chapter 4 – Impact of Domestic Abuse

This chapter covers:

- The impact of domestic abuse on victims - including on physical and mental health, stability and livelihood, which can be interlinked and cumulative.
- The impact of domestic abuse on children, highlighting different aspects of the experience of young people and how the statutory definition of domestic abuse is to operate alongside measures that address the safeguarding of children.

Impact on Victims

Physical

109. Domestic abuse can cause serious and devastating long and short term physical and mental, emotional, and psychological health impacts on adults and children.
110. For victims who suffer physical health issues, injuries can include bruises and welts, lacerations and abrasions, abdominal or thoracic injuries; fractures and broken bones or teeth; sight and hearing damage and head injuries.⁶³ Victims can be seriously physically injured as a result of domestic abuse and experience long-term injuries.
111. Victims may suffer from functional disorders or stress-related conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, gastrointestinal symptoms, fibromyalgia, chronic pain syndromes and exacerbation of asthma. Psychological harms can be associated with poorer physical health and this can include psychosomatic symptoms such as numbness and thrombosis, shaking and nervous twitching, cramps and paralysis.⁶⁴

Psychological

112. Not all domestic abuse begins with or results in physical abuse. Domestic abuse and associated trauma can have a significant impact on a victim's emotional, psychological and mental wellbeing. This may involve feelings of isolation, worthlessness and dependency on the perpetrator. It can also include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder⁶⁵, and sleeping and eating disorders.⁶⁶

⁶³ World Health Organisation (WHO). [Intimate Partner Violence](#): 2012; ONS. [Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#); data year ending March 2018.

⁶⁴ Stöckl, H., & Penhale, B. (2015). Intimate partner violence and its association with physical and mental health symptoms among older women in Germany. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 30(17), 3089-3111.

⁶⁵ Bacchus, L., Ranganathan, M., Watts, C., Devries, K. Recent intimate partner violence against women and health: a systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies. *BMJ*: 2018: 8.

⁶⁶ Bundock, L., Howard, L. M., Trevillion, K., Malcolm, E., Feder, G., & Oram, S. Prevalence and risk of experiences of intimate partner violence among people with eating disorders: a systematic review. *Journal of psychiatric research*, 2013: 47(9), 1134–1142; McGarry, J., Simpson, C., Hinchliff-Smith, K. The impact of domestic abuse for older women: a review of the literature. *Health & Social Care in the Community*: 2010:19(1), pp.3-14; Wood, S., Sommers, M.. Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence on Child Witnesses: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*: 2011 24(4), pp. 223-236.

113. A victim's day to day life can be affected by trying to manage the abuse, leading to increased anxiety and a focus on adapting their behaviour to appease the perpetrator. This can subsequently lead to a victim adopting the perspective of the perpetrator and starting to blame themselves for the abuse⁶⁷ and may result in the victim questioning or doubting their own experiences and developing low self-esteem.⁶⁸ See also the '[Mental health](#)' section in '[Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)'.

Suicide

114. The psychological impact of domestic abuse can be so severe that it leads to suicide ideation and attempt. The severity and time span of the abuse, and existing mental health needs of the victim, may be specific risk factors.

115. For the year ending March 2018, 11% of male and 7% of female victims of partner abuse attempted suicide in the previous year.⁶⁹ The Domestic Homicide Project found that there were 39 suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse in the year to 31 March 2021. The majority (35) were female, with four cases involving male victims. This is likely an underestimate of all victim suicides with a history of domestic abuse, as it excludes suicides where a prior history of domestic abuse was not known to police.⁷⁰ Refuge gathered data on over 3,500 of its service users and found that 24% had felt suicidal at one time or another, 18% had made plans to end their life and 3% had made at least one suicide attempt.⁷¹ There is increasing awareness of the links between domestic abuse and suicide and the need for early intervention.

116. Long-term trauma may not always be recognised in victims, who may be facing multiple disadvantages, such as, but not limited to, disabled victims, those with cognitive issues, mental ill health and/or issues with substance misuse. The impact of trauma may similarly be overlooked in children and young people. Prior experiences of physical or psychological trauma, because of bullying, discrimination and hate crime, may make victims of domestic abuse less likely to seek help. Adopting a trauma-informed approach to responding to domestic abuse is therefore essential, recognising the signs and symptoms of trauma and, in acknowledging this, providing appropriate support seeking not to re-traumatise.

⁶⁷ Kelly, L (1999). Domestic Violence Matters: an evaluation of a development project, pp.35-37

⁶⁸ See Women's Aid. [Women's Aid responds to Prime Minister's commitment to toughen laws on gaslighting](#): 2018.

⁶⁹ ONS. [Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales - Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2018.

⁷⁰ [Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

⁷¹ Aitken, R, Munro, V. [Domestic abuse and suicide: exploring the links with refuge's client Base and work force](#). London; University of Warwick, School of Law: Refuge: 2018.

Addiction

117. Some victims develop addictions, for example, they may begin smoking or using drugs or alcohol to help cope with abuse and this dependency may progress.
118. Perpetrators can try to exploit a victim's addictions. With drugs or alcohol, a perpetrator may try to sustain a victim's dependency or threaten to expose this to professionals. This can be particularly threatening to victims with children, or those from cultural backgrounds where drinking alcohol or misusing substances may be particularly condemned. Case research on perpetrators has shown that first responders can find it difficult to correctly identify perpetrators of abuse due to a tendency to see the perpetrator as the individual who is abusing alcohol.⁷² Alcohol use by women has in other studies been found to be a response to experience of abuse from partners. Alcohol is also used by male victims as a coping mechanism.⁷³ See also the section on '[Alcohol and substance misuse](#)'.

Offending

119. There are links between women's experience of domestic abuse and offending and reoffending. Data from the Ministry of Justice suggests that 57% of female offenders and 6% of male offenders have suffered domestic violence.⁷⁴ Women can be coerced or pressured into criminal activity by perpetrators, increasing their vulnerability and the risk of further abuse. This situation is often worsened by poverty, substance dependency or poor mental health. Women in prison are more than twice as likely as men to say they have committed offences to support someone else's drug use as well as their own.⁷⁵
120. More than half (53%) of female and a quarter (27%) of male prisoners responding to the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction Survey (SPCR) reported experiencing emotional, physical, or sexual abuse during childhood.⁷⁶ Some victims may come into contact with the criminal justice system where they have used violent resistance in self-defence. Data has shown that many women who kill their partners were themselves victims of often sustained and violent, domestic abuse by those partners.⁷⁷ Consideration of what age-appropriate, gender and trauma-informed responses to girls and young women at risk of domestic abuse whilst in contact with the criminal justice system entails (including examples of good practice) is included in the [Young Women's Justice Project Literature Review](#). The link between domestic abuse and a woman's offending should be recognised at the earliest opportunity to divert women from the criminal justice system, where this is appropriate.

⁷² Hester, M. [Who Does What to Whom? Gender and Domestic Violence Perpetrators](#). Bristol: University of Bristol in association with the Northern Rock Foundation: 2009.

⁷³ Humphreys, C, Regan, L, River, D, & Thiara RK. [Domestic Violence and Substance Use: Tackling Complexity](#), British Journal of Social Work: 2005: 35, 1303-1320.

⁷⁴ Ministry of Justice. [Supporting data tables: Female Offender Strategy](#): Data from 2013 to 2018. 2018.

⁷⁵ Light, M., Grant, E., & Hopkins, K. [Gender differences in substance misuse and mental health amongst prisoners: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction \(SPCR\) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners](#). Ministry of Justice.

⁷⁶ Williams, K, Papadopoulou, V, Booth, N. [Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction \(SPCR\) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners](#): Ministry of Justice: 2012.

⁷⁷ Centre for Women's Justice. [Women Who Kill: How the State Criminalises Women We Might Otherwise Be Burying](#): 2021.

121. Experience of abuse is a mitigating factor in sentencing and the Ministry of Justice is taking steps to ensure that Pre-Sentence Reports highlight such factors.

Livelihood

122. Many victims can be made homeless by domestic abuse. Annual statutory homelessness statistics for 2020 to 2021 show that 12% of households in England recorded 'domestic abuse' as their main reason for being homeless or threatened with homelessness.⁷⁸

123. Victims who are homeless are vulnerable to being further targeted by perpetrators of both physical and sexual abuse. Survey research conducted across England reported that some homeless women had formed an unwanted sexual partnership to get a roof over their heads or by engaging in sex work to raise money for accommodation.⁷⁹ Evidence based on 500 interviews with homeless people found that 61% of homeless women and 13% of homeless men have experienced domestic abuse from a partner.⁸⁰

124. The risk of homelessness can prevent a victim from leaving a home shared with a perpetrator, a victim may remain living with the perpetrator to avoid homelessness for them and their children. See the '[Housing](#)' section in '[Chapter 6 – Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)' for further information on homelessness, housing response and safe accommodation.

125. Victims may suffer from the effects of economic abuse resulting in unemployment, diminished employment prospects, debt or coerced debt, or poverty. The impact can lead to devastating and long-term consequences and can severely limit access to finance and financial independence,⁸¹ see the section on '[Economic abuse](#)'.

126. As set out throughout this guidance, victims with multiple and/or complex needs can face additional barriers to identifying abuse, seeking help, or accessing support services.

127. Victims may not recognise the abuse they face as domestic abuse or underrate their experience or the experience of forms of abuse that are not physical. They may be unclear on how to seek help, therefore continued efforts are required to help ensure that resources and services are accessible and that communications about what help is available give consideration to how to reach people within local areas including minority groups and communities.

⁷⁸ DLUHC. [Statutory homelessness in England: financial year 2020-21 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). 2021.

⁷⁹ Reeve, K., Casey, R., Goudie, R. [Homeless Women: Still being failed yet striving to survive](#). Crisis: 2006.

⁸⁰ Mackie, P, Thomas, I. [Nations Apart? Experiences of single homeless people across England and Wales](#). University of Wales, Crisis: 2014.

⁸¹ Surviving Economic Abuse. '[Economic abuse is your past, present and future': A report on the practical barriers women face in rebuilding their lives after domestic abuse](#): 2018.

Impact on child victims

128. Domestic abuse has a significant impact on children and young people of all ages (up to 18 years old). Section 3 of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) ('the 2021 Act') recognises children as victims of domestic abuse for the purposes of the Act if the child sees, hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse, and is related to, or falls under "parental responsibility" of, the victim and/or perpetrator of the domestic abuse. A child might therefore be considered a victim of domestic abuse under the 2021 Act where one parent is abusing another parent, or where a parent is abusing, or being abused by, a partner or relative.
129. There is limited data on the prevalence of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse being perpetrated by or directed towards a relative. Estimates suggest that between March 2017 to 2019, 7% of children aged ten to 15 years old were living in households where an adult reported experiencing domestic abuse in the previous year.⁸² For the year ending March 2018, victims of partner abuse were asked whether any children in the house heard or saw what happened during the most recent victimisation. In 41% of cases where adults aged 16 to 59 reported having experienced partner abuse, there was at least one child under the age of 16 living in the household. Where children were living in the household, one in five were reported to have either seen or heard what had happened.⁸³ The presence of domestic abuse has been identified as a risk factor for child physical abuse, with children who were exposed to domestic violence being more likely to be physically abused and neglected.⁸⁴
130. In their 2020 annual report, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel found that domestic abuse was featured in 43% of incidents involving serious harm and 41% of fatal incidents.⁸⁵ For the most high-risk cases of domestic abuse that are referred locally to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), there were an estimated 13 children for every ten cases (2019 to 2020), further highlighting the prevalence of children and young people affected by domestic abuse.⁸⁶ It should be noted that evidence suggests many children who experience domestic abuse are not identified and may therefore miss out on support.
131. Children are not a homogenous group, and there is a range of factors that may determine the nature of their experience - including age, sex, disability, race and socio-economic context. Professionals should develop an individual response for every child and young person affected, including for siblings.⁸⁷

⁸² ONS. [Childhood vulnerability to victimisation in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): data year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2019.

⁸³ ONS. [Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2018.

⁸⁴ Holt, S., Buckley, H., Whelan, S., 2008. The impact of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people: A review of the literature. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32(8), pp. 97-810.

⁸⁵ Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. [Annual Report 2020: Patterns in practice, key messages and 2021 work programme: 2021](#).

⁸⁶ SafeLives. [Q3 2019 Focus on Children in the Household.pdf \(safelives.org.uk\)](#): 2019.

⁸⁷ The Young People's Family Justice Board have produced some [top tips for professionals working with children and young people who have experience of and been affected by domestic abuse](#).

132. A review of 877 child abuse cases between February 2011 to September 2013 showed that the majority (97%) of children living with domestic abuse are exposed to that abuse. Of the children exposed to the abuse, two thirds were directly harmed, most often physically or emotionally abused, or neglected. When looking at all children that were exposed to domestic abuse, over half had behavioural problems, or felt responsible or to blame for negative events. Difficulties adjusting at school were found in over a third of cases.⁸⁸
133. Non-physical forms of domestic abuse like coercive control have a significant impact on children⁸⁹ and professionals focused on physical acts of violence may fail to understand the daily experience of victims and children, how it is affecting them, and the level of risk posed by perpetrators.
134. Experiencing domestic abuse perpetrated by or directed towards a relative can have devastating consequences for children. Experience of domestic abuse is recognised as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). Other ACEs include physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, or household dysfunction such as having incarcerated relatives or relatives experiencing substance abuse or mental illness. Research suggests that ACEs can often overlap, occurring in clusters.⁹⁰ A child's relationship with a trusted adult who has capacity to support them, wider family networks, friendship groups, and the type and frequency of the abuse are important factors.
135. Broadly, some of the impacts that domestic abuse can have on children can include⁹¹:
- Feeling anxious or depressed;
 - Low self-esteem and difficulties with forming healthy relationships;
 - Hypervigilance in reading body language or changes in mood and atmosphere;
 - Having difficulty sleeping, nightmares;
 - Physical symptoms such as stomach aches or bed wetting;
 - Delayed development or deterioration in speech, language and communication;
 - Reduction in school attainment, truancy, risk of exclusion from school;
 - Increased application to activities outside the home, including academia or sports, as a distraction;

⁸⁸ Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA). [Insights into domestic abuse 2: In plain sight: The evidence from children exposed to domestic abuse](#): 2014.

⁸⁹ [The multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse](#) September 2017 Gov.uk; Department for Education. [Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews 2011 to 2014](#): University of Warwick and University of East Anglia: 2016.

⁹⁰ Asmussen, K, Fischer, F, Drayton, E, McBride, T. [Adverse childhood experiences: What we know, what we don't know, and what should happen next](#): Early Intervention Foundation: 2020.

⁹¹ NSPCC. [Signs that a child has witnessed domestic abuse](#): 2022.

- Inconsistent regulation of emotions, including becoming distressed, upset or angry;
- Becoming aggressive or internalising their distress and becoming withdrawn;
- Managing their space within the home so they are not visible; and
- Using alcohol or drugs, or self-harming.

136. Children who are cared for by family members other than their parents and looked after children may also have additional needs that professionals should consider.

137. Children and young people of different ages may respond in different ways to domestic abuse, depending on their stage of development. Babies and young children may be particularly vulnerable when living with domestic abuse, with protective factors often minimal for this age group (unable to seek help or remove themselves from danger, often 'out of sight' of regular contact with professionals, dependent on others and may not be able to recognise abusive behaviour). Babies experiencing the effects of domestic abuse may be more likely to have difficulty sleeping, have higher levels of excess crying and disrupted attachment. Children of pre-school age tend to show the most behavioural disturbance such as bed wetting, sleep disturbances and eating difficulties and are particularly vulnerable to blaming themselves for the adult violence. Older children may be more likely to show the effects of the disruption in their lives through under performance at school, poorly developed social networks, self-harm, running away and engagement in anti-social behaviour.⁹²

138. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may find it difficult to express their feelings or may express them in different ways.⁹³ Particularly if the child is autistic, has a sensory impairment, a learning disability or has complex or profound difficulties and are, for example, non-verbal. Distress can be presented in different ways, including through challenging behaviour, becoming more withdrawn, difficulties concentrating or other changes to their usual behaviours or ways of communicating. Professionals must take the individual needs of the child into consideration to support them to communicate in a way they feel comfortable. This may include drawing on multi-agency approaches, working with educational psychologists and drawing on the knowledge of those who know the child best, such as their teacher or any therapists currently involved in their support. It is important that children and young people have the communication tools appropriate to report abuse and engage with professionals trained to aid their communication where needed.

139. Experiencing domestic abuse in childhood or adolescence has been shown in some research papers to increase the likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse later in life.⁹⁴ However, it is important to acknowledge that many victims do not

⁹² Cafcass Cymru. [Impact on Children of Experiencing Domestic Abuse](#): Welsh Government: 2019.

⁹³ See information on support for [Children with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\)](#) published on GOV.UK.

⁹⁴ Costa, B. M, et al. [Longitudinal predictors of domestic violence perpetration and victimization: A systematic review: Aggression and Violent Behavior](#): 2015; 24, 261-272; Guedes, D *et al.* [Experiences of violence across life course and its effects on mobility among participants in the international mobility in aging study](#). *British Medical Journal Open*; 2016; (6)10.

go on to perpetrate abuse and individual experiences, and how these can present differently, should be recognised. Children's Insights England and Wales data from 2015 to 2018 suggests that 60% of the children accessing domestic abuse related services experienced behavioural problems and around half (52%) experienced problems with social development and relationships. Over a third were undertaking risk taking behaviour.⁹⁵

140. [The Children's Insights England and Wales report](#) shows that a trauma-informed approach, including receiving help from specialist children's services reduces the impact of domestic abuse on these children and young people and improves their safety and health outcomes. A trauma-informed approach recognises that people who have survived significant childhood adversity may experience a triad of entwined social, physical, and psychological injuries. While these injuries are typically studied independently, they are better understood as interlocking and interdependent, shaping people's subjective experiences in complex ways across their lifespan. The result can be 'harm building upon harm', reducing the 'shock absorbers' available to cope at times of stress.
141. For children of separated parents where domestic abuse is a factor, the impact of the abuse may intensify after separation. Therefore, providing support to both children and the non-abusive parent is essential and the child's voice, their safety and the safety of the non-abusive parent should always be considered. There should be a focus on the importance of joint and parallel work for victims, including children and a range of services to sensitively address and overcome the harm domestic abuse has caused to the non-abusive parent-child relationship. This should also include appropriate access to relevant services for the perpetrator alongside clear accountability that the perpetrator is responsible for the harm caused.
142. The Ministry of Justice published the report '[Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children's cases](#)' which considers how the family courts identify and respond to allegations of domestic abuse and other serious offences in cases involving disputes between parents about the arrangements for their children. The findings included identifying the need to ensure that children's needs and wishes are at the centre of private law children proceedings and that procedures are designed to include domestic abuse as one of the central considerations where relevant (for further information, see the section '[Family courts and special measures in the family courts](#)').
143. Young people can also experience abuse in their own relationships (see the '[Teenage relationship abuse](#)' section). Experiencing abuse in their own intimate relationships can be hugely damaging for young people and abuse in teenage relationships should be taken just as seriously as in adult relationships.
144. The way children are treated by first responders and other professionals can have a significant impact on the extent to which they trust them and whether they feel safe

⁹⁵ SafeLives. [Children's Insights England and Wales dataset 2015-18](#): Specialist children's domestic abuse services: 2019.

disclosing future experiences of abuse (see the '[Responding to children and young people](#)' section in '[Chapter 6 – Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)' for more information).

Box 4.1: Case Study

Case Study

Carrie was supported by a specialist therapeutic counselling service aimed at children and young people, after experiencing her father abusing her mother, who are now separated. Carrie had been present when her father was abusive towards her mother and had also been directly affected by her father's coercive and controlling behaviours. Carrie has contact with her father, and wanted this, but she was struggling to make sense of her feelings. It was felt that independent counselling would help her to understand her emotions and manage how she was feeling.

Carrie was offered over ten counselling sessions which took place at her school. Her counsellor used creative interventions like mindfulness, therapeutic play, and metaphoric image work (which can help people to step outside of themselves and process feelings at a safe distance).

Through these interventions, Carrie and her counsellor explored her fears and anxieties; her relationships at home and at school; things within and beyond her sphere of control; and feeling and staying safe.

By the end of the counselling sessions, Carrie had an improved sense of what is and what is not within her control, and better able to identify abusive behaviours. She became less anxious and fearful at home, and more able to manage difficult and complicated emotions. She also felt more confident communicating her own wants and needs.

145. Further information about responding to domestic abuse, supporting and safeguarding victims, including children as victims, is set out in '[Chapter 6 – Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)' and '[Chapter 7 – Multi-Agency response to Domestic Abuse](#)'.

Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations

This chapter covers:

- Giving consideration to personal characteristics (including protected characteristics) and situational characteristics in domestic abuse cases.

146. As outlined in '[Chapter 3 – Recognising Domestic Abuse](#)', individuals can be the victims of multiple and different abusive behaviours. It is important to consider the different protected characteristics and related experiences of victims, and how these may intersect and overlap particularly in relation to accessing services and support if they are not adequately designed to meet specific needs. Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation are protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#). Other factors, such as an individual's immigration status or socio-economic position can also impact access to services. The impacts of abuse can be compounded, for example, where victims face multiple disadvantages.
147. Commissioners, service providers and statutory agencies should consider different experiences, needs and voices when developing their responses to both adult and child victims, to fully identify the experiences of all victims, vis-à-vis the abusive behaviour they are subject to and ensure that services are provided to victims without discrimination. [Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#) all victims have the right to be offered support when they report a crime to the police and to be referred to services that support victims. The offer of support should be based on the victim's needs and all services should be offered without discrimination of any kind. For further information on the Victims Code see '[Chapter 6 – Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)'.
148. As outlined in '[Chapter 4 – Impact of Domestic Abuse](#)', there are many practical and psychological barriers that victims may face when accessing support, including for example: feelings of shame or guilt, fear of what the perpetrator will do to them, or a belief that the situation might get better.
149. Other factors that can create additional barriers to a victim accessing support are listed below:
- Impact of coercive control and trauma – the abuse may make the victim feel isolated, worthless, to feel they are to blame for the abuse and/or be convinced they cannot look after themselves;

- Shame and stigma – including fear of not being believed, feeling shame around disclosing abuse and/or being able to access support;
- Economic dependence/instability – the victim may not have access to resources they need to be able to support themselves or their children independently, or may not be able to afford legal representation;
- Living in a rural community – a victim may face increased isolation from support networks and lack of access to services if they are living in a rural community compared to an urban setting or if they have not been allowed to mix freely with wider society. Victims living in rural communities may also find it difficult to access support or report abuse online due to poor digital connectivity. Victims may also lack privacy to make disclosures in close knit communities and may fear others knowing that they have sought support;
- Language and communication – the victim may face specific challenges in communicating the abuse which may hinder them from accessing or seeking assistance;
- Connections to local area – the victim may fear leaving their local area where they have a network of support (friends/family) and where their children are settled in schooling, as well as worrying about the upheaval to their children's lives;
- Religious/community/family pressures – the victim may be under pressure from religious or community figures, or members of their extended family, not to leave, or to return if they have left;
- Immigration status – if the victim has insecure immigration status, they may be fearful of seeking help from statutory agencies due to fear of being detained in immigration centres and being deported and/or having their children removed from their care;
- Impact of alcohol, drugs, substance misuse and mental health problems – domestic abuse can lead to or exacerbate a number of health-related issues for the victim, including the development of mental health issues; and
- Other considerations – or protected characteristics discussed below.

150. 'By and for' services are specialist services that are led, designed, and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve (for example victims and survivors from ethnic minority backgrounds, deaf and disabled victims and survivors, male victims, and LGBT victims and survivors). The involvement of specialist 'by and for' services is key to ensuring a local area can meet the needs of victims with different protected characteristics or situational characteristics. A list of organisations providing support to victims is available in [Annex A](#).

Age

151. The definition of domestic abuse in the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) ('the 2021 Act') includes a minimum age for the victim and the perpetrator of 16 years old. In addition, for the purposes of the Act, section 3 of the 2021 Act recognises children (up to 18 years old) as victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to one or both of the victim and perpetrator or the victim and/or perpetrator have "parental responsibility" of the child.
152. CPS guidance, however, applies to all cases of domestic abuse irrespective of the age of the perpetrator or victim (including those under 16). This approach means it is possible for protective orders such as Restraining Orders to benefit victims under 16 and where the behaviour of a perpetrator, including perpetrators under 16 years of age, is abusive they may be prosecuted or diverted to appropriate interventions.
153. Children and young people can face different types of abuse. See the '[Types of domestic abuse](#)' section for further detail. Young people may face barriers, relating to their age or another protected characteristic, in disclosing abuse or accessing services. They may also be inherently more vulnerable to abuse because it is harder for them to distinguish between normal and abusive behaviours. For further information relating to children, see the sections '[Impact on children](#)', '[Responding to children and young people](#)' and '[Multi-agency working to safeguard children](#)'.
154. Older people can be victims of intimate partner abuse, or abuse by family members including adult children. This abuse may include controlling or coercive behaviour, economic, emotional, psychological, sexual or physical abuse or neglect and can affect both men and women. SafeLives' Insights data indicates that victims aged 60 and over were less likely to attempt to leave the relationship in the year before getting help and are more likely to be living with the perpetrator after getting support.⁹⁶
155. The CSEW does not currently collect data on adults over 74, therefore does not present estimates for the prevalence of domestic abuse amongst this age group.⁹⁷ The CSEW year ending March 2020 suggests that prevalence reduces by ages, with 3.2% of respondents aged 60 to 74 having experienced abuse in the previous year.⁹⁸ This compares to 4.6% of 55 to 59-year-olds and is around a third of the prevalence for those aged 16 to 19 (9.5%). However, combined data from year ending March 2018 to 2020 shows that nearly 1 in 5 (18%) domestic homicide victims were 70 years or older.⁹⁹
156. Support services should avoid making assumptions about a victim's condition or health based on their age. For instance, injuries or mental health issues may be viewed

⁹⁶ SafeLives. [Spotlights Report #HiddenVictims: Save Later Lives: Older people and domestic abuse](#): 2016.

⁹⁷ Once it is possible to return to the face-to-face mode of delivery for the CSEW, ONS will immediately remove the current upper age limit for respondents to the self-completion modules.

⁹⁸ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2020.

⁹⁹ ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): data year ending March 2018 to 2020.

as the result of a victim's health and social care needs, without enquiries being made around domestic abuse.

157. A Women's Aid survey of 134 domestic abuse service organisations suggests that older victims are not being seen by specialist support services in the numbers that we would expect and can face significant barriers when asking for help or when trying to leave a relationship with a perpetrator.¹⁰⁰ Barriers can include that victims:

- have experienced years of prolonged abuse;
- are isolated within a particular community through language or culture;
- have experienced long term health impacts or disabilities; or
- are reliant on the perpetrator for their care or money.

158. Evidence also indicates that older people with protected characteristics such as being LGBT, from an ethnic minority background, or having a disability may be at greater risk of abuse, or face additional barriers that may prevent them from accessing support.¹⁰¹

159. It is crucial that older victims can get the support they need, and that their experiences are supported. Research by the Centre for Age, Gender and Social Justice emphasises the importance of enabling access and supporting older people to make safe and informed choices when seeking help.¹⁰² Dewis Choice provides [practitioner guidance on supporting older victims and responding to domestic abuse in later life](#).

Box 5.1: Case Study

Case Study

David aged 79 years, experienced abuse by his wife for over 30 years. Early on in the marriage the abuse had been verbal and emotional. However, since his diagnosis with a degenerative disease eight years ago, the abuse had also become physical and increased in severity and frequency as his illness progressed.

Paramedics attended David's home when he experienced breathing difficulties. A referral was made to social services after the paramedics observed David's wife shouting and screaming at him.

¹⁰⁰ Women's Aid. [The Domestic Abuse Report 2019: The Annual Audit: Bristol](#): 2019.

¹⁰¹ See Older People's Commissioner for Wales. 2021. [Support Services for Older People Experiencing Abuse in Wales](#).

¹⁰² The Centre for Age, Gender and Social Justice. [Transforming the response to domestic abuse in later life: Practitioner Guidance](#): 2020.

David had difficulty with his coordination and mobility and his wife purposefully left items positioned to cause him to trip or fall, sustaining bruises to his arms and face. She would also shout and 'humiliate' him, telling him he was useless as he could no longer carry out jobs around the home. David was fearful about the future. Particularly, that he would become more isolated and dependent on his wife as he developed care needs and was no longer able to leave his home without support. He wanted to be able to spend time with his adult children, who were discouraged from visiting by his wife. David had become increasingly depressed and wanted to leave his wife but he didn't know how to access support.

The social worker recognised that David was experiencing domestic abuse and explained that she felt he would benefit from support from a specialist service for older victims of abuse. David agreed, so she contacted the organisation to discuss a referral. As David had communication difficulties, the social worker assisted with arranging safe face-to-face contact with a support worker.

The support worker explained David's options and rights and went with him to apply for housing, helping him to explain that he was a victim of abuse and ensuring that he was assessed correctly as eligible for assistance. It took time to locate housing suitable for David's long-term needs. Whilst still living with his wife, he was supported with safety planning, advice and support to access health benefits and services and to help manage the move safely.

After David was re-housed the specialist service provided support for a further six months, which included long-term safety, recovery, and wellbeing, and help to re-engage with the community.

Disability

160. Disabled victims (this may include, but is not limited to victims with physical or sensory impairments, mental health issues, learning disabilities, cognitive impairments, long-term health conditions and neuro diverse victims¹⁰³) can face additional forms of abuse where the perpetrator is exploiting the victim's particular vulnerabilities to abuse them.
161. CSEW data from the year ending March 2020 shows that those with a disability were more likely to have been victims of domestic abuse in the previous year (11.8%) than those without (4.6%).¹⁰⁴ Disabled victims may also be more likely to continue living with the perpetrator.¹⁰⁵ Deaths involving disabled victims may be recorded as

¹⁰³ Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines a person as having a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This is for the purposes of this Act and the legislative framework it creates to advance equality of opportunity.

¹⁰⁴ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/domestic-abuse/victim-characteristics); Data year ending March 2020.

¹⁰⁵ SafeLives. Spotlight Report #HiddenVictims: Disabled Survivors Too: Disabled people and domestic abuse: 2017.

‘due to neglect’, rather than being captured as a domestic homicide, or without acknowledgment as a domestic abuse case.

162. Disabled victims may be at increased risk in relation to particular examples of abusive behaviour, either from an intimate partner, family member, or carer (who is “personally connected” to them),¹⁰⁶ or face specific risks relating to their disability and related circumstances including: control of medication; refusal to interpret; denial of access to health services or equipment; actions which makes the person’s health condition worse; and otherwise using the person’s disability to control them.
163. For example, blind victims and partially sighted individuals may be at greater risk of harm than a sighted person would be in some circumstances. They may be more at risk of physical abuse in terms of awareness of the threat of harm and the extent of harm caused. Where information and services are not accessible, they may need to rely on others, such as a partner or family member, to read information for them. Disabled victims, particularly disabled young people, may experience coercive or controlling behaviours involving infantilisation and denying their independence, which may go unnoticed. Unequal power relations and a relationship of dependency are recognised as common factors in such cases.
164. Disabled victims face multiple barriers to seeking and receiving help to escape domestic abuse, for example, accessible accommodation and transport, the need for assistance with personal care, access to mobility support, and possibly, for specialised emotional support, and fear of losing their children. These factors could impact an individual’s decision and ability to leave a relationship with a perpetrator or to seek help. Disabled victims can be more isolated and/or have smaller support networks and may be more vulnerable to domestic abuse as a result.¹⁰⁷
165. Disabled victims may be unable to leave or access a refuge because of poor access to safe accommodation, or because they rely on a perpetrator for care or support. Like any victim who is a parent, they may not want to move because they do not want to move their children away from school and friends, or because the school understands their needs as a disabled parent.
166. Disabled victims may have had negative experiences with services in the past which can create a feeling of distrust or impact their perception of the help that can be provided. Professionals and services should be aware of these factors and other barriers and proactively explore issues in coordination with other services to ensure the right support is offered. They should seek to engage with the victim privately, without a carer or other family member, as this may prevent or hinder disclosure, and have good knowledge of how to meet access, communication, and support needs. Sharing details of these needs with partner agencies, where this is possible, can avoid the same barriers being repeated and deterring the victim from accessing support.

¹⁰⁶ The relationship between carers and the cared is not covered by the definition of domestic abuse in the 2021 Act unless there is also a personal connection between them.

¹⁰⁷ Public Health England. [Disability and domestic abuse: Risk, impacts and response](#): 2015.

167. The experiences of disabled victims will be individual and may be specific to their disability, disabled victims should never be seen only in light of their disability. Risk assessments should be holistic and consider the whole person, including any intersecting needs.¹⁰⁸

Deaf victims

168. It is helpful to highlight the experiences of deaf victims who as a community are a linguistic minority based on their language and many deaf people experience personal and structural barriers in accessing help and reporting abuse. Deaf people may encounter specific barriers to accessing support when experiencing controlling or coercive behaviour as they might not be aware of the available support and/or professionals may not know to use appropriate communication methods.

169. There is likely to be underreporting of abuse by deaf victims due to communication and information barriers. Professionals and service providers should be aware that deaf victims need specialist support services who can understand their cultural and linguistic needs. Where possible, professionals working with deaf victims should be expected to have some personal experience of deafness, as having to relive their trauma time and again with new people (e.g. sign language interpreters) can be disruptive to their healing and may result in them disengaging from much needed support. This may also be relevant for those with a learning disability who may use an advocate or carer to support their process of talking about their experience.

170. Following best practice, deaf individuals should be signposted or referred on to a domestic abuse service specialised in supporting deaf people or a deaf-led specialist service in the first instance. To achieve optimum outcomes, professionals working with deaf victims should be able to communicate fluently using sign language, without the need for third party communication support. Organisations and agencies should also consider collaborative working relationships with other specialist services, so that they are able to jointly meet the needs of their clients through the sharing of resources, knowledge, and complementary skillsets.

Speech, language, and communication

171. People with speech, language, and communication needs may be actively targeted by perpetrators or experience abuse for longer periods of time because of difficulties they face in explaining what has happened to them, asking for help, and accessing the support available. Services, including local authorities should ensure that good practice includes the identification of, and appropriate support for, communication needs, including:

¹⁰⁸ For example, Stay Safe East provide a [Disability and Domestic Abuse risk assessment](#) to be used alongside the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and 'Honour'-Based Violence (DASH) risk assessment.

- the links between domestic abuse and speech, language and communication needs;
- the impact of witnessing domestic abuse on children’s speech, language and communication; and
- the services available to support people with those needs, including children (this may involve ensuring the availability of independent interpreters).

172. Many speech and language difficulties are unidentified and undiagnosed. Services should seek to understand the needs of people with these difficulties, including the risk that they may not be, or have been, taken seriously in their reports because of the way that they communicated them.

173. Speech, language, and communication needs can be a risk factor and are often hidden. They can result from lifelong or acquired conditions and for children and young people they may be part of a special educational need or disability.

174. Speech, language, and communication services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are covered by joint commissioning arrangements set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice](#),¹⁰⁹ which brings education, health and local authorities, and Youth Offending Teams together to assess needs and agree a local offer. Joint commissioning gives agencies the opportunity to consider the wider factors and interdependencies, such as domestic abuse, and design services accordingly. For more information on special education needs and disabilities, and the impact on children expressing their feelings see the ‘[Impact on children](#)’ section of the guidance.

175. Organisations and agencies should give consideration to communication in its broadest sense. There is a need to understand the communication environment and the various barriers which may prevent information, thoughts and ideas from being put across, received and understood successfully.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

176. LGBT victims can have a similar experience of domestic abuse to heterosexual victims. CSEW data for the year ending March 2020 suggests that LGBT victims were more likely to report being victims of domestic abuse. 8.4% of gay men and lesbian women were victims of domestic abuse in the previous year, as were 15.2% of bisexuals.¹¹⁰ This compares to 5.2% of heterosexual respondents.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ The code, which applies to England, is for: headteachers and principals, governing bodies, school and college staff, special educational needs and disability (SEND) co-ordinators, early years providers, other education settings, local authorities and health and social services staff.

¹¹⁰ There is currently no nationally representative data on prevalence of domestic abuse for trans victims.

¹¹¹ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data from year ending March 2020.

177. Whilst there are many similarities between heterosexual and LGBT people's experiences of domestic abuse, LGBT victims may also experience abuse of power and control closely associated with having their sexuality, gender identity or gender reassignment used against them. This may include the following abusive behaviours:

- Threats of disclosure of sexual orientation and gender reassignment to family, friends, work colleagues, community and others;
- Disclosing gender identity history, sexual orientation or HIV status without consent;
- Limiting or controlling access to LGBT spaces or resources;
- Using immigration law to threaten with deportation to the country of origin, which might be unsafe, due to, for example, anti-gay legislation; and
- Violent physical or sexual acts motivated by beliefs about an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity.

178. As with all victims, it is important that LGBT people are not viewed as a homogenous group. Abuse disclosed by lesbian women may be different to that of bisexual and trans women. Equally, gay men's experiences may be different to that of bisexual or trans men. Trans specific abuse may include coercing a person into not pursuing gender transition including denying or withholding access to medical treatment or hormones, ridiculing, or exotifying their body or assaulting medically altered body parts or forcing exposure.

179. LGBT people experience distinct personal and structural barriers in accessing help and reporting abuse. This may include services lacking quality referral pathways with LGBT specialist sector and low visibility and representation of LGBT issues within services. It can also include lack of understanding and awareness by professionals around unique forms of coercive control targeted at sexual orientation, gender identity or gender reassignment, and professionals minimising the risk experienced by LGBT people.

Sex

180. The statutory definition of domestic abuse is not specific to sex.

Female victims

181. We recognise that more women than men are affected by domestic abuse. Statistics from the last ONS bulletin showed that in the previous year, women were around twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse than men.¹¹²

¹¹² ONS. 2020. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-prevalence-and-victim-characteristics).

182. Child-to-parent abuse appears gendered, with the majority of cases being perpetrated by sons against their mothers, although men and boys are victims too. See the '[Types of domestic abuse](#)' section in '[Chapter 2 – Understanding Domestic Abuse](#)'.

183. In the CSEW data for the year ending March 2020, women were significantly more likely than men to be victims of each type of abuse asked about¹¹³, with the exception of sexual assault by a family member where, although higher, the difference between males and females was not significant.¹¹⁴ From the year ending March 2018 to the year ending March 2020, the majority of victims aged 16 and over of domestic homicides were female (76%). This contrasts with non-domestic homicides where the majority of victims were male (86%). When looking at perpetrators of female domestic homicide, 78% were a partner or ex-partner, 16% a parent and 7% a child or other family relative, such as a brother or sister.¹¹⁵

Male victims

184. Men and boys who are victims of domestic abuse may face specific fears of stigmatisation, concerns about being believed, not recognising that they are victims of domestic abuse and lack of promotion of services to support them. The CSEW for year ending March 2018 shows that only half (50.8%) of male victims of partner abuse told anyone that they were a victim of partner abuse, compared to 81.3% of female victims.¹¹⁶

185. Different systemic, environmental and cultural barriers can impact groups of victims, including men and boys, and taking into account their other characteristics. Therefore, it is important that men and boys are not viewed as a homogenous group as their experiences will be unique and cannot be defined in terms of sex alone. The [Supporting Male Victims document](#) sets out more detailed information on potential impacts on male victims of crimes considered in the Government's Tackling VAWG Strategy and Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan and highlights actions the Government is taking to support male victims more effectively.

¹¹³ Types of abuse asked about were non-sexual domestic abuse which includes non-sexual partner abuse and non-sexual family abuse, domestic stalking which includes stalking by a partner and stalking by a family member and domestic sexual assault which includes sexual assault by a partner and sexual assault by a family member.

¹¹⁴ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales](#): Data year ending March 2020.

¹¹⁵ ONS. [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): data year ending March 2021.

¹¹⁶ ONS. [Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales - Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2020.

Box 5.2: Case Study

Case Study

Sam's former wife abused him, both physically and mentally, for over a decade. Their relationship began like any other. They were both teachers working at the same school, and nothing seemed out of the ordinary. At first, she was caring but then things started to change.

She began to lock him out of their home or leave him on the side of the road, miles from home with no money. He was locked out of the house around 60 times over the course of almost ten years. She sometimes would take his wallet and keys, so he had no way of getting home. He found himself walking on eggshells, being coerced into situations he did not want to be in. He was often told he would never see his daughter again if he didn't do what she wanted. He felt he could not leave the family home for the sake of their daughter.

Sam realised he had to take action after he suffered serious injury when his wife attacked him with a hair dryer. Colleagues at the school he worked at came to know about the issues he was facing, and they were supportive towards him. After the attack, the school offered him paid time off to recover and paid for him to receive counselling. The school also provided him with further time off so that he could appear in court. This meant that he was able to give vital evidence of the abuse he had been subject to for nearly a decade. Sam feels that his situation shows that in coming forward male victims will be taken seriously and given the right support.

Pregnancy

186. Being pregnant may put women at increased risk of abuse, although the data available on prevalence of domestic abuse amongst pregnant individuals is limited. Some studies suggest prevalence as high as 40% to 60% of pregnant women experiencing abuse during pregnancy¹¹⁷, while others suggest it is much lower, ranging between 1% and 20%.¹¹⁸ Whilst data is mixed, other evidence suggests unplanned pregnancy to be one of only two predictors of domestic abuse that were both statistically and clinically significant.¹¹⁹
187. Domestic abuse experienced during pregnancy in utero and in the earliest years is harmful to birth outcomes and babies' early development. Whilst pregnancy may increase risk of abuse, it should also be recognised that the interaction with health professionals may provide an opportunity for women to seek support, as well as for professionals to reach out to women who may be experiencing domestic abuse. Health and social care professionals should also be alert to the need to offer support and safeguarding to the child post-birth if necessary.

¹¹⁷ SafeLives, [A cry for health: Why we must invest on domestic abuse services in hospitals](#). 2016.

¹¹⁸ Depending on the country and how prevalence is calculated.

¹¹⁹ Yakubovich, A, et al. [Risk and protective factors for intimate partner violence against women: Systematic review and meta-analyses of prospective-longitudinal studies](#). American Public Health Association: 2018.108(7): 1-11.

188. Access to trauma-informed support during pregnancy, post-birth and into childhood can be of benefit to adult and child victims. For further information on the impact of domestic abuse on children see the '[Impact on children](#)' section.
189. Evidence linking intimate partner violence to abortion varies, does not offer clear evidence of predictors or causes, and is often conducted in countries other than the UK. Evidence from a research review does indicate that intimate partner violence is associated with early termination of pregnancy. The association between intimate partner violence and repeat abortion indicates that there is sometimes a repetitive cycle of abuse and pregnancy.¹²⁰ Experience of intimate partner violence and loss of pregnancy can have further compounding impacts on the victim's emotional state and has been linked with negative mental health outcomes such as depression and suicidal ideation.¹²¹
190. Health and social care professionals should be aware of these factors and ensure that specialised mental health support, including post-abortive counselling, is in place for victims who have experienced abortion or other perinatal loss. Guidelines from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists recommend that healthcare services should identify issues such as domestic abuse among women seeking abortion and refer them to appropriate support services. See the '[Health](#)' section for further information about the role of health professionals including in exercising their professional curiosity and reaching out to pregnant women to offer support in relation to domestic abuse.

Religion or belief

191. Victims who follow a religion or are from faith backgrounds may experience additional barriers to receiving help or reporting abuse due to issues with accessing support related to their religious identity and their faith group. They might fear their faith being misunderstood or have concerns around whether they will be believed.
192. For the year ending March 2020, those reporting their religion as Buddhist, or an 'Other' religion not listed (9.6% and 9.1% respectively) were more likely to report domestic abuse within the last year. This compares to 6.4% of those with no religion, 4.8% of Christians, 3.7% of Muslims, and 3.2% of Hindus.¹²²
193. Specialist services should seek to understand the varying manifestations of domestic abuse relating to faith and how a mix of culture, religious tradition and holy scripture can be used as tools of abuse by perpetrators.¹²³

¹²⁰ Hall M, Chappell, LC, Parnell. BL, Seed, PT, Bewley, S. [Associations between intimate partner violence and termination of pregnancy: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#). PLOS Medicine: 2014;11(1):e1001581.

¹²¹ Gulliver, P, Fanslow, J. [Exploring risk factors for suicidal ideation in a population-based sample of New Zealand women who have experienced intimate partner violence](#). Aust NZ J Public Health 37: 2013; (6):527-33.

¹²² ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2020.

¹²³ An example of such practice includes the Faith and VAWG coalition, a partnership of organisations across the VAG sector and faith communities, centering the experiences of victims of faith in their work: [Home - Faith and VAWG Coalition](#).

194. It is important that specialist services communicate their understanding of a victim's religion to ensure they feel emotionally safe and supported. Support services should be aware that a lack of understanding of different experiences and needs can lead to silencing victims from faith backgrounds and reinforce barriers to receiving support from agencies such as the police, courts, social care, and housing. See the '[Abuse relating to faith](#)' section for further detail in '[Chapter 3 – Recognising Domestic Abuse](#)'.

Race and ethnicity

195. Victims from ethnic minority backgrounds may experience additional barriers to identifying, disclosing, seeking help or reporting abuse. This may include:

- A distrust of the police and other statutory agencies;
- Suspicion towards the police due to lack of perceived or real support for their community historically and/or currently;
- Concerns about racism and fear of racial stereotyping;
- Fears about immigration and/or asylum status and risk of deportation;
- Language and cultural barriers;
- Being disproportionately impacted by certain forms of VAWG, including forced marriage, staying in a marriage with a perpetrator, 'honour'-based abuse and FGM) (see also the section "['Honour'-based abuse](#)");
- Feeling ashamed and/or concerned about family finding out; and
- Fear of rejection by the wider community.

196. Domestic abuse is often under-reported within minority communities. Stereotypes and assumptions can be made about the victim's culture and in some cases, experiences of domestic abuse have been treated as housing or immigration cases by public authorities.¹²⁴ Professionals working with minority communities should be aware of barriers and actively seek to ensure the right support is made available to overcome them, including appropriate interpretation and translation support where this may be needed. There are distinct structural barriers that minority communities face in accessing support.

197. CSEW data for the year ending March 2020 suggests that those from a Mixed ethnic background were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse within the previous year (7.6%) than those from white (5.7%), black (3.7%), or Asian (3.6%) ethnic backgrounds. However, the presence and impact of additional barriers across all groups, and particularly within ethnic minority communities, may lead to underreporting of abuse.

¹²⁴ Thiara, RK, Roy, S, Ng, P. [Between the lines: Service responses to Black and Minority Ethnic \(BME\) Women and Girls experiencing Sexual Violence](#): University of Warwick and Imkaan: 2015.

198. There is a growing understanding amongst wider society about domestic abuse within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and barriers faced by people within these communities in accessing help.¹²⁵ Services should consider their particular support needs, including language or literacy support arising from disadvantages in relation to education, access to refuge spaces, and helping victims in building other support networks outside the community.

Immigration status and migrant victims

199. Victims who have entered the UK from overseas may face barriers when attempting to escape domestic abuse relating to their immigration status or lack thereof.¹²⁶ Some victims may have the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition imposed due to the type of leave they have been granted. This can lead to greater dependence on the partner or family if they have supported their being in the UK. They may also face greater economic impact of leaving a perpetrator if they are unable to claim benefits or access housing, or if they lose their immigration status by leaving their partner, including destitution and homelessness. This may be exploited by partners or family members to exert control over victims. Examples of how perpetrators can exert control over migrant victims include:

- Threatening to no longer provide support for their stay in the UK;
- Falsifying a victim's immigration status and/or purposefully bringing a victim into the UK with an incorrect visa to ensure they remain vulnerable to immigration enforcement, and without options for regularisation;
- Withholding key immigration documents from a victim, including their passport, so they are unable to ascertain what rights they may have;
- Withholding accurate information from a dependent, for example, when their visa lapses;
- Purposefully mismanaging a victim's immigration status and/or application, so they become overstayers and/or without valid status. This might involve purposefully missing a deadline to renew a dependent's visa;
- Deliberately using the immigration system to control and threaten a victim. For example, actually and/or threatening to report their insecure status to the Home Office;

¹²⁵ The Traveller Movement have published a good practice guidance on improving service provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller domestic abuse survivors: [20220225-da-good-practice-guide_0.pdf](https://travellerstimes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/25-da-good-practice-guide_0.pdf) (travellerstimes.org.uk).

¹²⁶ Domestic Abuse Commissioner. [Safety Before Status: Improving pathways to support for migrant victims of domestic abuse](#): 2021.

- Providing misinformation or mistruths to a victim about their rights or to multi-agency professionals involved in working with the victim. For example, falsely stating that the victim has NRPF when this is not the case; and
- Subjecting a victim to so called 'honour'-based violence or abuse within a transnational context. For example, ensuring that a victim is at high risk of 'honour'-based violence or abuse in their country of origin, and subsequently using the threat of deportation and the likelihood of additional harm as a tool to control them.

200. There are support mechanisms in place for migrant victims of domestic abuse, including specific support for asylum seekers, local authority support, a change of NRPF conditions, fee waivers or support for victims of modern slavery (which encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour) through the National Referral Mechanism.

201. Migrant victims on some partner visas are eligible for the Destitution Domestic Violence concession (DDVC). This concession enables these victims to apply for leave to remain without the NRPF condition when their relationship has broken down because of domestic abuse, they are destitute, and where they are eligible for, and intend to subsequently make, an application for indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic abuse. Under this concession, leave is granted for three months. These victims can then apply to claim public funds (benefits) for up to three months while they make an application to settle in the UK. This helps migrant victims on certain partner visas to fund a refuge space with the housing element of the benefits they can claim because their leave will not be subject to a NRPF condition. These victims can then apply for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) under the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain Rules.

202. Victims may be reluctant to report abuse due to the fear of information sharing by the police and other statutory and non-statutory services with the Home Office for the purpose of immigration control. The Home Office has undertaken a [review into the data-sharing arrangements between the police and Immigration Enforcement](#) when encountering migrant victims of crime, in response to the super-complaint submitted by Liberty and Southall Black Sisters. The review concluded that the Home Office will not be establishing a firewall but will seek to implement an Immigration Enforcement Migrant Victims Protocol which puts safeguarding needs first. See also the '[Victims with insecure immigration status](#)' section.

203. A key barrier to migrant victims of domestic abuse accessing support is the difficulty organisations face in funding bed spaces and ancillary services in a refuge for victims with NRPF. That is why the Government launched the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme in April 2021. The Support for Migrant Victims scheme is designed to provide support to those individuals who may be unable to access other support mechanisms, such as the DDVC. It provides a safety net of support through provision of accommodation in a refuge or other relevant accommodation. Additionally, the scheme

can offer wrap around provisions, including emotional support, and more practical support in forms such as immigration advice to aid victims in their recovery and navigation of advice and the options available to them to move on from that support. The support provided can be tailored to the needs of individual victims. An evaluation of the scheme is in progress, and its findings will inform future policy decisions.

Box 5.3: Case Study

Case Study

Ms K reached out to the police, and a specialist 'by and for' service providing support to migrant victims, for help after experiencing domestic abuse upon relocating to the UK. She was able to access emergency accommodation, counselling, and legal advice.

Ms K was born in Amritsar and moved to the UK to study when a family friend she viewed as her 'uncle' offered to pay for her studies. She obtained a student visa and arrived in the UK and went to stay with her 'uncle'. During her stay, her 'uncle' arranged her marriage by advertising on a matrimonial website.

Within three weeks of her marriage, Ms K was subjected to physical, verbal, and emotional abuse and forced into domestic servitude. Her mother-in-law continuously verbally harassed her; she called her names and encouraged her husband to use her as a slave. Ms K was often forced to cook all the family's meals, do all the laundry, and clean the entire house. She fell pregnant but was forced to continue to do all the housework late into her pregnancy.

Ms K's husband, who had previously been jailed for murder, was physically abusive in a manner that intensified during the course of their marriage. The abuse towards Ms K escalated during her pregnancy. Her 'uncle' visited her occasionally to intervene and to beg them to stop the abuse.

When she was around seven months pregnant, Ms K's husband assaulted her because she was sitting down on the sofa. She attempted to leave, but her mother-in-law forced her to sit down again, telling her she had to stay until she gave birth and then give the baby to them. Ms K managed to leave the room and called her 'uncle' to collect her. When her 'uncle' arrived, her husband stood in the doorway to prevent her from leaving the house. He became extremely angry and threw her belongings onto the driveway and told her not to return. Ms K's 'uncle' took her to the hospital for a check-up and she also gave a report at a local police station. The police referred her to SBS, but later, she reconciled with her husband following coercion from her in-laws and retracted her complaint.

However, soon after reconciling, her husband began to abuse her again. To ensure that she had no opportunity to disclose the abuse to anyone outside the family, her mother-in-law accompanied her to her GP appointments. However, the domestic abuse had a significant impact on Ms K's mental health, causing her to become depressed and anxious. She lived in constant fear for her life and that of her child.

Ms K gave birth to her son but following this the abuse towards her escalated. Ms K's in-laws threatened to take her son away and have her deported, especially if she dared to disclose her experiences to anyone outside the home. All of this led to her feeling isolated and trapped in her marital home. Her mother in-law often told Ms K that the baby belonged to her, and they were capable of killing Ms K and keeping the baby.

Following a number of death threats to Ms K and her family, and the relentless physical and verbal abuse to which she was subjected, Ms K finally decided to leave the marital home. She made a complaint to the local police and contacted SBS for assistance.

The specialist 'by and for' service was able to assist Ms K with making a complaint to the police and draw up a safety plan. They liaised with social services to help secure emergency accommodation for her and her son, referred Ms K to support and counselling services and helped her to obtain legal advice regarding her immigration status.

Asylum Seekers

204. Asylum seekers and their dependants who would otherwise be destitute are provided with accommodation and a weekly cash allowance to meet their essential living needs under the arrangements, as set out in section 95 of the [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#) ('the 1999 Act'). This includes asylum seekers who are victims of domestic abuse. An asylum seeker is destitute if they lack adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it. The [Asylum Support Regulations 2000](#) make clear that accommodation is not adequate if remaining in it exposes the individual to risk of domestic violence.
205. Arrangements are now in place to use the asylum support budget to close a gap which prevented asylum seekers and their dependants supported under section 95 of the 1999 Act from accessing a refuge. The policy is designed to ensure asylum seekers who are victims of domestic abuse receive the specialist support they need. This statutory guidance applies to asylum seekers who are entitled to asylum support, which will be provided whether in supported accommodation or a specialist refuge.
206. Those granted refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK have access to support provisions in the same way as anyone else residing in the UK with recourse to public funds. Asylum seekers can remain supported by the Home Office while their claim is being processed and recognised refugees have the right to work, access to benefits and can apply for housing.
207. Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration status, if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question. If a victim of domestic abuse has children, local authorities have a duty to provide financial support and/or accommodation under section 17 of the [Children Act 1989](#) to safeguard the welfare of those in need, regardless of their immigration status or that of their parents.

No recourse to public funds (NRPF) - change of conditions

208. An application to lift the NRPF status is available for migrants on certain specified human rights routes to settlement, such as the five-year parent route or ten-year partner, parent, or private life route. An applicant who has encountered a change in their circumstances and due to this will be destitute or at imminent risk of destitution, has a child whose particular additional and essential needs will not be met without access to public funds, or is encountering exceptional financial circumstances, may qualify for their NRPF status to be lifted.

Fee Waivers

209. Fee waivers are available for certain specified human rights applications where a migrant is applying for the right to remain in the UK based on family or private life but

cannot afford the fee. These include applicants under the five-year parent route and the ten-year partner, parent, or private life route.

Alcohol and substance misuse

210. Despite limited evidence, some studies have found a significant relationship between alcohol and drug use and intimate partner violence.¹²⁷ CSEW data for the year ending March 2018 found 16.6% of partner abuse victims highlighted that the offender was under the influence of alcohol, and 10.6% under the influence of drugs. Around one in five (21%) of victims said they did not know or did not want to answer whether the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol.¹²⁸ A 2022 Home Office report summarising 127 Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) found that alcohol and drug use was noted as a perpetrator vulnerability in around a third of cases.¹²⁹
211. Some victims may use alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism in response to abuse. Alcohol can also be embedded in a relationship with perpetrators of domestic abuse with perpetrators using alcohol to control victims.¹³⁰
212. Of the 120 support services that responded to Women's Aid's annual survey, 7% said supporting victims with multiple or complex needs was their most challenging issue faced between 2018 to 2019. Additionally, there were only three organisations (with 21 bed spaces) dedicated for women with substance use support needs or complex needs.¹³¹ Similarly, alcohol treatment services may not be sufficiently well-equipped to treat women who have experienced domestic abuse. A mapping exercise led by Against Violence and Abuse (AVA) found that women-only provisions of substance use services are available in less than half of local authorities in England and Wales.¹³² Furthermore, services typically address single issues, such as substance use or mental health which can see women being passed around services or unable to access holistic support. There can also be variations and gaps in service provision for certain groups.
213. Professionals should be aware that victims, with alcohol or drug dependencies, who have children may be wary of the involvement of children's social care as they may be concerned that their children may be removed from their care. This may create a barrier to victims seeking or accepting help. '[Chapter 6 – Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)' provides further information on the children's social care response and emphasises the importance of professionals building trusting relationships with the

¹²⁷ Costa, BM, et al. [Longitudinal predictors of domestic violence perpetration and victimization: A systematic review](#). Aggression and Violent Behaviour: 2015; 24, 261-271; Schumacher JA, Feldbau-Kohn S, Smith Slep AM, Heyman RE. [Risk factors for male-to-female partner physical abuse](#). Aggression and Violent Behaviour: 2001;6(2-3):281-352.

¹²⁸ ONS. [Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2018.

¹²⁹ Home Office. Domestic Homicide Reviews: [Key findings from analysis of domestic homicide reviews](#): 2022.

¹³⁰ The draft [statutory guidance](#) gives examples of ways substance use can exist within an abuse relationship, stating that responding agencies should understand these issues p.28.

¹³¹ Women's Aid. [The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Annual Audit](#). Bristol: Women's Aid: 2020.

¹³² Holly, J. (2017). [Mapping the Maze: Services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage in England and Wales](#). London: Agenda & AVA.

parent who is victim to domestic abuse to seek to overcome this fear and ensure the right support is offered for both adult and child victims. See also [further resources for practitioners working with families affected by domestic abuse](#).

214. Professionals should also recognise the consequence that alcohol-related abuse may have on children. Parental alcohol and drug use were documented in 37% and 38% of cases where a child was seriously hurt or killed between 2011 and 2014, respectfully.¹³³
215. The prevalence of alcohol-related domestic violence is five times higher among the most disadvantaged groups compared to the least disadvantaged.¹³⁴ However, both alcohol and substance misuse and domestic abuse can be hidden and data may be impacted by differences in disclosure or detection within different socio-economic groups.
216. The co-occurrence of drug and alcohol use, homelessness, criminal justice system involvement and mental health will often mean that victims will face huge challenges when seeking support. It is paramount that statutory services take into consideration the multiple barriers, needs and potential for discrimination that can be faced by these groups, when planning and delivering services. See also the section '[Impact on Victims](#)'.

Mental health

217. Mental health problems are not a cause of domestic abuse; however, it can be a risk factor for perpetration and victimisation. Depression has been linked with perpetrating abuse¹³⁵, and mental health issues can lead to an increased risk of being a victim of domestic abuse.¹³⁶
218. Domestic abuse can have a long-lasting effect on victims. It can lead to the development of long-lasting mental health problems and eating disorders. The CSEW for year ending March 2018 found that just under half of partner abuse victims aged 16 to 59 (48.9%) reported mental or emotional problems and around a quarter (25.5%) had stopped trusting people and experienced difficulty in other relationships. Over a third (36%) received specialist mental health or psychiatric services as a result of their abuse.¹³⁷

¹³³ Department of Education. [Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews 2011 to 2014](#): University of East Anglia and University of Warwick: 2016.

¹³⁴ Institute of Alcohol Studies. [Inequalities in victimisation: alcohol, violence, and anti-social behaviour](#): 2020.

¹³⁵ See Guedes, A., Bott, S., Garcia-Moreno, C., Colombini, M., 2016. [Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children](#). Global Health Action, 9(1); Schumacher, J., Feldbau-Kohn, S., Smith Slep, A., Heyman, R., 2001. Risk factors for male-to-female partner physical abuse. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 6(2-3), pp. 281-352.

¹³⁶ Bacchus, L., Ranganathan, M., Watts, C., Devries, K., 2018. [Recent intimate partner violence against women and health: a systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies](#). BMJ Open, 8(7), pp. 1-20.

¹³⁷ ONS. 2018. [Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

219. Victims with mental health needs might not attend a service specialising in domestic abuse, so it is important for all mental health support services and providers to be aware of indicators of possible domestic abuse, to ask about the individual's experiences in private discussion and to be appropriately trained to respond. Mental health services may need to tailor their support and work with other support services to provide this support. For further information, see the section on ['Psychological' impacts](#).

Socio-economic background

220. Individuals may be victims of domestic abuse regardless of their socio-economic position and background. However, socio-economic status has been identified as a risk factor for many types of crime and violence, including domestic abuse.¹³⁸ See also the ['Livelihood'](#) section in ['Chapter 4 – Impact of Domestic Abuse'](#).

221. An evidence review suggests that there may be particular risks associated with having low income, economic strain and benefit receipt, for example, in exacerbating interpersonal dependency and/or compounding wider patterns of vulnerability relating to lack of employment or poor access to social support.¹³⁹ Consideration should be given to these circumstances and its relation to any abusive behaviours present, and the specific needs of victims and potential barriers to accessing services.

222. As emphasised throughout this guidance, it is important to highlight that simply because an individual is exposed to any one of these factors, it does not necessarily mean they will experience or carry out domestic abuse.

¹³⁸ Capaldi, D. Knoble, N. Shortt, J. Hyon, K., 2012. A systematic review of risk factors for intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*. Volume 2, Issue 3, pp 231-280.

¹³⁹ Fahmy, E, Williamson E, Pantazis, C. [Evidence and policy review: Domestic violence and poverty](#): A research report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation: University of Bristol: 2016.

Chapter 6 – Agency Response to Domestic Abuse

This chapter covers:

- The role of individual agencies in identifying and responding to domestic abuse, including assessing risk.
- The context of existing guidance and strategies and some of the tools available to organisations.

Identifying and responding

223. This chapter outlines the role of individual agencies in responding to domestic abuse. It often takes victims of domestic abuse a significant period of time to seek effective help from agencies.¹⁴⁰ Further to this, victims of domestic abuse with protected characteristics (as defined by section 4 of the Equality Act 2010) may face additional barriers to accessing support.¹⁴¹ Children and young people may also face different or additional barriers to disclosing their abuse.¹⁴² See '[Chapter 4 – Impact of Domestic Abuse](#)' and '[Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)'.

224. Given that less than 1 in 5 victims report their abuse to the police¹⁴³, many victims of domestic abuse do not come into contact with the criminal justice system. It is therefore important that a wide range of agencies and bodies are able to identify victims and know how to provide the right response. Early intervention by the voluntary sector and statutory agencies working together can help to protect adults and children from further harm, as well as preventing escalation and recurrence of abuse.

225. Public agencies should invest in awareness raising, specialist training and systems change within their services to ensure that victims receive effective and safe responses and that information about their services reach the range of different communities and protected groups in their areas.

226. Where a criminal offence is being investigated, victims of domestic abuse will be treated as victims of crime under the Victims' Code in England and Wales. The Victims' Code sets out the services, and the standard for these services, that must be provided

¹⁴⁰ SafeLives. [Getting it right first time: 2015](#).

¹⁴¹ See the [Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#) section for further information.

¹⁴² See the [Impact on children](#) section.

¹⁴³ ONS. [Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): Data year ending March 2018: Table 4.12.

to victims of crime by relevant organisations. The rights extend to a parent or guardian of the victim if the victim is under 18 years of age, or a nominated family spokesperson if the victim has a mental impairment or has communication needs including where this has arisen as a result of the offence. Which rights apply is circumstance dependent (such as reporting to the police or identifying a suspect who is subsequently charged) however all victims are entitled 'to be able to understand and to be understood', 'to be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to their needs' and 'to make a complaint about their rights not being met'. Further information can be found in the [Victims' Code](#) published by the Ministry of Justice. Government intends to place the key principles of the Victims' Code into law in the Victims Bill.

227. [Annex A](#) presents a non-exhaustive list of agencies that victims of domestic abuse and their families may come into contact with. The information sections below are to assist those organisations exercising public protection duties and frontline professionals so they can identify all the victims of the abuse, including children and young people, and ensure that they receive support and protection tailored to their particular needs.

228. It is essential that agencies identify and respond to all forms of abuse and all victims. Given the complex nature of domestic abuse, a multi-agency response is critical to identifying victims and their families at an early stage and before abuse reaches a crisis point. This is in addition to understanding the necessary precautions and response for crisis and risk management including cohesive understandings of safeguarding needs by all relevant professionals. For details see '[Chapter 7 – Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)'.

Risk assessment

229. Professionals who are trained to do so can use tools such as the [Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment \(DASH\) risk assessment](#) to help identify the level of risk an individual is facing and to tailor their support accordingly.¹⁴⁴ The DASH risk tool is not a definitive assessment of risk but provides for the identification and assessment of risk based on structured professional judgment. Professionals using this, or other risk assessment tools, should be alert to the risk to children as well as adults. It is essential to identify changes, such as escalation in severity and/or frequency of abuse.

230. Risk assessments should holistically encompass specialist professional judgement, survivor perceptions of risk, along with additional indicators relevant to minority groups.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Police forces are in the process of adopting the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessor (DARA).

¹⁴⁵ For example, [ROAR LGBT risk assessment tool](#); [Stay Safe East Disabled victims risk assessment](#); and [SafeLives Young People's DASH risk checklist with guidance](#).

Responding to children and young people

231. In responding to cases of abuse involving those under 18, child safeguarding procedures should be followed as set out in the statutory guidance document, [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#). Children and young people can experience different forms of abuse, see '[Chapter 2 – Understanding Domestic Abuse](#)'. Professionals should be mindful that young people may be reluctant to discuss relationships or their concerns around abuse with adults. Additionally, young people may be particularly ill-equipped to deal with certain practical challenges, such as moving home to escape the abuse or managing their own finances.
232. Young people experiencing or perpetrating abuse in their own relationships need to be supported in a way that is tailored to their needs, although they may often have to rely on specialist services designed for adult victims¹⁴⁶ that are not always appropriate. It is vital that young people who experience domestic abuse within their own relationships are referred through a multi-agency risk assessment.
233. Children and young people should be offered support based on their individual needs, with a range of interventions, so that each child is able to access the specialised help they require. This could include access to psychoeducational support, therapeutic services (for example, counselling) or specialist children's victim support workers or an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) who is able to work with children and young people. A strengths-based approach to recovery, building on 'the resilient blocks in the child's life', has been shown to be effective in interventions for children.¹⁴⁷
234. Professionals should be equipped to identify and respond to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse, drawing on the range of support available, from early intervention to crisis stage. Best practice responses involve an integrated response which combines child safeguarding and high-risk domestic abuse expertise, particularly in relation to risk assessment and safety planning. Further details on responding to young people experiencing abuse can be found in the [SafeLives Practice Briefing](#), [Respect Guidance 'Work with young people's violence and abuse'](#) and [Women's Aid Good Practice Guidance for specialist services for children and young people](#).
235. Professionals should recognise the dynamics, impact, and risk when responding to cases of child-to-parent abuse. This may include, commissioning specialised local child-to-parent abuse services or embedding staff, within a multi-agency 'front door' referral system, who are trained to identify and respond appropriately to both the child and the parent victim. It is important that a young person using abusive behaviour against a parent or family member receives a safeguarding response, which should include referral to a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub or local equivalent in the first

¹⁴⁶ See Donovan, C., Magic, J., West, S. 2021. [LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Service Provision Mapping Study](#). Galop, Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Durham University.

¹⁴⁷ Holt, S. et al. 2008. 'The impact of exposure to domestic abuse on children and young people; A review of the literature'. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 32:8.

instance where a parent advocate may attend, followed by referral to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference if necessary, regardless of whether any police action is taken.

236. The Home Office intends to publish later this year updated guidance on child-to-parent abuse. This guidance will include the recommended responses by police, health professionals and social workers.
237. A trauma-informed response requires service providers to recognise the signs and impact of trauma and to view people's difficulties through a 'trauma lens', recognise the increased likelihood of disengagement from standard services and the need for trauma-specific services that take into account the need for relational trust and collaboration to be at the centre of intervention.¹⁴⁸ Trauma-informed practice seeks to address the barriers that those affected by trauma can experience when accessing care and services and the role of such practice in early intervention and prevention can be crucial.
238. For information on working across agencies to respond to children experiencing domestic abuse see the section '[Multi-agency working to safeguard children](#)'.

Education

239. Education (including early years, childcare, schools and higher education) is not a reserved matter and is within the legislative competence of the Senedd, therefore information in this section only applies to England.

Early Years and Childcare

240. Early years providers can play a key role in preventing and detecting domestic abuse. Early years providers have a duty under section 40 of the [Childcare Act 2006](#) to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.
241. Early years providers must have regard to '[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)' which requires them to ensure that they are alert to any issues of concern in the child's life and that they have, and implement, a policy and set of procedures to safeguard children. This must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. The policy must also cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting, that staff complete safeguarding training that enables them to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect.
242. Early years providers must ensure that they have a practitioner who is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within each early years setting and

¹⁴⁸ Taggart, D. [Trauma Informed Care for Young People, Research in Practice](#): Darlington: 2018.

who must liaise with local statutory children’s services as appropriate. This lead must also complete child protection training.

Schools and colleges

243. School and college staff are particularly important as they are in a unique position to identify concerns early, provide help for children and prevent concerns from escalating. School settings can also increase opportunities for sexual abuse and other harmful relationships and behaviours to develop between peers.¹⁴⁹

244. Schools and colleges must have regard to [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) statutory guidance.¹⁵⁰ This guidance provides that if a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children’s social care immediately, and, if appropriate, to the police. The guidance includes an annex providing additional information for staff on specific types of harm and abuse, including identifying and responding to domestic abuse.

245. KCSIE is clear that schools and colleges should ensure that all staff receive regularly updated safeguarding training so they can take appropriate steps to identify, protect and support children. Training could include an exploration of domestic abuse, including the dynamics of inequality, power, and control, which underpin domestic abuse; the different forms domestic abuse may take and the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people. This could cover both domestic abuse within family settings as well as abuse perpetrated between children and young people either in their own intimate relationships or towards their family.

246. Every school and college should have a designated safeguarding lead who provides support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and who will liaise closely with other services, such as children’s social care and the police. The lead should be a senior member of staff, full details of the role is set out in [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#). When considering the needs of children affected by domestic abuse, schools and colleges may also want to consider their duties in regard to children with special educational needs, including those with behavioural problems, and refer to the [SEND Code of Practice](#).

247. There is also [guidance available on child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment in schools and colleges](#) in England.

248. The organisation [Operation Encompass](#) has created an information sharing protocol between police forces and schools so that police can alert designated safeguarding leads of domestic abuse incidents involving a child. Police notify schools about all domestic abuse incidents before the start of the next school day so that appropriate

¹⁴⁹ Brown, S., Redmond, T., Rees, D., Ford, S. & King, S. (2020). [Truth Project Thematic Report: Child sexual abuse in the context of schools](#). London: Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/research/csa-schools>.

¹⁵⁰ In Wales, guidance for local authorities and governing bodies on arrangements for safeguarding children is under [Keeping Learners Safe](#).

and trained school staff are made aware of incidents and can support the child accordingly when they come into school. Whereas children’s social services only intervene in the most serious cases, Operation Encompass enables every child to receive support, regardless of whether the incident has been recorded as a crime. It does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, the police and/or schools should make a referral to children’s social care if they are concerned about a child’s welfare. The [Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance](#) makes it clear that where there are safeguarding concerns about a child or young person, the designated safeguarding lead and any deputies should liaise with the three safeguarding partners and work with other agencies, in line with [‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’](#).

249. More information on Operation Encompass is provided through the case study at Box 6.1. All police forces in England and Wales now use Operation Encompass and all schools are encouraged to sign up to the scheme.

250. Concerns about obtaining a school placement for their children may be a barrier to victims escaping domestic abuse mid-way through the school year and seeking refuge or safe accommodation, particularly if it means leaving the area or creating difficulty for children to continue to attend a faith school. However, parents can apply for a place for their child at any school at any time; and where there are places available, the child must be admitted. In 2020, the Department for Education consulted on a package of changes to the School Admissions Code to improve the in-year admissions process and to minimise gaps in children’s education. This included specific proposals to support the in-year admission of children of victims of domestic abuse. The new [School Admissions Code](#) containing these provisions came into force in September 2021. The changes introduced new categories of children who must be placed via local Fair Access Protocols (FAP) - the mechanism to ensure that unplaced and vulnerable children are allocated a school place as quickly as possible to now include “children living in refuge or other Relevant Accommodation” and children “subject to a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan” (or have had one within the last 12 months). All admission authorities are required to participate in their local FAP. This includes admitting children referred to their school via the FAP. Other changes were also made to improve the general operation of FAPs, including a requirement that children must be allocated a place within 20 school days of being referred to the FAP. Together, these changes will benefit all children who need to move schools in the middle of a school year, but will be particularly beneficial to the most vulnerable, including those who need to move schools as a consequence of domestic abuse.

251. Understanding healthy relationships is at the centre of a child’s compulsory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RHSE) in school. The topic ‘Being Safe’ supports children to recognise and report feelings of being unsafe and covers the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, ‘honour’-based abuse and FGM, and how these can affect current and future relationships. Schools must

have regard to the [RSHE statutory guidance](#), and where their practices depart from parts of the guidance which state that they should or should not do something, they will need to have good reason for doing so. Government is supporting teachers to deliver high quality, age-appropriate teaching on the subject and build an awareness of all forms of abuse through [teacher training modules available on GOV.UK](#).

252. There is no right to withdraw from RSHE, in which the topic of Being Safe is taught, at primary or secondary school. The content of this subject is essential in supporting pupils' wellbeing and attainment and helping young people to become successful and happy adults who make a meaningful contribution to society.
253. If a primary school chooses to teach sex education and a parent wishes to withdraw their child, the head teacher must comply with their wish. For pupils at secondary school the RSHE statutory guidance sets out that unless there are exceptional circumstances, the parents' request to withdraw their child from sex education should be granted until three terms before the pupil turns 16. At that point, if the child wishes to take part in sex education lessons, the head teacher should ensure they receive it in one of those terms.

Box 6.1: Case Study – Operation Encompass

Case Study

A school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) received an Operation Encompass call related to one of their pupils. There had been an incident between the child's mother and her partner the previous evening.

The DSL spoke to the child's class teacher who was then prepared for the young reception child to behave differently from his usual self and was ready to offer support, whether silent or overt, according to the child's wishes.

The child arrived at the classroom with his mother and his teddy bear. His class teacher would normally have either asked him to put the teddy in a safe place in the classroom or asked him if he wanted mum to take teddy home so that he would be safe. She did neither, recognising that his teddy had been brought for a reason. The child hugged his teddy all day and even brought him to his speech therapy in school. His class teacher quietly supported him all day, working next to him and letting him know she was there.

In being informed at the earliest opportunity about the child's experience of domestic abuse, the teacher and the school had been ready to react and support the child's individual needs.

Higher education

254. Higher Education (HE) providers have clear responsibilities, including under the Equality Act 2010, and should have robust policies and procedures in place to comply with the law, and to investigate and swiftly address reports of violence.
255. The Government continues to work closely with Universities UK (UUK) on implementing its [Changing the Culture](#) framework, which seeks to tackle violence against women, harassment and hate crime. Underreporting of abuse and domestic violence is common and it is important that providers break down barriers to reporting and that students feel safe and able to report incidents of all abuse, harassment, and violence.
256. All HE providers should discharge their responsibilities fully and have robust policies and procedures in place to address harassment, making sure that HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone. Government would expect providers to ensure that students continue to have access to support services, and complaints processes, to ensure they are able to report any issues. The HARM network (University of Lancaster) has developed and published its own [policy guidance for UK Universities](#), encouraging universities to have in place specific policies and procedures to address domestic abuse to protect students and staff.
257. Any student who feels that their complaint has not been dealt with appropriately or satisfactorily can escalate their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

Social Care

258. Social care is not a reserved matter and is within the legislative competence of the Senedd, therefore information in this section only applies to England.
259. In Wales, statutory guidance for local authorities and social care professionals is provided under the [Social Services and Well Being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). This Act provides the legal framework for improving the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. Social Workers in Wales must meet the [Social Care Wales professional standards](#) and [Code of Practice for Social Care Workers](#). Social Care Wales regulates and sets standards for social work education training in Wales.

Children's Social Care

260. Domestic abuse is the most common risk factor identified by social workers in assessments and is a key driver of need for children's social care.¹⁵¹ Children's social

¹⁵¹ In the year ending 31 March 2021, domestic abuse (concerns about a parent) remained the most common factor identified at the end of assessment, recorded in 168,960 episodes of children in need (34% of all episodes where assessment factor information was recorded).. ONS. [Characteristics of children in need: 2020 to 2021](#): Data year ending March 2021.

workers are therefore an important partner both in the identification of domestic abuse and the service response – whether by engaging families to keep children safe from harm, supporting a safeguarding response to teenage victims or perpetrators of intimate partner abuse, finding the best possible care when children cannot live at home, or creating the conditions that enable children to thrive and achieve. Children’s social workers play a crucial role within the wider multi-agency response, alongside other safeguarding partners, statutory and non-statutory, such as the police, schools, and health, to help protect children.

261. All social workers must meet Social Work England’s (SWE) professional standards for registration (and initial training must prepare new social workers to meet these standards). [Professional Standards Guidance](#) that social workers must use social work theories, models, and research, alongside the evidence from assessments, in making their professional judgements. In responding to domestic abuse, this might include taking into account known risk factors associated with domestic abuse such as pregnancy,¹⁵² as well as co-occurrence with other factors, including adult mental ill-health and substance use.¹⁵³ It is important that social workers continue to develop their knowledge and skills through continuing professional development; this should include an understanding of the different forms of domestic abuse. All social workers are required to undertake development and training and upload a record of this to maintain their registration with SWE. Training should be bespoke and specifically address experiences and needs of children and young people with diverse identities and backgrounds.
262. Once children and family social workers are qualified there are clear expectations in Post Qualifying Standards (PQS) under the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#). The ‘Post-Qualifying Standard: Knowledge and Skills Statement for Children and Family Practitioners’ sets out, for example, the expectation that child and family social workers have the knowledge and skills to identify the impact of domestic abuse and work with other professionals to ensure vulnerable adults are safeguarded and children are protected.
263. Given the insidious and often hidden nature of domestic abuse, it is critical that social workers employ professional curiosity to recognise patterns of behaviour over time. Social workers should understand the stigma and fear that victims may have when disclosing domestic abuse, including the fear by the non-abusive parent of the possibility of having their children removed, should they disclose abuse. They should also be alive to the ways in which perpetrators might seek to manipulate them or other professionals. This stigma may be compounded by intersecting factors which may create further barriers in disclosure. Social workers should have the ability to build empathic and trusting relationships to seek to overcome this, understanding the nuances of each situation and working with the victim’s wishes where possible.

¹⁵² Yakubovich, A, et al. [Risk and protective factors for intimate partner violence against women: Systematic review and meta-analyses of prospective-longitudinal studies](#): American Public Health Association: 2018: 108(7).

¹⁵³ Humphreys, C, Regan, L, River, D, & Thiara, RK. [Domestic Violence and Substance Use: Tackling Complexity](#): The British Journal of Social Work: 2005: 35(8), 1303–1320.

264. The statutory guidance '[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)' is clear that practitioners should always take a child-centred approach, keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families. Practitioners should see and speak to children, listen to them, and take their views seriously, working with them and their families in deciding how to support their needs. Special provision should be put in place to support dialogue with children who have communication difficulties and/or language barriers.
265. Practitioners work most effectively when they are able to combine practical, theoretical, therapeutic and systemic knowledge. Within the statutory system, social workers must look to understand and consider the wishes of the child where possible.
266. Effective social work practice will build on an understanding that a full disclosure – from an adult or child victim – can take time and trust. Practitioners should not focus wholly on disclosure and recognise that its absence does not necessarily mean that abuse is not occurring. This includes understanding the different effects domestic abuse can have on children and how these effects present in their behaviour (set out in the '[Impact on child victims](#)' section in '[Chapter 4 – Impact of Domestic Abuse](#)').
267. Efforts should be made to provide support for children to maintain and sustain relationships with the non-abusive parent, and to direct the professional focus on working with the whole family, including any children living outside the home, to help them to be safe and recover. Social workers should view every family member as one part of a complex picture. Practitioners should seek to understand the parent-child relationships taking place, identifying the harmful impacts of the domestic abuse, and recognising the links between a perpetrator's abuse and their parenting, holding them to account accordingly. However, careful consideration should be given to the safety of the victim and non-abusive parent, and it may not always be appropriate or safe for services to engage the perpetrator at the same time. Services should also ensure an appropriate balance of responsibility on protecting the child involved and should be clear that accountability for the harm caused lies with the perpetrator. It is important that there are multiple channels of engagement to challenge perpetrators to identify, understand and change behaviour. This should not sit solely within the criminal justice system.¹⁵⁴
268. Social workers should also be aware of the ways in which perpetrators may attempt to use the relationship between the non-abusive parent and child as a tool of coercive control. They may also seek to manipulate the relationship between the child and the non-abusive parent.
269. If children and families are to receive help at the right time, practitioners who come into contact with them have a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. Detail on multi-agency working to safeguard children is included in '[Chapter 7 - Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)'.

¹⁵⁴ Department for Education. [Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, Whole Family Approaches to Tackling Domestic Abuse](#): 2017.

270. The local authority and its social workers have specific roles and responsibilities to lead the statutory assessment of children in need and to lead child protection enquiries, including for children in families with no recourse to public funds.

271. Within one working day of a referral being received, a local authority social worker should acknowledge receipt to the referrer and make a decision about next steps and the type of response required. This will include determining whether:

- the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required;
- the child is in need and should be accessed under section 17 of the [Children Act 1989](#);
- there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and whether enquiries should be made and the child assessed under section 47 of the [Children Act 1989](#);
- any services are required by the child and family and what type of services;
- further specialist assessments are required to help the local authority to decide what further action to take;
- to see the child as soon as possible, if the decision is taken that the referral requires further assessment.

Every assessment should draw relevant information gathered from the child and their family and for relevant practitioners including teachers, school staff, early years workers, health practitioners, the police, and adult social care.

272. The 2017 joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) on [The multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse-agency response to children living with domestic abuse](#), conducted by Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), advises on good practice in this area. The report highlights to the importance of striking a balance between responding to immediate individual crises, and developing long-term solutions for the family, including attending to the overall needs of children. Understanding the emotional and psychological impact of domestic abuse is extremely challenging, and social workers will draw on a wide range of skills in assessing and responding effectively.

273. The JTAI also highlighted the need to:

- develop age-appropriate tools to understand the range of risks that children face;
- adopt a systematic focus on the perpetrator's behaviour rather than just focusing on the victim as the sole solution; and
- help schools support victims and families, particularly given the protective role education can play when the impact of domestic abuse is fully understood and taken into account.

274. It is important for social workers to work in partnership with children, families and professionals, being both authoritative and empathic and recognising the shame, fear

and resistance that can surround domestic abuse. In doing so, they can draw on the key features of effective practice, including using a strengths-based and systemic approach, doing skilled direct work and reflective supervision and practice within their organisation, such as group case discussions.

275. Successful whole family approaches utilise multi-disciplinary teams that can tackle issues on multiple fronts and share responsibility and risk across professionals. It is vital that social workers work effectively across all safeguarding agencies, including health and police professionals, in response to domestic abuse, including joint visits and approaches where appropriate, and adopt a timely flow of information to ensure plans and interventions are aligned. This includes children's and adults' specialists and, where available, local specialist domestic abuse services should be involved. A focus on underlying issues including mental health and substance misuse is important in order to break cycles of disengagement and reoffending.
276. The co-location of specialists can help facilitate multi-disciplinary working particularly in places where families already know and feel comfortable. There should be data-sharing within, and between, teams, including qualitative recording of families' experiences of working with professionals. Separate workers for victims and perpetrators and for adults and children, operating within the same team, can be crucial to building families' trust and ensuring safety.¹⁵⁵

Box 6.2: Case Study – Whole-system approach to safeguarding children

Case Study

Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding is an innovative whole-system approach to safeguarding children and young people. It was developed in 2014 by Hertfordshire County Council using Department for Education Innovation Programme funding. It is currently being rolled out as part of the Department for Education's Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme.

The approach places specialist mental health practitioners, domestic abuse workers, probation officers and children's social workers together in a Family Safeguarding team to give direct help to parents. Hertfordshire started to adopt this practice model in 2015 and have seen significant improved outcomes for children and their families.

Adopting a whole family approach makes it easy for parents to access all the support they need from within one team, to help them deal with the complex issues of domestic abuse, mental health and drug/alcohol abuse that harm their lives and those of their children. Staff are also trained in Motivational Interviewing, a technique used to support behaviour change, tapping into the strengths and resources within the family and wider support network to ensure vulnerable children and families are safeguarded.

¹⁵⁵ Department for Education. [Children's Social Care Innovation Programme](#): 2017.

As a result, Hertfordshire saw the number of children on child protection plans reduce by 55% in just 30 months. Children’s exposure to harmful parental behaviours drastically reduced, and at the same time their school attendance and life chances improved. It also achieved a 39% reduction in the number of days children spent in care, for cases allocated to the safeguarding team, a 53% drop in hospital admissions for adults in that family, and a 66% reduction in contact with the police.

This approach is one of three models that is being rolled out to 17 local authorities as part of the [Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme](#).

Adult Social Care

277. Victims of domestic abuse may also have care and support needs and already have involvement with safeguarding agencies. Individuals, who have care and support needs, may be particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse from intimate partners or family members, who may use the fact that they have caring responsibilities as a cover for their abuse. See sections on ‘[Controlling or coercive behaviour](#)’ and ‘[Economic abuse](#)’ in ‘[Chapter 3 – Recognising Domestic abuse](#)’.

278. The [Care Act 2014](#)¹⁵⁶ specifies that freedom from abuse and neglect is a key aspect of a person’s wellbeing – this includes domestic abuse. The adult safeguarding provisions in the [Care Act 2014](#) apply to an adult who appears to have needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting those needs), is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and, as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from the risk of, or the experience of, that abuse or neglect.¹⁵⁷

279. Under the [Care Act 2014](#), a local authority has duties to:

- Make, or cause to be made, enquiries if it has reasonable cause to suspect that the adult is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect;
- Determine whether any action should be taken, if so by whom, and what that action should be. All local authorities have safeguarding adult procedures to support such enquiries and coordinate action with partner organisations;
- Arrange for independent advocacy to be available to adults who have difficulty in taking part in the process, and where there is no other appropriate adult to assist;
- Co-operate with other agencies;
- Establish a Safeguarding Adults Board for its area to provide assurance that local safeguarding arrangements and partners are acting to help and protect adults that are at risk of abuse or neglect. Safeguarding Adult Boards also have

¹⁵⁶ In Wales, refer to the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#).

¹⁵⁷ See paragraph 14.2 of the [Care and Support Statutory Guidance](#).

the authority to carry out Safeguarding Adult Reviews where an adult with care and support needs has suffered serious harm, neglect, or death; and

- Establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice, including on how to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of an adult who has needs for care and support.

280. As well as the specific statutory duties to safeguard adults with care and support needs, local authorities have a number of general duties under Part 1 of the [Care Act 2014](#). These include a duty to promote individual wellbeing and prevent needs for care and support developing, by promoting individuals' personal dignity; emotional, social and economic wellbeing; participation in society; and control over their day-to-day lives. In addition, there are specific duties to undertake a needs (and where applicable) carer's needs assessment. Both local domestic abuse and safeguarding adults' protocols will apply to situations where a person, who has care and support needs that prevent them from safeguarding themselves, is experiencing domestic abuse. Safeguarding work should ensure that the person experiencing abuse has support to access a choice of specialist domestic abuse services and that there is partnership working with health and social care providers, housing and criminal justice agencies, as well as specialist domestic abuse and advocacy services.

281. The [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#) ('the 2005 Act') also offers protections against abuse, including domestic abuse, by creating the criminal offences of ill treatment and wilful neglect of a person who lacks capacity under section 44 of the 2005 Act. The offences may apply to anyone who has the care of the person, an attorney acting under a lasting power of attorney or an enduring power of attorney, and deputies appointed by the court. The offences carry a penalty of a fine, a maximum of five years imprisonment, or both. The 2005 Act also created the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) which registers Lasting Powers of Attorney and supervises deputies appointed by the Court of Protection. If finance or health and welfare concerns are raised with the OPG about an attorney or deputy, it can investigate, working with other organisations (such as local authorities or the NHS, where appropriate).

282. Potential indicators which may indicate that closer review and possible investigation might be needed include a change in living conditions, inability to pay bills, unexplained shortage of money, the unexplained loss or misplacement of financial documents and sudden or unexpected changes in a will or other financial documents. See also the '[Economic abuse](#)' section. [The Care and support statutory guidance](#) acts as key supporting guidance to the [Care Act 2014](#), including setting out the role of the Principal Social Worker and local authorities, and covering adult safeguarding procedures. It is crucial that adult social workers receive regular, updated domestic abuse training.

Health

283. Health is not a reserved matter and it is within the legislative competence of the Senedd, therefore information in this section only applies to England. It is relevant to

health professionals in England whether working within NHS commissioned services or local authority commissioned health services such as 0 to 19 services, sexual health and drug and alcohol treatment services.

Role and structures

284. Health professionals not only interact with victims of abuse regularly, but they may also interact regularly with every member of the household including children. They are trusted professionals who can often have access to patients on their own during times of increased vulnerability, including during pregnancy for women. This access can result in high volumes of disclosures of abuse. As a result, health professionals are ideally placed to identify and respond to the needs of victims, perpetrators and children and must be supported appropriately to do so.

285. Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) frequently cite health professionals as those with the best chance of taking action, and [analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews](#) has shown the significant role that health professionals play. Some victims may be long-term patients which reinforces the importance of the relationship with health professionals.

286. The [Health and Care Act 2022](#) builds upon the work of voluntary Integrated Care Systems, by establishing 42 Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), and requiring the creation of Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) in each system area across England. This will empower local health and care leaders to join up planning and provision of services, both within the NHS and with local authorities, and help deliver more person-centred and preventative care. The ICB will take on the commissioning functions of the CCG as well as some of NHS England's commissioning functions. It will also be jointly accountable for NHS spend and performance within the system. This will put more power and autonomy in the hands of local systems, to plan and deliver seamless health and social care services. The ICP will be tasked with promoting partnership arrangements, and developing a plan to address the health, social care and public health needs of their population. The ICB and local authorities will have to have regard to that plan when making decisions. Responding to and preventing domestic abuse should be a strategic priority for both ICBs and ICPs and should be the responsibility of all healthcare professionals working within a system. An ICS is expected to have a joined up, collaborative response to domestic abuse across its geographical footprint.

287. In relation to roles and responsibilities:

- ICB senior leadership – will have statutory safeguarding responsibilities and be subject to a statutory requirement to contribute to needs assessment for safe accommodation. The [Health and Care Act 2022](#) amended the [NHS Act 2006](#) to require ICBs and their partner NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts to set out any steps they propose to take to address the particular needs of victims of abuse (including domestic abuse) when developing their 5-year Joint Forward Plans.
- ICPs – will have a statutory responsibility to develop a strategy addressing how the health, public health, and social care needs, identified in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments will be met by commissioners. Health and Wellbeing

Boards should ensure that the health and care needs of those impacted by domestic abuse, are reflected in their Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, so that these needs can be addressed in local and system-wide decision making.

Enquiries

288. There is a need for all frontline staff in public services to be trained to make enquiries into domestic abuse to ensure they are Making Every Contact Count.¹⁵⁸ To provide the best support to victims of domestic abuse, it is essential that healthcare staff have the tools and confidence required to identify potential victims, sensitively, intervene at an early stage where possible, and refer on as appropriate. It is critical that all health professionals understand the need to enquire about domestic abuse, and how to do this safely, if they are concerned that a patient may be experiencing or perpetrating it.
289. All staff working in the NHS must undertake level 1 safeguarding training as a minimum, and this training includes domestic abuse as a module. Further training is required for different occupational groups (Levels 2-3) and specific roles (Levels 4-5). The intercollegiate documents for safeguarding children and adults provide clear frameworks to identify the role and competencies required for all healthcare staff. The frameworks also include specific detail for chief executives, chairs, board members (including executives non-executives and lay members). Each level will have an assigned minimum training requirement.
290. There is a range of guidance available and relevant to different healthcare settings aimed at helping staff make relevant and appropriate enquiries in a sensitive manner and at the right time. Department of Health and Social care (DHSC) provides online domestic abuse resource for health professionals, a Quality Standard for Domestic Abuse has been published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Institute of Health Professionals working in conjunction with the Royal Colleges of Nursing and General Practitioners have developed a series of e-learning and training modules. It is recommended that healthcare professionals follow the specific guidance required for their practice and at the requisite level.
291. NICE guidelines state that being trained to respond to disclosure (Level 1) and how to ask about domestic abuse (Level 2) is essential for safe enquiry about experiences of domestic abuse and a consistent and appropriate response. Staff should understand the epidemiology of domestic violence and abuse, how it affects people's lives and their own role, and that of other professionals, in intervening safely. Staff should be adequately trained in recognising domestic abuse and how to respond in practice. They should also be updated on local policy, protocols for identifying and assessing risk, information sharing, and pathways to and from specialist domestic abuse services.

¹⁵⁸ Agenda. [Ask and Take Action](#): why public services must ask about domestic abuse: 2019.

292. Health and social care service managers and professionals should ensure trained staff in antenatal, postnatal, reproductive care, sexual health, alcohol or drug misuse, mental health, children's, and vulnerable adults' services ask service users whether they have experienced domestic abuse. This should be a routine part of good clinical practice, even where there are no indicators of such abuse.
293. Findings from the Pathfinder Project¹⁵⁹ highlighted that health professionals feel better able to enquire about domestic abuse if their Integrated Care System and primary care networks supported the placement of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) or other accredited domestic abuse peer advocacy programme. These specialised trauma-informed services might then be best placed to follow up with any disclosures of abuse; a greater understanding of local referral pathways; specialist recovery and peer advocacy services to which they can refer or signpost victims, survivors or perpetrators dependent upon their unique situation.
294. Healthcare professionals should seek to create opportunities to speak to patients without the presence of others to facilitate the opportunity for abuse to be disclosed. Appropriately qualified professional interpreters should be used where needed to mitigate the risk of reliance on those who may be attending with the victim. Health professionals should not be relying on family members or partners for interpretation services when enquiring about domestic abuse. There is a significant risk that people experiencing domestic abuse may be less likely to disclose abuse with someone they know in the room. It may increase the risk to the victim if they disclose abuse in front of the perpetrator or someone who could share that information with the perpetrator. Health professionals are often the only professionals with an optimal opportunity to speak privately and safely with victims of domestic abuse and therefore should ensure that where possible, only professional, and independent interpreters are used. Speaking with victims alone can be difficult. For example, speaking with women alone can be difficult within maternity services. Pregnant women may be accompanied by their partners, family members or friends in attending antenatal appointments or making ultrasound scan visits. Whilst this is challenging, considering domestic abuse can start or exacerbate during pregnancy seeking to create opportunities for private discussion can be crucial. See '[Pregnancy](#)' section in '[Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)'.
295. Recognising the increase in remote healthcare assessments, [guidance has been developed on routine enquiry within 'virtual' health settings](#). This guidance sets out steps to help health professionals identify and respond to those who may be at risk, and it can be applied to many areas where routine enquiries occur, for example maternity services as well as general practice.

Integrated response

296. To ensure joint local Health and Wellbeing Strategies, and the commissioning of relevant health and public health services, meet the needs of the local population, local

¹⁵⁹ See [Pathfinder Toolkit](#). 2020.

health and public health partners should work together. This can be achieved through the Health and Wellbeing Board, to produce a needs assessment and this should include consideration of domestic abuse victims. The CSEW for the year ending March 2018, found that 33% of victims experiencing partner abuse received medical attention as a result of physical injuries and other effects. Around one in five partner abuse victims reported telling healthcare professionals about this abuse.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, it is vital health professionals are supported, via specialist training and partnership working, to respond effectively and ensure victims have an effective non-criminal justice-based support option available to them.

297. For different bodies with the Health and Care System, working together is crucial. Care in the health service can be fragmented and patients may not have continuity of care. In England, the [Health and Care Act 2022](#) will increase integration between health and social care and embed more power and autonomy in the hands of local systems, to deliver seamless health and social care services.
298. Poor information recording and inadequate information sharing within the health service and between health and other organisations are recurring themes in multi-agency reviews of death and/or serious harm in domestic abuse cases.¹⁶¹ A multitude of factors hinder good recording and sharing - such as lack of training, lack of time, and concerns about perpetrators seeing the information. Health professionals should record and share information about suspected and actual abuse accurately to better support victims of domestic abuse. ICBs may seek to adopt and embed the good practice recommendations for recording and sharing information about domestic abuse in health services from the Pathfinder consortium commissioned report on recording and sharing information, where these are applicable.
299. Health services should be encouraged and supported to set up robust partnerships with local domestic abuse specialist services and build referral pathways that are clear and easily accessible, to ensure staff feel confident to respond to victims. The NHS has a key role in providing care and support to victims of domestic abuse, including children, and babies through a wide range of health care services, including services for physical and mental health. Staff working in the NHS can help to identify victims and potential victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse and provide, signpost or refer them to appropriate support, for example to local safeguarding arrangements, specialist domestic abuse services, and/or the local Sexual Assault and Abuse Services Pathway for cases where domestic abuse has included sexual violence.
300. In line with the NHS key principle that care should be based on clinical priority, health services should ensure that any and all victims of domestic abuse and their children are not unduly disadvantaged in accessing physical and mental health services when they are forced to move to new accommodation in a different area.

¹⁶⁰ ONS. 2018. [Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

¹⁶¹ Home Office. [Domestic Homicide Reviews, Key findings from analysis of domestic homicide reviews](#): 2016.

301. Working together across agencies helps to provide support for victims. This may include attending local domestic abuse or violence against women and girls strategic group meetings, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) and engaging with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). For more information on these see '[Chapter 7 – Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse](#)'.
302. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published its [Quality Standard for Domestic Abuse](#) in March 2016.¹⁶² This includes identifying and supporting people experiencing domestic abuse, as well as referring to specialist services for those perpetrating domestic abuse. It also covers children and young people (under 16) who are living with/experiencing domestic abuse.
303. Health professionals can refer to the [Pathfinder toolkit](#) as good practice, taking an integrated healthcare response to domestic abuse, and a systematic approach to transforming the health sector's response to domestic abuse. The toolkit combines all elements of evidence-based good practice, this includes:
- partnership working across health and specialist services;
 - specialist interventions such as the IRIS programme in general practices;
 - Domestic Abuse Coordinators and IDVAs in acute and mental health settings;
 - sustainable specialist training, policies and procedures; and
 - accurate data collection and information sharing.
304. The model works across acute, mental health and general practice settings, so that all victims have access to the support they need and further harm can be prevented. Early qualitative findings from the independent evaluation of Pathfinder¹⁶³ underscored the value of the whole-health model in creating the opportunities and pathways needed so that victims could find safety.
305. A whole-health model response to domestic abuse goes beyond training and stand-alone interventions. It requires a change in the culture of health services and partnership working with specialist domestic abuse services. Key to implementing these changes is monitoring and accountability. A coordinated and systemic approach lies at the heart of this work and is critical in ensuring sustainability and a safer and more effective response to domestic abuse.
306. The Inter-Collegiate and Agency Domestic Violence Abuse (INCADVA) forum is a policy forum which brings together the expertise and knowledge of national health and social care bodies, medical royal colleges and the domestic abuse sector. INCADVA

¹⁶² NICE also covers Wales, however, in this context NICE is interacting with a devolved health service that is under differing legislative duties, and this needs to be considered by professionals.

¹⁶³ Pathfinder was a 3-year fixed-term pilot project that brought together expertise and funding for specialist domestic abuse interventions to embed a 'Whole Health' approach to domestic abuse in 8 sites across England. The project ended in March 2020 and was led by Standing Together in partnership with four expert partners Against Violence and Abuse (AVA), Imkaan, IRISi and SafeLives.

have recommended a list of actions to highlight the vital role of the healthcare system in responding to domestic abuse, including:

- Implementing the IRIS¹⁶⁴ (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) Programme. IRIS is an evidence-based intervention to improve the general practice response to domestic abuse through training, support to practice teams and having a DA specialist embedded in practices. It is nationally recognised as best practice and has informed NICE guidance.
- The co-location of specialist Health IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) within health settings. A SafeLives report *A Cry for Health*¹⁶⁵ provides extensive evidence around the benefits of this intervention in acute hospitals and other studies find similar results when specialists are located in mental health settings.
- The establishment of a Domestic Abuse Coordinator and the implementation of a Domestic Abuse Champions Network. These have been core elements of the good practice that has emerged as part of the Pathfinder project.
- Ensuring that victims have priority and timely access to specialist mental health support services, which are adequately and consistently funded, and available across the country to all victims, regardless of their immigration status.¹⁶⁶
- Long-term public health messaging to challenge public attitudes to domestic abuse.
- Representation from mental health services on advisory panels, in addition to the wider health service representation.

307. In December 2021, the Department of Health and Social Care published [the Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England](#), to be followed with the publication of the strategy. The Vision set out the overarching ambition of improving the health and wellbeing of women and girls in England based on the life course approach. The Strategy will set out actions both on issues that only affect women and girls, and on issues that affect everyone but which have sex-based differences in prevalence, experience or outcomes. It will detail delivery plans against the themes (women's voices, healthcare policies and services, information and education, health in the workplace, research evidence and data) and against specific health needs and conditions.

308. Pharmacies also play a role in providing community based support to victims of domestic abuse, for example, the Home Office funds the [Ask for ANI](#) 'Action Needed

¹⁶⁴ See [About the IRIS programme - IRISi](#).

¹⁶⁵ SafeLives, [A cry for health: Why we must invest on domestic abuse services in hospitals](#). 2016.

¹⁶⁶ Charges for people who are not ordinarily resident in the UK in respect of relevant NHS services in England is set out in the [National Health Service \(Charges to Overseas Visitors\) Regulations](#). Treatment for physical or mental condition caused by domestic abuse is free of charge to everyone.

Immediately' codeword scheme which allows victims of domestic abuse to ask for 'ANI' and access emergency support from the safety of their local pharmacy.

Housing

309. Housing is not a reserved matter and is within the legislative competence of the Senedd, therefore information in this section only applies to England.

Role and approach

310. Alternative housing options, whether refuges, social housing, or private accommodation¹⁶⁷, are key to ensuring victims are able to escape domestic abuse, and factor strongly in a victim's decision making about whether they stay or leave a perpetrator. As the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated at home¹⁶⁸, housing providers can play a unique role in supporting victims of abuse who are their tenants and reporting perpetrators where appropriate. Some local authorities offer sanctuary schemes and support for victims to stay in their own home where it is safe to do so. Housing services may consider re-housing the perpetrator in certain circumstances rather than the victim.

311. It is vital that housing providers are able to recognise and respond to the signs of domestic abuse. A report by SafeLives identified the risk of misdiagnosing the effects of domestic abuse as Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).¹⁶⁹ Housing providers should employ professional curiosity when faced with all cases, even if domestic abuse is not immediately suspected. Abuse may manifest as multiple moves in quick succession; a refusal to let housing officers into the property; neighbour complaints or damage to property. Housing officers should recognise the impact of wrongly criminalising victims in such instances and consider safety planning and specialist support for the victim if action is taken against the perpetrator.

312. The Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) is a partnership that has established the first domestic abuse accreditation for housing providers. It aims to improve the housing sector's response to domestic abuse through the introduction and adoption of an established set of standards and an accreditation process. The DAHA has produced a toolkit which sets out the steps that housing providers should take to become accredited.

313. In addition, the DAHA has led the introduction of a [Whole Housing Approach](#) to domestic abuse in partnership with groups that include Surviving Economic Abuse and Safer London. The programme is being piloted in three local areas (London 'three boroughs', Cambridgeshire and Stockton). The programme aims to raise awareness of domestic abuse within all housing sectors and improve outcomes for victims so they

¹⁶⁷ This is a non-exhaustive list, depending on an individual's circumstances different options may be available.

¹⁶⁸ HMICFRS. [Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse](#): 2015.

¹⁶⁹ SafeLives. [Safe at Home: The case for a response to domestic abuse by housing providers](#): 2018.

can achieve stable housing and live safely. It recognises the diversity in both the housing needs of victims and the approaches required across different tenures, including social and private renting, and privately owned, to identify how they can be part of an effective response.

Homelessness and domestic abuse victims' priority need for accommodation

314. Many victims of domestic abuse must leave their homes and the area where they live to escape abuse.
315. Victims who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse have priority need for accommodation. This means local housing authorities have a duty to secure accommodation for victims of domestic abuse if they are homeless through no fault of their own and eligible for assistance. The accommodation provided must be suitable in relation to the applicant and to all members of their household who normally reside with them, or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.
316. The [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#)¹⁷⁰ states that in formulating their homelessness strategies, housing authorities should consider the particular needs that victims of domestic abuse have for safe accommodation, this could include implementing a reciprocal agreement with other housing authorities and providers to facilitate out of area moves for victims of domestic abuse. There are a number of potential accommodation options for victims of domestic abuse, and housing authorities will need to consider which are most appropriate for each person on a case-by-case basis, taking into account their circumstances and needs.
317. Housing authorities should consider whether mixed sex accommodation is appropriate and seek to provide single sex accommodation where this is required. Some women may feel safer in single sex accommodation. The [Equality Act 2010](#) allows for the provision of separate or single sex services in certain circumstances. Limiting a service on the basis of sex (and in certain circumstances gender reassignment) must be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. The Equality and Human Rights Commission acknowledges that a legitimate aim could be for reasons of privacy, decency, to ensure health and safety or to prevent trauma. An example of this could include imposing such limitations on access by males, or by a transgender person whether or not they have a Gender Recognition Certificate, to a domestic abuse refuge offering emergency accommodation to female victims. For full details see the guidance [Separate and single-sex service providers: a guide on the Equality Act sex and gender reassignment provisions](#).
318. It is important that victims have spaces where they feel safe and can be provided with trauma-informed support. Safe accommodation settings such as domestic abuse

¹⁷⁰ In Wales, refer to [Part 2 of the Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#).

refuges should be single sex¹⁷¹, secure and dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse. The approach to the services and support commissioned should consider the particular needs of all victims in the area and authorities must consider their Public Sector Equality Duty under the [Equality Act 2010](#). All support within safe accommodation should be delivered by knowledgeable and/or experienced specialist providers, charities, and other voluntary organisations whose purpose is to provide support to victims of domestic abuse. This support should meet the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Quality Standards, Women’s Aid National Quality Standards, Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards, Male Domestic Abuse Network Service Standards or DAHA Accreditation Framework for Housing Providers.

319. Local authorities have a duty under Part 4 of the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) (‘the 2021 Act’) to provide safe accommodation. This duty requires that tier one authorities assess the need for accommodation-based support for victims of domestic abuse in their area and use the funding provided through Part 4 of the 2021 Act to supply this. Tier one and tier two local authorities need to work together to establish what support is needed at safe accommodation in the local authority area.
320. The duty under Part 4 of the 2021 Act is a strategic duty rather than a duty owed to individuals. Where an eligible applicant approaches their local authority as homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse, the local authority has a duty to treat the household as priority need for homeless assistance, and provide suitable accommodation as set out under Part 7 of the [Housing Act 1996](#) and in the Homelessness Code of Guidance, rather than a duty to secure safe accommodation that meets the Part 4 requirements. Housing authorities must consider all of a household’s circumstances and needs when determining the suitability of accommodation, including personal safety, and local authorities may review placements on request. The regulations and statutory guidance on relevant accommodation provides information for housing authorities securing suitable accommodation for victims who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse. There is further information on Part 4 of the 2021 Act below.
321. Housing authorities should also consider the needs of people who are rough sleeping or hidden homeless in formulating their approach to housing domestic abuse victims. Annual statutory homelessness statistics for 2020 to 2021 show that 31,180 households (12%) recorded ‘domestic abuse’ as their main reason for being homeless or threatened with homelessness.¹⁷² Where victims are rough sleeping, the risk of further abuse on the streets is significant.

¹⁷¹ It is permitted to provide single sex accommodation and services in safe accommodation. See the statutory guidance on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-support-within-safe-accommodation/delivery-of-support-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse-in-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-services>.

¹⁷² Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). [Statutory Homelessness Annual Report, 2020-21, England](#): 2020.

Housing response

322. Housing providers should have policies in place to identify and respond to domestic abuse. The [White Paper on Social Housing](#) sets out that the Regulator of Social Housing will make clear that landlords should have a policy setting out how they tackle issues surrounding domestic abuse, working with other agencies as appropriate.¹⁷³
323. Victims can experience many incidents of abuse before calling the police or reporting it to another agency. Housing providers may be able to identify abuse at earlier stages and should consider how they can best provide support to their residents. By understanding the indicators of domestic abuse through training and professional development, housing officers can increase their confidence to speak to people experiencing abuse, risk assess and safety plan alongside them.
324. Housing providers should carefully consider the nature and effects of domestic abuse with regards to the needs of victims, including tactics used by a perpetrator which have financial and safety implications for victims. For example, research identified impacts related to the fact that where a victim and perpetrator have a joint tenancy or mortgage they will be jointly and severally responsible for any liabilities. This may result in victims being liable for arrears or repairs when the perpetrator refuses to pay – a form of economic abuse - or fearing for their safety if unable to change locks without prior agreement from a landlord, letting agent or mortgage provider.¹⁷⁴ See section on '[Economic abuse](#)' for more information.
325. Safety should be at the core of the housing response to domestic abuse. Housing authorities and housing providers should also be alert to the wider role they play in ensuring victim safety. Procedures should be in place to keep all information on victims safe and secure. In many cases, particularly where extended family members or multiple perpetrators may be involved, perpetrators go to great lengths to seek information on victims. The housing authority and providers should be alert to the possibility of employees being, or having links to, perpetrators. Housing authorities should not disclose information about an applicant to anybody outside the organisation without consent. Authorities should consider safety when sharing information and ensure information sharing is relevant, necessary and proportionate for the purpose for which it is being shared, and that the lawful basis for sharing information is clear. In some circumstances, it may be necessary to restrict access to cases where abuse is disclosed to only named members of staff.
326. Housing authorities should work co-operatively with other local authorities and commissioners to provide services to tackle domestic abuse. Local authorities should

¹⁷³ The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will undertake a consultation on the impacts of joint tenancy law on domestic abuse victims. This is in recognition of the fact that the current rules on joint tenancies mean that periodic and social housing tenancies can be ended by either tenant, without the consent of the other. Victims who are in a periodic joint tenancy with a perpetrator can therefore be vulnerable to the threat of being made homeless by perpetrators. The consultation aims to consider ways to support victims and reduce the risk of homelessness.

¹⁷⁴ Walker, SJ, Hester, M. [Policy Evidence Summary 4: Justice, housing and domestic abuse, the experiences of homeowners and private renters](#). Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance: 2019.

assess the accommodation-based support needs of all domestic abuse victims, including children as stated in section 57 of the 2021 Act. This includes ensuring there is support specifically for victims with unique and/or complex needs, such as mental health advice and support, drug and alcohol advice and support, as well as signposting accordingly. Local authorities should also ensure that the appropriate and adequate support within safe accommodation meets the needs of all victims including those with multiple and complex needs and whose support needs may not be able to be met within generic domestic abuse safe accommodation, such as victims with mental health and/or substance misuse needs. See '[Chapter 5 – Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)' for further information.

327. Housing officers and homelessness commissioners should be involved in multi-agency working, including by being part of local safeguarding arrangements such as Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) or MARACs.

Safe Accommodation

328. Part 4 of the 2021 Act introduces a statutory duty on local authorities, placing clearer accountability on local areas to ensure the needs of victims within refuges and other forms of domestic abuse safe accommodation are met in a consistent way across England. Under these duties, tier one authorities (county councils, unitary councils outside London, and the Greater London Authority and the Council of the Isles of Scilly) in England are required to appoint a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to support local needs assessments and local strategies.

329. Tier one authorities are required to effectively commission services based on a local strategy informed by a robust needs assessment, and report back annually to Government. The annual reporting requirement will help the Government and others to monitor how the new duties on local authorities are working, understand where there may be challenges and how the funding is being used, and help identify and disseminate good practice. The Part 4 duty also requires tier two authorities in two-tier areas (District Councils in areas with a County Council, and London Boroughs) to co-operate with the lead tier one authority.

330. Under the duties, local authorities should consider the specific accommodation-based support needs of all victims in its area, including those with particular protected characteristics, and/or multiple complex needs. Relevant safe accommodation includes refuge accommodation, specialist safe accommodation, dispersed accommodation, second stage accommodation or other accommodation designated by the local authority, registered social landlord or registered charity as domestic abuse emergency accommodation.

331. Under these duties, authorities cannot provide support in 'bed and breakfast' accommodation¹⁷⁵ and support should not be provided in any shared, mixed sex

¹⁷⁵ As defined in [The Domestic Abuse Support \(Relevant Accommodation\) Regulations 2021](#).

accommodation as this would not be in line with the descriptions of safe accommodation in the relevant regulations or guidance. Where a victim is in this type of accommodation and the authority identifies that they require support, the authority may deem it appropriate to work with the housing authority to ensure that support can be provided in the appropriate relevant safe accommodation. If a victim does not require support in safe accommodation, then local housing authorities will need to continue to comply with their duties under homelessness legislation in line with Chapter 21 of the [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#).

332. Refuge services are a core component of the housing response to domestic abuse which provide a crucial form of provision for victims, including children, who are no longer safe at home. However, some victims may not want to take up this option and some can face challenges in accessing support. These may include victims experiencing homelessness and facing multiple disadvantages related to mental health, substance abuse and having a disability. In addition, those from minority communities can also face challenges. Commissioners and providers should take an approach that is mindful of different needs and experiences, how they may intersect as well as any additional barriers and layers of discrimination faced by these groups when planning and delivering services.
333. There is a need to ensure that all victims are able to access safe accommodation irrespective of where they originally reside. Many victims fleeing domestic abuse will travel across borders to seek help and move away from the perpetrator. Women's Aid annual 2017 survey found that over two thirds of women in refuges were from a different local authority area.¹⁷⁶ The DLUHC has [published statutory guidance relating to Part 4 of the 2021 Act](#) that makes clear that tier one local authorities must meet the support needs of all victims residing in relevant accommodation including those who originally present from outside of the locality. This guidance includes reference to the appropriate quality standards to adhere to.
334. DLUHC has also produced [guidance on improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse who are in a refuge or other form of temporary accommodation](#). The guidance encourages housing authorities to use their existing powers to support victims to remain safely in their homes if they choose to do so. It makes clear that housing authorities are expected not to apply residency tests for victims who have fled to another district and sets out how they can ensure victims are given appropriate priority for social housing. In line with section 79 of the 2021 Act, the guidance requires local authorities and private registered providers of social housing to ensure that victims of domestic abuse who have a lifetime tenancy, or who have had a lifetime tenancy and have fled the social home to escape domestic abuse, retain their lifetime security of tenure if the landlord grants them a new tenancy for reasons connected with the abuse.

¹⁷⁶ Women's Aid. [Survival and Beyond: The Domestic Abuse Report 2017](#): 2018.

Local Criminal Justice Boards

335. An effective response by the criminal justice system is crucial in supporting victims of domestic abuse and ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice. Local criminal justice boards (LCJBs) are responsible for joining up local criminal justice agencies to achieve common aims and objectives including reducing crime, bringing more offenders to justice, and increasing public confidence. This can include activity to drive forward the adoption of the [Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework](#). LCJBs could be used by senior officers to monitor criminal justice responses to domestic abuse within agencies that sit on the boards.

Policing

336. Domestic abuse related offences represent 18% of all offences recorded by the police.¹⁷⁷ A review of domestic homicides and suspected victim suicides during the Covid-19 pandemic found that over half of suspects (58%) were previously known to the police as a suspect for any prior offending.¹⁷⁸ This review adopted a wide definition of domestic abuse related deaths which included child deaths in a domestic setting, unexplained or suspicious deaths, and suspected suicides of individuals with a known history of domestic abuse victimisation.

337. Incidents of domestic abuse should not be seen in isolation; by its nature domestic abuse involves repeat victimisation. Officers should consider the history and any patterns of behaviour to understand any incident within its wider context. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMCIFRS) reports on the police response to domestic abuse have indicated that there are a number of reasons why domestic abuse cases may not result in prosecutions.¹⁷⁹ A significant share of domestic abuse cases are withdrawn, with the victim not supporting police action. It is vital to work with victims in a trauma-informed way to support them through an investigation process and to prevent re-traumatisation. Victims may withdraw their support for prosecution if they experience a lack of communication, empathy and support. HMCIFRS has noted a huge variation between forces in the proportion of cases discontinued on the grounds that “victim does not support police action”. This varied across forces from less than 10 to over 40 per 100 domestic abuse related offences in the year ending March 2020.¹⁸⁰ The quality of the policing response plays a significant part in victim engagement in domestic abuse cases and can impact charge and conviction rates. The Government has committed to review the data in cases closed due to evidential difficulties or where the victim does not support police action.

338. The report found that delays in investigations, lack of contact and lengthy court processes more generally result in high levels of disengagement. Access to justice,

¹⁷⁷ ONS. [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#): data year ending March 2021.

¹⁷⁸ Bates, I., Hoeger, K, Stoneman M-J, Whitaker, A. Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP): [Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021](#): Home Office, VKPP, NPCC, College of Policing: 2021.

¹⁷⁹ [HMCIFRS reports, including update reports, on domestic abuse](#) are published on the organisation's website.

¹⁸⁰ HMCIFRS. [Police response to violence against women and girls: Final inspection report](#): 2021.

including long waiting times between a charge being made and a case being heard at court increase the risk of victims disengaging with the process.

339. The College of Policing has developed guidance – [Authorised Professional Practice](#) – which sets out principles and standards for officers in investigating domestic abuse. The guidance outlines the duty of officers to take positive action in all stages of the police response to domestic abuse to ensure that victims, including children are protected; criminal proceedings are pursued where appropriate; and that there is effective perpetrator management where criminal proceedings are not possible or suitable.¹⁸¹
340. Relevant [CPS guidance on domestic abuse](#) and associated offences is referenced in the '[Crown Prosecution Service](#)' section where topics related to police investigation are covered and are therefore applicable to officers as well as other professionals working on domestic abuse within the criminal justice system.
341. Controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or familial relationship has been a criminal offence since 2015 by virtue of section 76 of the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#) where the requirements of the offence are set out. Further information can be found in the [statutory guidance issued to police and criminal justice agencies under section 77 of that Act](#) about investigations of this offence. This guidance should be considered when investigating the offence. See also section on '[Controlling or coercive behaviour](#)'.
342. The police should adopt a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive approach¹⁸² and take into account the following when supporting victims of domestic abuse:
- An awareness of protected characteristics (as set out in section 4 of the [Equality Act 2010](#)) and any vulnerabilities that may impact on the victim and how they seek support, avoiding making assumptions based on stereotypes;
 - Barriers that may exist for victims to disclose information or seek support¹⁸³, for example: fear of the perpetrator; fear that they may not be believed; pressures from family or the community – in particular for those victims in rural or closed communities; negative past experiences with the police or services; a desire to make the relationship work; economic barriers; communication difficulties; not wanting to uproot the children or fear that the children will be taken into care; fear of repercussions related to insecure immigration status;
 - Building trust can help people to disclose;
 - An awareness that domestic abuse can involve the wider family particularly where there is 'honour'-based abuse or wider caring responsibilities;

¹⁸¹ For more information also see the College of Policing and NPCC's Policing Violence Against Women and Girls [National framework for delivery: Year 1](#) and [Outcomes and performance network](#).

¹⁸² See '[Impact on Victims](#)' section in '[Chapter 4 - Impact of Domestic Abuse](#)' for further information on a trauma-informed response.

¹⁸³ These barriers can intersect with barriers resulting from a victim's protected characteristic(s). See Chapter 5 '[Different experiences, needs and related considerations](#)'.

- Carry out safe enquiry, follow risk identification, assessment and management procedures, including the need to refer to an IDVA or Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC),
- Make referrals to local specialist support services as appropriate;
- Follow local procedures for safeguarding adults and children, including multi-agency safeguarding arrangements set out by the chief officer of police as a statutory safeguarding partner;
- Recognise the impact ‘first responders’ may have on children who see, hear or experience the abuse in a domestic abuse incident, ensuring premises are consistently checked for the presence of children (whether or not in the room during an incident) and children are actively listened to. Responders should also be trained to recognise vulnerability and signs of abuse during a call for service for domestic abuse. See the section on ‘[Education](#)’ for more information on Operation Encompass;
- Act to safeguard children by making a referral to social services where there are concerns about a child’s welfare;
- Consider whether the perpetrator also needs a response that offers the chance to change their behaviour and holds them to account if they continue with their abuse. The [Respect Phonenumber](#) can offer advice and information to perpetrators, their family and friends and to professionals, and can signpost to local Respect accredited programmes;
- Investigate the history of the relationship (as well as the perpetrator’s history with other victims) and recognise the dynamics including any power imbalance;
- Where substance misuse has occurred, be alert to the more complex dynamics that might exist meaning the abuse is not necessarily ‘alcohol-related violence’ and that the violence may be symptomatic of domestic abuse;¹⁸⁴
- Record any crimes and any previous incidents and place a domestic abuse flag on them, following National Crime Recording Standards. Consider that behaviours such as harassment and stalking may form part of the abuse but be recorded as separate offences;
- Consider whether an application under the ‘Right to Know’ route of the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#), also known as ‘Clare’s Law’, needs to be made;
- Provide the victim with accessible information about the criminal justice process and their rights under the [Victims’ Code](#);
- Be aware that perpetrators may raise counter or cross-allegations when reported by victims of abuse, and care should be taken to assess evidence and correctly identify victims and perpetrators, which can include family members.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ See, for example, Ward, M, et al. [Domestic Abuse and Change Resistant Drinkers: preventing and reducing the harm](#). Learning lessons from Domestic Homicide Reviews: Alcohol Concern, Against Violence & Abuse (AVA): 2016.

¹⁸⁵ For further information, see for example [Respect’s 2019 Toolkit for Work with Male Victims of Domestic Abuse](#).

In the event that a victim of abuse is reported as being a perpetrator by the real perpetrator, it is important that the victim should still be given support as a victim.

- Ensure victims of domestic abuse have an interpreter¹⁸⁶ (including BSL for deaf victims) or other communication accessibility support where required;
- Where appropriate, provide an intermediary (if the victim is particularly vulnerable)¹⁸⁷ or allow someone to sit with the victim during police interviews. This could be a supportive friend or family member (who is not a potential witness); this person should not be the child of the victim or perpetrator or any individual or member of the community where there is risk that they may disclose information shared by the victim with the perpetrator; and
- Consider and follow your force's positive action policy.

Link between victimisation and offending

343. Police and other criminal justice agencies should recognise the part domestic abuse can play in offending behaviour; this link is highlighted in the Ministry of Justice's [Female Offender Strategy](#). The response from criminal justice agencies to those affected can be pivotal in identifying domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity, offering support, and helping to break the cycle of victimisation and offending.

344. A range of offences may result from a victim's experience of abuse, including: handling stolen goods under threat of violence from a partner; possession of a controlled substance belonging to an abusive partner; use of force against an abusive partner or ex-partner; failure to ensure school attendance for fear of meeting an abusive partner or ex-partner.¹⁸⁸ Agencies should always consider the possible context of domestic abuse in female offending and emphasise a gender and trauma-responsive approach for supporting women at risk of entering the criminal justice system. See also the section on '[Offending](#)'.

Victims with insecure immigration status

345. Perpetrators of domestic violence can use insecure immigration status as a way to inflict abuse on the victim, for example, by way of threatening to tell the police or Home Office. When dealing with victims with insecure immigration status, police should treat all individuals who report domestic abuse as victims first. See the '[Immigration status and migrant victims](#)' section for guidance as to what support victims with insecure immigration status may be able to access.

¹⁸⁶ [The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse](#) provides guidance on the use of, and selection of, interpreters at the scene and during interviews.

¹⁸⁷ As outlined in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales \('the Victims Code'\), November 2020](#): victim, or witness, might need the help of a Registered Intermediary because of their age, a learning disability, a mental disorder or a physical disability that affects their ability to communicate. They are often the difference between a witness being able to give evidence or not.

¹⁸⁸ For further information on identifying perpetrators as victims see Respect [Toolkit for work with Male Victims of Domestic Abuse](#): 2019 edition.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

346. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ('DVDS'), also known as 'Clare's Law', as it was introduced following the murder of Clare Wood, by her former partner in Greater Manchester in 2009, is a policy framework, which provides for procedures enabling disclosure of information relating to previous violent conduct. Disclosures under this scheme are made using the police's common law powers to disclose information to prevent crime, here by disclosing to A, information relating to abusive, or violent, offending by A's current, or former, intimate partner, B. In order to be lawful, any such disclosure of information about B must be necessary to prevent crime, in this case, harm to A. Any disclosure must be proportionate to that aim, and must be in accordance with relevant over-arching legislation, for example the [Human Rights Act 1998](#), the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#). Police should consider the need to seek legal advice on the legality of using their common law disclosure powers in the context of the DVDS on a case-by-case basis.

347. The DVDS includes two routes for disclosing information:

- "Right to Ask" is triggered by a member of the public ("A" or someone acting on behalf of "A") applying to the police for a disclosure; and
- "Right to Know" is triggered by the police making a proactive decision to disclose information to protect a potential victim ("A or someone acting on behalf of A").

The DVDS was implemented across all police forces in England and Wales in March 2014. Once brought into force, section 77(1) of the 2021 Act will place a duty on the Secretary of State to issue guidance to chief officers of police about DVDS. Section 77(2) imposes a duty on chief officers of police to have regard to guidance issued under section 77(1). Placing a statutory duty on the police to have regard to the guidance, which means they must have a good, clear reason to depart from it, will help raise awareness of the scheme, increase the number of disclosures made to prevent harm and ensure that the scheme is used and applied consistently across all police forces. There is existing [non-statutory guidance](#) on the DVDS scheme, this guidance will be updated and re-issued as statutory guidance later in 2022.

Bail

348. Bail conditions are an important means of supporting the positive action of arrest. They offer protection for the alleged victim and witnesses while criminal offences are investigated or during criminal proceedings. If a suspect breaches bail conditions, they should be swiftly held to account. Bail can be applied for both pre-charge and post-charge:

- **Pre-charge bail:** Perpetrators may be released from police custody and subject to pre-charge bail before being charged, if it is necessary and proportionate to do so. If it is not necessary and proportionate to release on bail and there are no grounds for

further detention of the suspect, the suspect must either be 'Released Under Investigation' or released with 'No Further Action' taken. If released on bail, appropriate bail conditions can be applied if it is necessary in the circumstances, for instance to protect the suspect interfering with witnesses.¹⁸⁹

- In domestic abuse cases, police should consider that a suspect Released Under Investigation will not be subject to any conditions. This can lead the alleged victim to feel unprotected, particularly if they live with the suspect and the suspect is able to return home. Such circumstances can increase the likelihood of victims fleeing their homes or withdrawing their support for investigations. These potential outcomes should be balanced against the impact of release on bail with conditions on the suspect.
- A suspect who breaches pre-charge bail conditions can be arrested and released again on the same bail conditions. Protective Notices and Orders can also be used where not already in place, further detail is provided at [Annex D](#), which summarises different protective orders that can be issued.¹⁹⁰ The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will reform the law around pre-charge bail and includes provisions to better protect vulnerable victims and witnesses.
- **Post-charge bail:** Appropriate bail conditions can be applied once a perpetrator is charged to protect victims, witnesses and the public. Post-charge bail can be used to protect victims and witnesses from the risk of danger, threats, pressure, or repeat offences.

Voluntary Attendance Interview

349. A Voluntary Attendance (VA) Interview can also be used for progressing investigations. It should be noted that no conditions can be placed on a perpetrator when they attend a voluntary interview. Interviews may hinder the effectiveness of investigations in providing suspects with prior notice and the opportunity to destroy evidence (for example on digital devices) or speak to witnesses in advance. As such, VA should only be used when appropriate as it may not afford enough protection for the victim in cases of domestic abuse. Read [further information on Voluntary Attendance Interviews](#).

Protective Notices and Orders

350. Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPNs/DVPOs) (governed by sections. 24-33 of the [Crime and Security Act 2010](#),

¹⁸⁹ The Government undertook a consultation on reforming pre-charge bail in 2020. The Government consulted on several proposals to make sure we have a system that prioritises the safety of victims and witnesses and supports the effective management of investigations; and the timely progression of cases to courts. The Government responded to the consultation on 14 January 2021 and [a copy of the pre-charge bail consultation response can be found on GOV.UK](#).

¹⁹⁰ College of Policing. [Post-arrest management of suspect and casefile](#): 2018. More information can also be found in the College of Policing guidance on [Identification, assessment and management of serial or potentially dangerous domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators: Eight principles to assist forces](#) (college.police.uk).

‘the 2010 Act’) can allow for protective measures to be put in place for a victim following a domestic incident of violence or the threat of violence involving a perpetrator aged 18 or over. These may be used, for example, where there is no substantive criminal offence to prosecute. Breach of a DVPO is not a criminal offence but enforcement action can be taken in a magistrates’ court as a contempt of court.

351. A DVPN issued by the police prohibits the perpetrator from molesting the victim, as a minimum, which could include prohibiting the perpetrator from contacting the victim by any means. A DVPN may also exclude the perpetrator from the premises if they live with the victim. It also protects the victim and prevents further abuse until the matter goes before a magistrate. The DVPN is followed up with an application for a DVPO in a magistrates’ court within 48 hours of service of the notice (not including Sundays, bank holidays, Christmas Day or Good Friday). The resulting DVPO, if granted, lasts for between 14 and 28 days.¹⁹¹

352. The 2021 Act introduces Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (“DAPOs”) and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (“DAPNs”). Once brought fully into force, DAPOs will bring together the strongest elements of the existing protective order regime into a single, comprehensive order to provide flexible, longer-term protection to victims of domestic abuse. In addition to imposing negative prohibitions such as excluding a perpetrator from a specified area, the DAPO will be able to impose electronic monitoring requirements, and positive requirements such as attendance on perpetrator behaviour change programmes.

353. DAPNs and DAPOs will initially be piloted in selected areas across England and Wales for two years to test the effectiveness and impact of the new model ahead of expected national roll-out. Separate guidance for the police on DAPNs and DAPOs will be published ahead of the pilot. DVPNs/DVPOs will continue to apply in non-pilot areas until, as expected, DAPNs/DAPOs are rolled out fully on a national basis. At that point, the existing provisions in the 2010 Act relating to DVPN/DVPO will be repealed – DVPNs/DVPOs and the guidance which underpins them will become obsolete. The following paragraphs consider some of the other protective orders that can be issued, further orders may be available dependent on the circumstances.

354. Other protective notices and orders include:

- Restraining Orders
- Stalking Protection Orders
- Forced Marriage Protection Orders
- FGM Protection Orders
- Non-molestation Orders and Occupation Orders
- Sexual Risk Orders

¹⁹¹ For more information, read the [guidance on Domestic Violence Protection Orders](#).

- Sexual Harm Prevention Orders
- Notification Orders

355. A table providing a summary of the orders is set out at [Annex D](#) and further details can be found in the respective College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice and CPS guidance.

Police and Crime Commissioners

356. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)¹⁹² are responsible for issuing police and crime plans which set out their priorities for the police force area during their period of office. As part of the process of preparing the plan, PCCs arrange for the public and victims of crime to give their views before it is issued. In preparing plans, consideration should be given to those that may experience disparities in service outcomes or their experience of crime and policing. PCCs will need to ensure they comply with their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

357. PCCs are responsible for holding their Chief Constables to account for the exercise of the Chief Constable's functions and the functions of the persons under the Chief Constable's direction and control. This may include setting clear expectations on responding adequately and effectively to victims of crimes including victims of domestic abuse related crimes incidents.

358. PCCs should consider how they work with other partners to provide an efficient and effective criminal justice system for their local areas including in relation to domestic abuse related crime and incidents to support prevention, early intervention and the provision of services. This may involve bringing partners together through convening and leading forums such as [Local Criminal Justice Boards](#) (LCJBs) and some areas will have other partnership boards working alongside or reporting into the LCJBs. For example, there are often boards, and other structures, with a particular focus on domestic abuse and sexual violence. PCCs will play a leading role in these, given their responsibilities in respect to victims of crime and commissioning local support services for victims.

Crown Prosecution Service

359. The Crown Prosecution Service (the 'CPS') prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. The CPS is independent and makes its decisions independently of the police and Government. The CPS decides which cases should be prosecuted using the Full Code Test, determines the appropriate charges in more serious or complex cases and advises the police during the early stages of investigations, prepares cases, and presents them at court. The CPS prosecutes criminal cases in England and Wales on

¹⁹² Including directly elected mayors with Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) powers, however the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 indicates some of the differences between the governance models in particular in relation to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

behalf of the state against a defendant. The CPS works with partners to inform, support, and serve victims and witnesses to help secure and deliver justice. The Attorney General superintends the CPS, but the CPS is operationally independent. The relationship between the police and CPS in relation to prosecution decisions is set out in the [Director's Guidance on Charging](#).

360. The CPS does not decide whether a person is guilty of a criminal offence – that is for the jury, judge, or magistrate - but it must make the key decision of whether a case should be put before a court. Every charging decision is based on the same two-stage test outlined in the [Code for Crown Prosecutors](#):

- Does the evidence provide a realistic prospect of conviction? That means, having heard the evidence, is a court more likely than not to find the defendant guilty?
- Is it in the public interest to prosecute? That means asking questions including how serious the offence is, the impact on communities and whether prosecution is a proportionate response.

361. Cases involving domestic abuse are regarded as particularly serious by the CPS given the abuse of trust involved. The CPS recognises the importance of understanding the barriers that victims may face in reporting and accessing justice. The CPS recognises the difficult decision victims may have to take before they report abuse and the vulnerable position many face. There may be an ongoing threat to the safety of victims as their life maybe closely intertwined with that of the perpetrator, for example, they may have dependents and they may live, or have lived, together.

362. [CPS legal guidance](#) and training to prosecutors on handling cases of domestic abuse applies to all victims, and sets out handling on all aspects of offending related to domestic abuse including recognising the lasting trauma that victims and their extended families may face and reminding prosecutors that abuse can comprise controlling or coercive behaviour and can be psychological, physical, sexual, economic and emotional. Wider CPS guidance on offences including [controlling or coercive behaviour](#); stalking and harassment; [cybercrime](#); and [‘honour’-based abuse and forced marriage](#) can also be relevant to domestic abuse cases.

363. The CPS works closely with the police to build the strongest possible case in order to bring offenders to justice and is committed to taking all practicable steps to help victims through the often difficult experience of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. Working with the police, the CPS has developed a proactive prosecution approach, which requires prosecutors to assess as soon as possible whether there is sufficient other evidence to bring a prosecution without the need for the victim to attend court. This other evidence could include police body worn video footage and 999 recordings where appropriate.

[Victim's Right to Review scheme](#)

364. Both the police and CPS operate a Victims Right of Review (VRR) making it easier for people to seek a review of a decision not to bring charges or to terminate proceedings in eligible cases. The right to review police decisions is an entitlement under the Victim's Code and the police should make victims aware of this right when providing an explanation for a police decision not to charge.

365. For both VRR schemes, there is a three-month time limit to make a request. Reviews will be considered by a person independent of the original investigation and decision. The police VRR involves one review stage, conducted by an officer at least one rank higher than the original decision maker. The CPS VRR can include two stages comprising a local resolution stage and, if necessary, review by the national Appeals and Review Unit.

366. The national guidance on the police VRR is being refreshed and an updated copy will be published later this year. Details can also be found on individual force websites. Further guidance on the CPS VRR is available in the [Victims Right to Review scheme](#) and the [Victims' Right to Review Policy and Guidance 2020](#). In addition, CPS, alongside other organisations, have obligations under the Victims' Code.

Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework for Courts

367. The CPS, together with the police and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) are leading efforts to implement a best practice framework for use across all magistrates' courts. The framework has been developed by identifying common components from high performing courts and aims to improve the capacity and capability of the criminal justice system to respond effectively to reports of domestic abuse offending. The framework also serves to provide a level of service to victims, which increases their safety and satisfaction in the criminal justice system.

368. The framework has identified common components including:

- A clear multi-agency/community approach which addresses risk management and safeguarding procedures. Multi-agency fora enable participating agencies to discuss the handling of domestic abuse cases ensuring all information is provided in a timely, safe and efficient manner and the correct support is put in place for the victim. Agencies should scrutinise their local data and put in place mitigating actions to address any emerging issues;
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) support ensures victims are informed at each stage of the prosecution process, working with prosecutors to support the victim;
- Trained, consistently deployed staff across all agencies (including judges); and
- In court services - proactive witness services/pre-trial familiarisation visits/appropriate use of special measures. As part of this, in some areas, they have considered fast tracking or expedited trial systems.

369. Following the testing of the Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework (DA BPF) in three test sites, all sites improved their performance in respect of managing domestic abuse cases, moving from being low performing areas to being in line with or above national average domestic abuse performance. The framework was rolled out in the magistrates' courts in January 2019.
370. Regions all have strategic and operational groups, including [Local Criminal Justice Boards](#), which should drive forward adoption of the DA BPF in each local area. They are being supported by a national implementation group – membership of which includes representatives from HMCTS, Police, CPS, Victim Support, and specialist domestic abuse support services.

Prison and Probation

371. The role of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is to supervise sentences given by the Courts either in custody or in the community, supporting people to complete them successfully or taking enforcement action where they are not complying. This includes tackling domestic abuse as part of HMPPS' wider role of protecting the public and reducing reoffending. HMPPS works closely with a variety of other agencies, to manage the risks perpetrators pose and to ensure that risk management plans address the safety and wellbeing of victims, including children.
372. The [HMPPS Domestic Abuse Policy Framework](#) sets out the organisation's commitment to reducing domestic abuse related reoffending, the risk of serious harm associated with it and to provide interventions to support rehabilitation. It ensures that staff at all levels understand what is expected of them and take action to safeguard adults and children at risk. It encourages staff to approach the issue with professional curiosity in every case and sets out the principles of good practice in relation to working with domestic abuse.
373. The Policy Framework outlines the arrangements for working with people whose behaviours include domestic abuse, as well as those with convictions. The identification of domestic abuse is not a one-off activity that occurs only at the point of a court report or at the start of the sentence. Throughout the sentence, all staff need to use an investigative approach, being vigilant and inquisitive in seeking out information from a wide range of sources to inform an ongoing assessment of whether domestic abuse features in current or previous relationships. Risk assessment requires an analysis of all available sources of information and takes into account prior known incidents of domestic abuse (e.g. police call-out information) as well as convictions. Risk Management Plans must address all the identified risk factors and set out actions to safeguard identified individuals assessed to be at risk of serious harm.
374. HMPPS provides advice to courts to support safe sentencing and work closely with a variety of other agencies to manage the risks posed by those under their supervision. Sharing information in relation to risk is already an expected element of all staff's

practice. The Policy Framework details the expectations of multi-agency working in the context of domestic abuse, highlighting the range of arrangements under which multi-agency working is governed and individual cases discussed. Staff will need to be familiar with local arrangements for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), child safeguarding case conferences, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) as well as familiarising themselves with specialist voluntary sector domestic abuse agencies. Probation practitioners and their managers should expect to work with a variety of other agencies, to manage the risks perpetrators pose and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of victims, including children. The involvement of other agencies and the need to share information should form part of a Risk Management Plan and staff will need to consider which multi-agency arrangements are likely to be the most effective mechanism for each plan.

375. Where appropriate, perpetrators should be offered the opportunity to engage with an offending behaviour programme and those who are eligible for HMPPS accredited programmes should be referred. Those who are not suitable for an accredited programme will be able to access alternative rehabilitative activities designed to reduce reoffending. Interventions and accredited offending behaviour programmes need to be carefully considered for those with a history of abuse, including whether mixed sex groups are appropriate.
376. Abuse can continue from within prison through phone calls, letters, face to face meetings, or through family members. Prison Offender Managers should assess whether a prisoner presents a continuing risk while in custody and prepare plans to manage and address the risks identified. A perpetrator's release from prison can also be a risky period for victims and Prison Offender Managers and probation practitioners should ensure that issues arising in custody are fed into release planning. Ensuring that all necessary information has been obtained to inform and assess the suitability of the address and adequate accommodation planning is also key to ensure perpetrators do not immediately return to victims, including children or other vulnerable adults.
377. HMPPS operates a Unwanted Prisoner Contact Service¹⁹³ that is available for victims or third-party agencies acting on behalf of a victim and with their consent, to stop unwanted contact from a prisoner including to stop domestic abuse perpetrators contacting victims from inside prison, even where the prisoner is serving a sentence for an unrelated offence. Contact with the service is made by telephone or email directly by the concerned individual or third-party agency. The service can also provide victims with approximate release dates and any concerns about release will normally result in a report being sent to the holding establishment.
378. Victim safety in the context of domestic abuse covers both past victims and identified adults or children at risk of becoming victims in the future. Given the prevalence of domestic abuse, HMPPS recognises that some of the people they

¹⁹³ [Get support as a victim of crime – GOV.UK](#).

supervise will themselves be victims of domestic abuse. As part of sentence planning and risk management, staff will work together with local agencies, domestic abuse services and specialist services to ensure the most effective way of achieving the safety of those affected by domestic abuse.

379. Victims of perpetrators who have been convicted of a specified sexual or violent offence and sentenced to 12 months or more in custody have a statutory right to participate in the HMPPS Victim Contact Scheme. If victims have opted into the Victim Contact Scheme, the expectations of the Victim Liaison Officer and case managers are set out in the Policy Framework; the role of the Victim Liaison Officer includes informing the victim about key developments in the perpetrator's sentence such as if they are due to be released from prison or, for indeterminate prisoners, updates on Parole Board hearings. The probation practitioner should include the arrangements for informing the victim of a prisoner's release from custody as part of the victim safety element of their risk management plan including in circumstances where the person poses a high risk of harm to a victim who does not fall into the scheme. Further information is provided in the Policy Framework.

Youth Offending Teams

380. Youth Offending Teams play a significant role in assessing and identifying both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. The teams are often one of the key referrers into children's social care and play an instrumental role in delivering offence-focused work around domestic abuse and providing learning on healthy relationships. The general services they provide include:

- running local crime prevention programmes;
- helping young people at the police station if they are arrested;
- helping young people and their families at court;
- supervising young people serving a community sentence; and
- staying in touch with a young person if they are sentenced to custody.

381. Whilst the police are usually the first people to contact the youth offending team, any agency can make contact and family members and friends can also contact them if they are worried about a young person's behaviour.

Criminal and Civil Justice System – Criminal, Civil, and Family Courts

Criminal courts and special measures in the criminal courts

382. Domestic abuse is dealt with under both the criminal and civil law. The two systems are separate and are largely administered by separate courts. Criminal courts primarily deal with offenders who have committed a criminal offence, from common assault to

more serious crimes such as murder. The criminal courts will take necessary steps to ensure that victims and witnesses are able to give their best evidence in such proceedings.

383. The [Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999](#) ('the 1999 Act') introduced a range of measures that can be used to facilitate the gathering and giving of evidence by vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. These measures are known collectively as 'special measures' and include the following:

- Screens to shield the witness from the defendant
- Evidence given by witnesses through live link
- Evidence given in private
- Removal of wigs and gowns by judges and barristers
- Visual recorded interview
- Pre-trial visual recorded cross-examination or re-examination
- Examination of witness through an intermediary
- Aids to communication

384. The CPS provides [further guidance on special measures](#). The 2021 Act provides for automatic eligibility for complainants of offences relating to domestic abuse to be considered for special measures in criminal proceedings. Once fully in force, section 62 of the 2021 Act, will directly amend the relevant provisions in the 1999 Act. This change will provide complainants with automatic eligibility for special measures as intimidated witnesses (under section 17(4) of the 1999 Act). This will mean that they will not have to demonstrate fear or distress to be eligible for special measures. Special measures apply to prosecution and defence witnesses, but not to the defendant and must be made through an application to the court. Witnesses will be automatically considered as intimidated witnesses under the 1999 Act and can choose what special measure(s) they would like the application to be made to the court for, however, granting special measure applications is always a judicial decision.

Civil courts and special measures in the civil courts

385. The civil courts resolve disputes mainly between individuals or organisations. They do not have a separate category of offence for domestic abuse, however, cases before these courts involve a wide-ranging category from debt to those involving housing rights, compensation, and contractual disputes. As in the other court jurisdictions, there is recognition that perpetrators sometimes use the courts to continue their abuse, often bringing victims back to court repeatedly, which can in itself be a traumatising process.

386. Section 64 of the 2021 Act, which was commenced on 14 June 2022, requires Rules of Court to include provision enabling a court to make a special measures direction to provide for victims or alleged victims of specified offences to be eligible for special measures (for example, to enable them to give evidence via a video link or behind a screen). It also requires the Rules of Court to provide for those who are victims of domestic abuse or who are 'at risk' of being a victim to avail of special measures in the civil courts. The purpose of the provision is to ensure that rules are

made setting out when and how special measures directions should be made in such cases. Regulations¹⁹⁴ have been made specifying which offences are relevant for the purposes of these rules. Whether any special measures are ultimately provided in a particular civil case will depend on whether the court considers they would likely improve the quality of the witness's evidence, or a party's participation in the proceedings. Special measures might only be appropriate in certain civil cases and not others, but the new rules require the court to consider whether a special measure direction should be made.

387. Once brought into force, section 66 of the 2021 Act will also prohibit perpetrators from cross-examining their victims in person and vice versa in specified circumstances in civil proceedings in England and Wales. Such cross-examination in person can serve to re-traumatise victims and prevent them giving their best evidence in court. This will apply for example, where a party or witness is a victim of a specified offence or there is a relevant injunction in place. The 2021 Act will also allow domestic abuse victims to introduce evidence (for example a letter from a doctor or employer) of domestic abuse perpetrated by a party to the proceedings towards a witness (or vice versa) in order to qualify for this ban. Regulations¹⁹⁵ have been made specifying the types of specified offence, protective injunctions and evidence that are relevant for the purpose of prohibiting cross-examination in civil proceedings.

Family courts and special measures in the family courts

388. Family proceedings in England and Wales are dealt with in the family court or in the Family Division of the High Court. The administration of these courts in England and Wales is a reserved matter and is therefore the responsibility of the UK Government. However, in England, the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (Cafcass) provide expert advice and recommendations to the court on the interests of the child in both public law cases as well as in private law cases where there are safeguarding risks, including those related to domestic abuse.¹⁹⁶ In Wales, Cafcass Cymru is the key agency tasked with looking after the interests of children. Cafcass Cymru is devolved and part of the Welsh Government.¹⁹⁷

389. The family courts routinely hear cases involving alleged or admitted domestic abuse in both public law proceedings – usually disputes between parents and the state (such as care proceedings), and private law proceedings – typically disputes between family members over child arrangements. A literature review conducted on private law children cases draws attention to estimates that allegations or findings of domestic abuse are present in between 49% and 62% of child arrangement cases.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ [The Special Measures in Civil Proceedings \(Specified Offences\) Regulations 2022 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

¹⁹⁵ [The Prohibition of Cross-Examination in Person \(Civil and Family Proceedings\) Regulations 2022 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

¹⁹⁶ Cafcass provide [resources for assessing domestic abuse targeted at Family Court Advisers](#).

¹⁹⁷ Further information on Cafcass Cymru is available at: [Cafcass Cymru | GOV.WALES](#).

¹⁹⁸ Ministry of Justice. [Domestic Abuse and Private Law Children Cases, a literature review](#) Table 4.1: Brunel University London: 2020.

390. The [Family Procedure Rules 2010](#) set out the practice and procedure to be followed in family proceedings. [Practice Direction 12J](#), which supplements those rules, sets out what the court is required to do in child arrangements cases where domestic abuse is alleged or admitted, or there is other reason to believe that the child or a party is at risk of domestic abuse. The welfare of the child must be the court's paramount consideration when making any child arrangements order.¹⁹⁹ The court must be satisfied that any contact ordered with a parent who has perpetuated domestic abuse does not expose either the child or the parent with whom the child is living to risk of further harm.

391. The 2020 Ministry of Justice report [Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases](#) raised concerns about the experience of domestic abuse victims, including children in the family proceedings. The expert panel (the 'Harm Panel') considered over 1,200 submissions from individuals and organisations across England and Wales, together with roundtables and focus groups held with professionals, parents and children with experience of the family courts. Key themes of the report include:

- The pro-contact culture - respondents felt that courts placed undue priority on ensuring contact with the non-resident parent, which resulted in systemic minimisation of allegations of domestic abuse.
- Working in silos – submissions highlighted differences in approaches and culture between criminal justice, child protection (public law) and private law children proceedings, and lack of communication and coordination between family courts and other courts and agencies working with families, which led to contradictory decisions and confusion.
- An adversarial system – with parents placed in opposition on what is often not a level playing field in cases involving domestic abuse, child sexual abuse and self-representation, with little or no involvement of the child.

392. In response, the Government published an [Implementation Plan](#) setting out commitments to improve the experience of domestic abuse victims, including children in private law proceedings.

393. This plan included a commitment to address the Harm Panel's conclusion that perpetrators sometimes use the family court as a way to continue their abuse, often bringing victims back repeatedly, which can itself be a traumatising process. An order under section 91(14) of the Children Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act') (also known as a barring order) can be made by the court to require individuals to seek permission before they can apply again for particular orders. The Harm Panel concluded in its report that this power has not been used sufficiently. The Government has therefore introduced section 91A to the 1989 Act, inserted by section 67 of the 2021 Act. Section 67 makes clear that section 91 (14) orders can be made by the court when it is satisfied that the making of a further application for an order under that Act, would put the child

¹⁹⁹ Section 1(1) of the Children Act 1989.

concerned, or another individual, at risk of harm. Risk of harm includes risk of harm from domestic abuse, including seeing or hearing it.

394. Once brought into force, section 65 of the 2021 Act will prevent perpetrators from cross-examining their victims in person and vice versa in specified circumstances in family proceedings in England and Wales. Such cross-examination in person can serve to re-traumatise victims and prevent them giving their best evidence in court. This will apply for example, where a party or witness is a victim of a specified offence or there is a relevant injunction in place. The 2021 Act will also allow domestic abuse victims in family proceedings to introduce evidence (for example, a letter from a doctor or an employer) of domestic abuse perpetrated by a party to the proceedings towards a witness (or vice versa) in order to qualify for this ban. Regulations²⁰⁰ have been made specifying the types of specified offence, protective injunctions and evidence that are relevant for the purpose of prohibiting cross-examination in family proceedings.
395. Section 63 of the 2021 Act provides for special measures in family proceedings. It mandates an amendment to the existing Family Procedure Rules at Part 3A, to automatically deem as “vulnerable” victims of domestic abuse for the purposes of determining whether a participation direction should be ordered. Specifically, it requires that rules of court must provide that where a party or witness in family proceedings is, or is at risk of being, a victim of domestic abuse carried out by a party, a relative of a party, or a witness, it is to be assumed that the quality of their evidence, and their participation in the proceedings are likely to be diminished by reason of vulnerability. An exception may be included in rules to cover instances where a person does not wish to be deemed eligible for a special measures’ direction.

Protective Orders

396. Victims or other professional agencies, depending on the nature of the abuse, can apply for a protective measure to protect a victim or a person who may become a victim of abuse. Applications for injunctions – either non-molestation or occupation orders - can be made to the family court and emergency injunctions can be ordered at the judge’s discretion, without the perpetrator’s knowledge.
397. Courts can make protective orders of their own volition, to protect a victim or person at risk, where statute provides for this.
398. A summary table of protective orders for victims of domestic abuse is at [Annex D](#).

Jobcentre Plus

399. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) employees are highly likely to come into contact with victims of domestic abuse and staff undertake learning to be able to

²⁰⁰ [The Prohibition of Cross-Examination in Person \(Civil and Family Proceedings\) Regulations 2022 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

support customers. Each jobcentre has assigned domestic abuse points of contact who have undergone training to identify and support the needs of anyone experiencing domestic abuse and will work closely with local services to share knowledge and signpost victims to additional, external support. Furthermore, the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan commits to piloting the Ask for ANI 'Action Needed Immediately' codeword scheme in jobcentres (currently operating only in pharmacies), so that individuals can make disclosures safely and access emergency support.

400. There are a range of measures that may help victims of domestic abuse, including:
- Victims of domestic abuse can be exempt from work-related requirements for up to 26 weeks;
 - The Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) (see the ['Immigration status and migrant victims'](#) section);
 - Advance payments;
 - An exception to the policy of supporting a maximum of two children. The exception applies to those third and subsequent children likely to have been born as a result of non-consensual conception (which, for this purpose, includes rape or where the claimant was in a controlling or coercive relationship with the child's other biological parent at the time of conception);
 - Housing Benefit paid to a Universal Credit claimant (for domestic abuse victims living in a refuge) is excluded from the benefit cap;
 - Waiver of the Child Maintenance Scheme application fee;
 - Dual housing support - if victims have to temporarily stay in alternative accommodation but intend to return to their former home, they may be able to receive the housing element of Universal Credit for both their usual permanent home and the temporary alternative accommodation;
 - Removal of the spare-room subsidy not applying to victims staying in exempt accommodation;
 - Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) - The DHP Guidance Manual highlights individuals or families fleeing domestic abuse as a priority group for DHPs;
 - Alternative payment arrangements, including split payments (no information about why the split payment request has been granted is given to the perpetrator);
 - A change to the claimant messaging within the Universal Credit service to encourage claimants who have joint claims where there are children in the household to nominate the bank account of the main carer to receive the Universal Credit payment; and
 - Support to make a new claim for Universal Credit if there is not one in place, or to split an existing joint claim if the survivor has left the perpetrator.

401. Jobcentre Plus staff should be aware that perpetrators may make vexatious allegations of benefit fraud in an attempt to control and abuse partners or former partners.

Employers

402. Employers have an important role to play in helping victims of domestic abuse to remain in work, in the workplace itself, and to help victims access the support they need through signposting to specialist services and raising awareness about domestic abuse. All employers need to consider what action they can take in relation to this role and their responsibilities. Employers continue to have a pivotal role as new ways of working in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including home working and hybrid working, are established. For those experiencing abuse, the workplace can often offer a safe space and a respite away from the perpetrator. Colleagues and managers can often be the only people outside the home that victims talk to each day and are therefore uniquely placed to help spot signs of abuse.

403. Many employers are likely to encounter employees affected by domestic abuse, either as victims, carers, witnesses to abuse, or as perpetrators. These individuals may be found in any position within an organisation.

404. Domestic abuse can impact on victims' ability to access work and their career prospects. Examples of how perpetrators may prevent victims from working include through threats, causing physical injuries or restraining them. Perpetrators may also try to harass victims whilst at work, abuse or threaten their colleagues or employer, or control their income. Victims may be forced to stop working when they flee from perpetrators due to having to move area or go into a refuge.²⁰¹

405. Domestic abuse has considerable costs for the economy, with an estimated £14 billion arising from lost output due to time off work and reduced productivity from domestic abuse victims in the year to March 2017.²⁰²

406. Employers have a duty of care to their employees. Legally, this means that they need to abide by relevant health and safety and employment law, as well as the common law duty of care. Employers must ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers should consider the impact of domestic abuse on their employees as part of their duty of care.

407. As best practice, employers should develop policies to set out their approach to domestic abuse within their workforce including, for example, signposting to specialist organisations, roles and responsibilities within the organisation, any education and training available, the practical support they can offer to victims in their workforce and their approach to perpetrators in the workplace. This support offer may include access

²⁰¹ TUC. [Domestic violence and the workplace: A TUC Survey Report](#): 2014.

²⁰² Home Office. [The economic and social costs of domestic abuse: Research Report 107](#): 2019.

to paid leave or flexible working arrangements which can be helpful to victims in certain situations, for example, managing appointments related to domestic abuse or finding safe accommodation. Employers should consult with staff, trade unions, employee representatives or domestic abuse charities to develop, implement and maintain a domestic abuse policy taking into account the law, guidance and identified good practice.

408. In 2020, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy undertook a [review to examine how victims of domestic abuse can be supported in the workplace](#) and how to give employers the confidence and knowledge to support victims better. The report sets out the need to tackle domestic abuse as a workplace issue and the positive role that employers can play in supporting victims. The [report on workplace support for victims of domestic abuse](#) includes best practice case studies and prompts to help those experiencing domestic abuse.
409. There is a range of up-to-date practical guidance which employers can access. Employers should note the [Employers' Initiative for Domestic Abuse \(EIDA\)](#), a business network which empowers employers to take action against domestic abuse, for their staff, and their sectors. The EIDA bring together the experience, expertise and best practice of their members and partners to tackle abuse and raise awareness. Membership is free to any employer wanting to act. The network provides practical guidance, up to date tools and materials, as well as signposting to support services. For example, their handbook is a single reference guide, with a raft of practical steps for employers to take to establish and maintain a domestic abuse policy and support employees who make a disclosure. The guidance has been assembled with the help of EIDA's partners, founders, and Beacon members and is available to download for members of the network. They also have a free to download employer toolkit which has been updated to reflect post-Covid-19 pandemic working.
410. Employers should also note the [Employers Domestic Abuse Covenant \(EDAC\)](#), a commitment by businesses to support those affected by abuse to enter or re-enter the workplace. Employers are invited to sign the Covenant and identify workplace skills and opportunities for victims seeking sustainable employment opportunities. The initiative aims to harness real and meaningful social change, create inclusive and positive opportunities, develop long term, sustainable solutions for victims of abuse to build their confidence, resilience, skills, and access to the workplace. The EDAC has been rolled out across England from June 2021 and is a collaboration between the Sharan Project and the Department for Work and Pensions, with support from the Home Office and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.
411. Employers should also refer to the [PHE BITC Domestic Abuse Employer Toolkit](#). This toolkit helps employers of all sizes and sectors make a commitment to respond to the risk of domestic abuse and build an approach that ensures all employees feel supported and empowered by their workplace to deal with domestic abuse. The Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development have also published a [guide for employers on managing and supporting](#)

[employees experiencing domestic abuse](#), which outlines what a framework of support may look like. UNISON has also produced a [model workplace agreement on domestic violence and abuse](#).

412. Employers may access Hestia’s [Respond to Abuse Employer’s Advice Line and digital tool](#), which is available to any business or organisation in the United Kingdom who would like free guidance and information regarding how to support employees enduring domestic abuse in the workplace. See [Annex A](#) for a list of support available for victims.

Financial services

413. Control – through restriction, exploitation or sabotage – of finances is a significant part of economic abuse. The [VAWG National Statement of Expectations](#) recommends that local commissioners explore what local financial institutions are doing to identify and support victims of coercive control, including whether they can provide a safe disclosure point for a victim. See section on ‘[Economic abuse](#)’ for further information.
414. In 2015, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), which regulates the financial services industry in the UK and helps protect consumers, published research²⁰³ to challenge firms to better support vulnerable customers. The FCA has worked with stakeholders to ensure that vulnerable consumers are consistently treated fairly across financial services sectors. Following a consultation process, [the FCA finalised guidance for firms on the fair treatment of vulnerable customers](#). This guidance identifies that alongside other characteristics certain life events, including relationship breakdown and domestic abuse, can increase the risk of consumers becoming vulnerable to different types of harm or disadvantage. It highlights actions firms should take to understand the needs of consumers in these circumstances to make sure they are treated fairly.
415. In recognising the role that financial services play in responding to domestic abuse UK Finance and the Building Societies Association have established a [Financial Abuse Code](#). The voluntary Code sets out how participating banks and building societies should support customers who are victims of domestic and financial or economic abuse. It is also designed to extend to other forms of abuse – i.e. abuse by people that are not connected as defined by the 2021 Act – for example elder abuse by carers who are not “personally connected” to the victim. The Code aims to bring increased awareness and better understanding of what financial abuse looks like for firms, colleagues (e.g. customer facing staff), and those impacted by financial abuse.
416. A growing number of financial institutions and associated brands, representing a large proportion of current accounts, have signed up to the Code since its launch. They are implementing the principles set out in the Code, improving how they support

²⁰³ FCA. [Occasional Paper No. 8: Consumer Vulnerability](#): 2015.

customers to understand and regain control of their finances, which is often an important first step in regaining their independence.

Links with the voluntary sector

417. The voluntary sector plays a key role in providing specialist support for victims, their families and perpetrators. Many areas have voluntary support services, including specialist and 'by and for' services, providing support in the community and beyond, such as:

- national and local helplines;
- refuge services;
- advocacy (including Independent Domestic Violence Advocates and Domestic Abuse Prevention Advocates);
- outreach and floating support;
- support for children and young people;
- drop-in services;
- counselling and therapeutic services;
- group work and peer support;
- recovery programmes for victims, including children;
- research and evidence building;
- development of policy and service standards; and
- behaviour change programmes for perpetrators.

418. The Government funds the Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline for England (0808 2000 247) run by Refuge. The Helpline offers confidential, non-judgmental information and expert support to keep victims safe and provide them with information in order to make informed choices. The Government also funds the only specialist LGBT domestic abuse helpline, run by Galop, an LGBT anti-violence charity and a specific Men's Advice helpline run by Respect (0808 801 0327). Southall Black Sisters operates a specialist advice helpline for ethnic minority and migrant women with no recourse to public funds (020 8571 9595). There is also helpline support for perpetrators through the Respect Phoneline (0808 8024 040). The Live Fear Free helpline is the national Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence helpline in Wales (0808 80 10 800) and is funded by the Welsh Government. These helplines and a non-exhaustive list of other specialist domestic abuse support can be found at [Annex A](#).

419. As specialist trained practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) act as a victims' point of contact, supporting those who are at high risk of harm from perpetrators. IDVAs work with their clients from a point of crisis to assess risk

levels, discuss options and create safety plans. This includes actions from Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) as well as sanctions and remedies available through the criminal and civil courts, housing options and services available through other organisations.²⁰⁴ IDVAs may work closely with Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) in cases involving sexual assault or rape and the Children and Young People IDVA role provides specialist support in cases involving children and young people at high risk.

420. For multi-agency working to be effective it is vital that the state works closely with the voluntary sector to ensure full and proper combination of expertise to provide holistic support. For instance, specialist domestic abuse support workers are highly trained to support families affected by domestic abuse and contribute valuably to discussions and risk assessments involved in Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs) or Child in Need and Child Protection plans, including attendance at Initial Child Protection Conferences. Further details about multi-agency working are provided in [‘Chapter 7 – Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse’](#).

²⁰⁴ SafeLives. [National Definition for IDVA work](#): 2014.

Chapter 7 – Multi-Agency Response to Domestic Abuse

This chapter covers:

- The responsibility for agencies to work together and share information, including to safeguard children.
- Best practice principles for multi-agency working.
- Working together to address the behaviour of perpetrators.
- Domestic Homicide Reviews.

Multi-agency working

421. The response to domestic abuse is a complex one that spans several statutory and non-statutory agencies, including but not limited to, local authorities, community-based agencies, children's services, schools, housing, health (including mental health), drug and alcohol services, specialist domestic abuse agencies, the police and the criminal justice system. Wider organisations, such as employers and financial services institutions also have a role to play. Agencies have a responsibility to work together effectively to provide support and protection to victims of domestic abuse. This can be through strategic planning, co-commissioning and creating joined-up services. Working together is essential to help with identifying domestic abuse at an early stage and with responding to domestic abuse in a manner that can reduce the risk of escalation. It is vital to appropriately safeguard victims, including children, regardless of the level of risk.

422. An effective multi-agency response means that all frontline agencies consider domestic abuse and are trained to understand both the complex dynamics and the signs of domestic abuse. Specialist domestic abuse organisations offer a range of training for professionals working in multi-agency safeguarding contexts. This training should take into account a victim's protected characteristics, individual circumstances and recognise that intersecting forms of abuse may be at play. These factors can prevent victims from accessing support and services and highlight the need for specialist 'by and for' services to form part of all multi-agency working practices. In Wales, there is a statutory duty placed on Relevant Authorities to train their staff to appropriate levels in line with the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence statutory guidance issued under section 15 of the [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and section 60 of the [Government of Wales Act 2006](#).

423. Agencies must work together and share information to ensure they are able to draw on all the available information held within each agency to build a full picture of the victims, including children, and perpetrators. This includes looking holistically at an individual's case and circumstances to identify appropriate multi-agency support.
424. All agencies have a duty to assess whether a safeguarding response is required before referring an incident to a multi-agency partnership. Co-locating specialist domestic abuse services or providers can be an effective way of multi-agency working. For example, some local areas have Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) based in police stations and hospitals.²⁰⁵ Co-location can be particularly effective in supporting those who have experienced domestic abuse, where there may be a stigma around accessing services.
425. Standing Together have produced [In Search of Excellence](#), a guide for facilitating Coordinated Community Response (CCR) partnerships that reiterates the importance of coordination work amongst frontline provision.²⁰⁶
426. The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) ('the 2021 Act') established in law the office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC), to provide public leadership on domestic abuse issues, play a key role in overseeing and monitoring the provision of domestic abuse services in England and Wales and promote best practice, including in multi-agency working.²⁰⁷
427. Multi-agency working should be embedded into approaches to responding to domestic abuse and should offer a range of interventions and support, from early intervention to support for high-risk cases through formalised safeguarding arrangements. These responses can include but are not limited to:
- Advice and guidance;
 - Advocacy;
 - Onward referrals or signposting to other agencies or services;
 - Housing support;
 - Financial advice and assistance;
 - One-to-One or group counselling;
 - Respite care;
 - Child protection plans;

²⁰⁵ The Pathfinder Toolkit includes a section on the co-location of health based IDVAs.

²⁰⁶ Standing Together also provide a CCR [Network hub for sharing best practice including information on professional training](#).

²⁰⁷ The Home Office, in consultation with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, developed a [framework document](#) within which the Commissioner will operate. The Welsh Ministers have also been consulted as required under section 11(7) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The purpose of the document, which is issued under section 11 of the Act, is to set out how the Home Secretary and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will work together.

- Safety and support plans;
- Support through a criminal justice process, or civil court case;
- Drug and alcohol support; and
- Perpetrator behaviour change programmes.

428. A Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is one way of coordinating activity around safeguarding referrals, assessments and joined-up responses. Other local areas may call multi-agency safeguarding structures something different. These bring together expert professionals from a range of services that have contact with children, young people, adults and families, making the best possible use of their combined knowledge and information to safeguard children who are at risk of harm or neglect. Many local areas have a MASH or other fora, with the aim of providing a 'one front door' model, where professionals gather information and make decisions about which pathways to follow for different contacts and referrals. This may lead to an assessment by children's social care, early help or a response from universal services. Where local areas do not have MASH arrangements in place, alternative multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be in place which deliver the broad principles set out below. SafeLives have published [Seeing the Whole Picture: an Evaluation of SafeLives' One Front Door](#) which sets out what an effective model should look like.

429. Local organisations and agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families. Local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services based on a clear understanding of local needs. This requires all practitioners, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other practitioners to support early identification and assessment.

430. Effective multi-agency working (for example, a MASH):

- Needs to see and respond to the whole picture;
- Should embed the needs, safety, and wishes of victims;
- Should have a clear strategic focus;
- Requires active partners participating in meaningful joint working;
- Needs specialist skills;
- Requires safe and effective information sharing;
- Values and employs staff with the right values; and
- Addresses the behaviour of the perpetrator.

431. See the [‘Principles for multi-agency working’](#) section.
432. The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts \(PCSC\) Act 2022](#) (‘the PCSC Act 2022’) introduced a Serious Violence Duty to ensure specified authorities across England and Wales, being police, fire and rescue services, health, local authorities, youth offending teams and probation services to work collaborative, share data and information in order to put in place a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence. Section 13 of the PCSC Act 2022 explicitly includes domestic abuse and sexual offences within the definition of “violence” for the purpose of the Serious Violence Duty.²⁰⁸

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

433. A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a non-statutory process that brings together statutory and voluntary agencies to jointly support adult and child victims of domestic abuse who are at a high risk of serious harm or homicide, and to disrupt and divert the behaviour of the perpetrator(s). The MARAC’s working assumption is that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. The core MARAC agencies are: police, IDVA services, housing, children’s services, the Probation Service, primary health, mental health, substance misuse service and adult social care.
434. At the beginning of the MARAC process, local agencies will refer victims to the local MARAC. Before the meeting, all participating agencies will gather relevant, proportionate, and necessary information regarding the victims, including children, and the perpetrator(s). The local agency representatives will attend the MARAC meeting, (usually taking place monthly or fortnightly) to discuss the shared information and expertise and suggest actions. Agencies should ensure that they are regularly communicating with each other between MARAC meetings – this is a crucial part of the MARAC process and ensures there is a coordinated response to domestic abuse. Communication around cases should not wait for MARAC meetings to take place.
435. The IDVA is a specialist practitioner who works in partnership with other agencies to implement the action plan, mobilising resources on behalf of the victims, including children to increase their safety. They crucially represent the victim at the MARAC, making sure their voice is heard.
436. The victims, including children, and perpetrator(s) do not attend the meeting. The victim is informed that the case is being taken through the MARAC process, unless it is deemed unsafe to do so. If the victim objects to the disclosure of personal information, this should be considered in proportion to the risks present. If it is believed that withholding information puts a child at risk of significant harm, or another adult at risk of serious harm, then disclosure may be justified in the public interest and/or in order to

²⁰⁸ At the time of writing, draft statutory guidance on the Serious Violence Duty, which will be issued by the Secretary of State under section 19 of the PCSC Act 2022, is published for public consultation.

protect the vital interests of the third party. If the victim is at significant risk of harm, then this would be in the public interest. The process must be compliant with the UK GDPR and [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and the common law duty of confidence. The Information Sharing Protocol and Caldicott Principles must be adhered to and the decision to share must be recorded as being both proportional and relevant in relation to the risks. You can read the [Practical Guidance on the application of the Caldicott Guardian Principles to Domestic Violence and MARACs](#). Dependent on which regime the processing falls within, you will need to ensure that the appropriate conditions for processing (including for sensitive processing) are satisfied. [Advice on data sharing is available for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#).

Multi-agency working to safeguard children

437. Agencies should recognise the impact of domestic abuse has on children and support them accordingly. Those responding to children experiencing domestic abuse should follow existing safeguarding, risk assessment and referrals processes and procedures.
438. Multi-agency working to safeguard children is underpinned by the system of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, provided for by the [Children Act 2004](#), as amended by the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#). These arrangements place a statutory duty on police, health, and local authority leaders to work together on local safeguarding arrangements. They are jointly responsible for coordinating safeguarding services to keep children safe and are accountable for how well local agencies work together to protect children from abuse and neglect. The three safeguarding partners (the local authority, health and police) should agree on ways to coordinate their safeguarding services; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents.
439. The statutory guidance document, [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#), sets out what professionals and organisations need to do, individually and in partnership with other agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This remains core guidance on supporting children who are victims of domestic abuse. Working Together also highlights that everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe and that multi-agency working and information sharing is essential to ensure that children and families receive the right help at the right time. The importance of early help in promoting the welfare of children is emphasised. The [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) applies in Wales as well as the accompanying [Working Together to Safeguard People guidance](#) and the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) for children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect.
440. The Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance also sets out key roles for individual organisations and agencies to deliver effective arrangements for

safeguarding and places an equal and shared duty on the three safeguarding partners (the local authority, health and police) to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area. In relation to children in need (section 17 of the Children Act 1989) and child protection enquiries (section 47 of the 1989 Act), the guidance sets out the specific roles and responsibilities of the local authority and its social workers in leading statutory assessments. Working Together makes clear that in all welfare and safeguarding enquiries, a child-centred approach should be adopted by practitioners to ensure that the best interests of the child are considered at all times. See the section on '[Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children](#)' and '[Responding to children and young people](#)' for further information.

Principles for multi-agency working

Seeing and responding to the whole picture

441. It is essential that services work together to identify and respond coherently and take into account the whole picture of a domestic abuse context. This principle should frame the multi-agency response to victims, including children. Agencies should:

- **Develop a collaborative approach built around coordinating the skills, experience and perspectives of people from each agency.** Any assessment process should recognise and allow for fluctuations in the victim's needs and safety and should be informed by the assessment provided by the specialist domestic abuse service.
- **Be aware of the potential for domestic abuse to intersect with other harms, taking into account other safeguarding functions when considering the needs of victims, alongside pathways for intervention for perpetrators.** Many harms and adverse experiences intersect with one another to either drive abusive behaviour, or to exacerbate vulnerabilities in those who have experienced abuse - for example, where there is a suspected risk of serious violence, modern slavery or child sexual exploitation.
- **Use an evidence-based assessment process** to ensure there is a shared understanding of the risk and a shared plan to address risk. The assessment should involve identifying the risk to/from each family member and the needs of each family member. The primary goal of this assessment should be the increased safety and wellbeing of all non-abusive family members, with the response tailored to their particular situation and the views they have expressed. This assessment process should be well-evidenced, tested with service users, and be the subject of regular, high quality training on how it should (and should not) be used. It should have reference to existing assessment methods such as the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and 'Honour'-Based Violence (DASH) risk assessment and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) work. Risk is fluid and must be re-assessed regularly and the process should facilitate that.

- **Develop processes and pathways** that ensure that once needs and risks are identified, family members get the most appropriate support as soon as possible.

Box 7.1: Case Study – Support for victims of domestic abuse

Case Study

Hounslow Domestic and Sexual Violence Outreach Service is a violence against women and girls (VAWG) service for all victims of gender-based violence. Victims living in the London Borough of Hounslow can access the service themselves or partner agencies can refer. Examples of the way in which Hounslow provides support to victims of domestic abuse include:

Adult Social Care IDVA – supports vulnerable adults, including those with disabilities, the elderly and those with complex needs.

Health IDVA – co-located with the Clinical Commissioning Group and supports victims identified and referred by GPs, Maternity, and the local hospital. The referral pathway is via the NHS System 1 ensuring speedy referrals from busy medical staff.

Metropolitan Police – The IDVA is co-located with the Safeguarding Unit to respond quickly to reports of high-risk domestic abuse incidences thereby providing earlier intervention and safety plans.

Freedom Programme – a 12-week programme designed to empower female victims of domestic abuse.

Hounslow One Stop Shop – A designated venue offering a free weekly drop-in providing information and advice from a variety of partners to victims of VAWG. Partnerships with housing services, welfare benefits advisers, family law solicitors, immigration solicitors, children’s support workers, ethnic minority support workers and IDVAs working together to support families in Hounslow.

Children affected by domestic abuse project – provides a coordinated early help response delivering improved outcomes for children and families affected by domestic abuse. The project supports Operation Encompass which notifies schools within 24 hours after police have responded to an incident where a pupil is residing at the address. Specialist Parent and Child Domestic Abuse Workers (PCDAWs), co-located in schools, receive all notifications and work with the schools to provide holistic therapeutic support to children and non-abusive parents. They also work with non-abusive parents empowering them to make informed choices and supporting them to help address their child’s needs. The PCDAWs liaise regularly with the Designated Safeguarding Leads within the schools, enhancing the support that schools can offer children affected by domestic abuse.

These practitioners also enhance information sharing to schools, social, care and other specialist services via the Domestic Abuse Early Help Lead (DAEHL) co-located in the MASH. The DAEHL triages all domestic abuse contacts which come into the MASH, working in partnership with the borough's MASH members such as the Police, Health, Education and Children Social Care to identify the needs and risks to the family – better informing social care decisions and practices. Outcomes from these assessments have included referrals to the project, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), the local perpetrator programme, and children's therapeutic services.

Designing interventions and responses around the needs of victims

442. The voice and needs of victims, including children, needs to be embedded in a multi-agency response. Services designed around the needs of victims, and grounded in victim experience, means victims are more likely to stay engaged in the process.²⁰⁹ Agencies should:

- **Consider the needs of all local communities** using local demographic data to understand the make-up of the area and make appropriate provision, including in rural communities and for those who face additional barriers to seeking and engaging with the support available, such as language, mobility, physical disability, learning difficulties or social attitudes. This could include, for example, building sustainable and trusting relationships across faith and cultural allies in the community to ensure the needs of victims are represented – see [The Safety Across Faith and Ethnic \(SAFE\) Communities project](#) from domestic abuse charity Standing Together as an example of good practice in this area. An equality impact assessment should be developed and reviewed regularly, including to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches against intended aims, with input from service users and specialists to identify barriers and provide responses experienced by some groups. Religious, community or cultural institutions should always prioritise the welfare of victims.
- **Listen to the views and experiences of victims and their family members.** This process should be embedded in the multi-agency response and should consider how best to reach all victims, including children and young people who may face additional barriers accessing services or making their voice heard. Their views should be used to assess the risk that the perpetrator(s) of the abuse pose(s) to other family members and the impact this has on their needs, such as safety, health, housing, and wellbeing. **The safety and support for the victim should be central to any approach or engagement with other family members.**
- **Be trained to identify and understand the different typologies of abuse and perpetrators,** the prevalence of different types of abuse in the local area, and

²⁰⁹ Standing Together. [In Search of Excellence](#): A refreshed guide to effective domestic abuse partnership work – The Coordinated Community Response (CCR): 2020.

the appropriate strategies to reduce abusive behaviour recognising that different groups of professionals need different levels of training and awareness based on their level of contact with children and families.

- **Have embedded, or have readily available, input from specialist agencies and 'by and for' services** that have a proven track record of supporting victims of domestic abuse and who are aware and experienced in working with male and female victims with protected characteristics, including being from an ethnic minority, being disabled, LGBT or from a particular religion or faith.
- **Fully inform victims about the purpose and aims of the multi-agency safeguarding team where such a team is in place.** The team needs to be aware that victims may perceive the involvement of statutory agencies in their situation in a negative way. They may fear that they will not be believed, that they will be blamed for the abuse and that they may lose their children. Agencies should be trained to understand the different forms of abuse including coercive, controlling and violent behaviour and the impact it has on male and female victims, and this should inform professional practice.
- **Develop processes to ensure that individuals do not have to repeat their story** to several professionals in different agencies. The team should consider a single point of contact approach with the person acting as a lead seeking consent to share information with relevant partners in all situations where it is possible and legally required.
- **Develop processes that ensure that the safety, needs and wishes of all non-abusive family members are sought at the earliest opportunity** and that plans are developed which are responsive to the views they have given.
- **Embed reflective practice throughout the service** centred on feedback from victims (both adults and children). Consult them regularly and use this to reassess situations where necessary, considering new information, informing continuous development and improvement of the collaborative work of the agencies.
- **Consider the role of victims throughout the process** from service development to commissioning, delivery and evaluation. There should be an ongoing process of victim engagement throughout the lifecycle of any multi-agency arrangement.
- **Consider the burden on the victim throughout the process**, while it is sometimes appropriate for actions to be focused on the victim or non-abusive parent, this can also place additional burdens on the victim when the person responsible for the situation is the perpetrator.

A clear strategic focus

443. For multi-agency working to be effective, all agencies must work with a clear and common focus. For this to be achieved partnerships should:

- **Have an integrated governance and operational structure**, so that agencies are regularly meeting at strategic, operational, and decision-making level. Accountability and leadership are clear and effective and are appropriately linked to local bodies such as the Community Safety Partnership, Safeguarding Partners and Safeguarding Adult Boards.
- **Agree a statement of common purpose** which sets out a shared vision and ambition and a high-level operating manual and protocols for the multi-agency safeguarding team.
- **Agree a common outcomes framework**, which will focus on four key measures: effective informed support provided to victims and family members, which increases their level of safety and wellbeing at the earliest opportunity; increasing victim trust and confidence in safeguarding; perpetrator behaviour addressed at the earliest opportunity by agencies; family needs considered holistically by agencies, not in isolation from each other.
- **Take ownership of the need to understand local referral pathways and available provision**, identifying any gaps in provision and considering within strategic governance how these gaps can be addressed.
- **Together, regularly analyse performance and outcome measurement data**, undertake deep dive case audits to check for missed opportunities and consider the feedback received from service users and specialist organisations. A key element of the monitoring process should involve scrutiny around whether the data collected reflect any disproportionality in terms of decisions or practice for particular groups, e.g. ethnic minorities, LGBT, disabled victims, or victims belonging to a particular faith. Personal data relating to any of these groups is considered 'special category' data and is highlighted in Article 9 of the UK GDPR. The processing (including sharing) of any 'special category' personal data must meet further conditions set out in this Article. Further [guidance on special category data](#) is provided by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The data collected could be used to improve ongoing practice. This process might be facilitated by a critical friend – a peer multi-agency team or independent local or national organisation.
- **Identify a dedicated multi-agency team coordinator or manager** with specific responsibility for team building, developing a common culture of meaningful partnership through the creation of operating manuals, joint protocols, agreed assessment procedures, joint induction and training programmes and common monitoring and evaluation processes. All multi-agency partners are clear about the role, responsibility, authority, and accountability of the multi-agency

safeguarding team coordinator/manager; there is a clear, multi-agency safeguarding escalation process for any concerns.

- **Share information in a way that is timely, proportionate, legal, and safe.** A protocol will be in place between agencies to govern this information sharing process and be the subject of annual review. All IT and use of that IT will be compliant with data protection legislation. The multi-agency safeguarding team will have developed and published a data protection impact assessment (DPIA). A DPIA **must** be in place where a proposed data share is high risk or concerns sensitive data. Further Guidance can be found here; [ICO Data protection impact assessments](#).
- **Provide accurate data including designing out duplication of cases** where feasible and understanding the service pathway being undertaken by victims of domestic abuse.

Participation as active and joined-up partners

444. In addition to having a common strategic focus, multi-agency partnerships should also ensure the right people and organisations are at meetings and that a whole family approach is taken to ensure meaningful work is achieved. Agencies should:

- **Engage the core agencies whose collaborative working will be needed** to improve outcomes for victims, including children. This is likely to include the police, probation, children's services, health (physical and mental), housing, specialist domestic abuse services, education, adult safeguarding services, drugs, and alcohol support and Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service). This could also involve undergoing training in other safeguarding procedures to maintain a full understanding of how different harms and vulnerabilities intersect with one another.
- **Seek to undergo training in other safeguarding procedures** to maintain a full understanding of how different harms and vulnerabilities intersect with one another. Good practice might consist of teams undertaking training in one another's safeguarding procedures, to improve the response and support given to victims.
- **Demonstrate both in policy and practice that agencies consider the safeguarding need of all family members**, i.e. that those agencies primarily charged with child safeguarding are considering the safety and wellbeing of the non-abusive parent and other family members, and the agencies primarily charged with safeguarding adults will also consider the support needs of the child(ren).

Specialist skills

- **Invite a specialist domestic abuse service to be embedded within the team.** The specialist should have skills and experience in identifying the individual

circumstances of risk and need someone might be facing. This should include professional expertise on supporting children experiencing or perpetrating domestic abuse, including in a family setting or in their own intimate relationships.

- **Professionals from that service should be treated as having parity of status** with statutory bodies in the multi-agency safeguarding team (they should, for example, be included in all relevant meetings, be part of information sharing agreements, have good access around the building, expect that their skills, knowledge and experience will be drawn on for key decisions and the outcome of decisions shared with them).
- **Set an expectation** that the service invited to join the multi-agency safeguarding team is able to evidence that it meets the [shared sector standards](#) agreed between Imkaan, Respect, SafeLives and Women's Aid published in 2016.

Safe and effective information sharing

445. Effective and meaningful multi-agency work relies heavily on timely and appropriate, while lawful, information sharing, ensuring all agencies have the necessary information to participate materially in meetings and make informed decisions. Agencies should:

- **Make mandatory, appropriate information sharing training available** to the multi-agency safeguarding team so that they are professionally competent and confident about when and how to share (or not share) information, in line with the multi-agency safeguarding team protocol (see above), data protection legislation (UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018, 'the 2018 Act') and the [ICO Data Sharing Code of Practice](#). When sharing personal data, consideration must be given to whether it is lawful, personal data can only be shared if there is a lawful basis for doing so. Training should be informed by service user feedback and learning from local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, national reviews published by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- **Develop links and information sharing protocols that place the safety of the victims, including children, at the centre** with multi-agency safeguarding structures including MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements), MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference), Operation Encompass, CSE (child sexual exploitation) operational groups, Prevent, the Community Safety Partnership and Supporting Families.
- **Decision-making about what to share, and when, should be governed by a clear, collective understanding** about the risks to safety for an individual and family, and how those risks and the other needs within that family can be addressed. Information sharing should happen with the express intent of reducing risk to one or more family members. There must be a lawful basis to

process (including sharing) any personal data. What lawful basis is appropriate will depend on the specific purpose for the processing. The six different lawful bases are set out in Article 6 of the UK GDPR, one of which must be met before personal data can be processed or shared. If using consent as the lawful basis this must be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication, and an individual should be able to withdraw consent at any time. Consent may not be the most appropriate lawful basis and consideration should be given to each situation; for example processing personal data to comply with a statutory obligation such as a court directive, in this case the lawful basis would be compliance with a legal obligation. If there is a genuine change in circumstances that requires the lawful basis to be amended, this should be documented and the individual informed; for example if consent was used as the original lawful basis, but an unanticipated risk to an individual has become apparent, then the lawful basis can justifiably be changed to vital interest. Further details on lawful basis is provided online by the [Information Commissioner's Office](#). Where necessary agencies should redact information or consider splitting meetings where it is thought that doing so could reduce the risk to the victims, including children. In relation to law enforcement processing by competent authorities under Part 3 of the 2018 Act, such as police forces, different rules under that Part of the 2018 Act will apply.

- **Document these decisions** to demonstrate data protection compliance.
- **Record all relevant data**, information sharing is only as good as the quality of the information being shared, and the level of detail can be crucial to accurate risk assessment. For example, simply recording “there is a history of domestic abuse” does not give other professionals the level of detail needed to be able to risk assess. When sharing personal data, consideration must be given to whether it is lawful, personal data can only be shared if there is a lawful basis for doing so.

Valuing and employing staff with the right values

446. The work performed by agencies is heavily reliant on the ability of staff to carry out the work, and agencies should ensure that staff are adequately supported. This can be done by:

- **Demonstrating in both policy and practice that they take the duty of care to their staff seriously.** This should involve a focus on reflective practice, joint training programmes which bring different organisations’ staff together, clinical supervision and employee assistance programmes;
- **Demonstrating professional curiosity** when engaging service users. Often, victims will make contact with a range of services before disclosing their abuse. These contacts represent opportunities for early intervention, so it is crucial that all staff are trained to recognise domestic abuse and ask the right questions;

- **Creating opportunities for staff to have sight of any positive outcomes**, such as case studies or local stories, and being able to link back to families that they had initial contact with, to understand the impact of their work;
- **Recognising the specialised nature of the work**, choosing staff who hold specialist qualifications, training, accreditation, or other recognised professional standard which gives parity of status with agency colleagues; and
- **Having a domestic abuse policy in place**, complementing the policies held by each individual agency, which addresses the potential for staff to themselves be victims, or perpetrators, or experiencing vicarious trauma, which they action and own.

447. There are a number of different existing initiatives and processes beyond MASHs (or equivalent) that agencies should be feeding into. Some of these initiatives and processes will be more or less appropriate depending on the level of risk and the stage at which agencies are intervening, e.g. early intervention or a well-established case. These include but are not limited to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, Perpetrator Panels and Perpetrator Programmes (see also the section '[Addressing the behaviour of the perpetrator](#)').

Address the behaviour of the perpetrator

448. Addressing perpetrator behaviour is as important as safeguarding and supporting victims. Often, the courses of action considered are those aimed at the victims and non-abusive parents, placing additional burdens on them. Tackling perpetrator behaviour and placing the onus on them should be a key consideration for partnership work.

449. Agencies should take the earliest opportunity available to consider how the behaviour of the perpetrator can be disrupted or constrained, putting the emphasis for change on that individual. The response to the perpetrator must be appropriate for the unique context and needs of the victim. For instance, victims subject to 'honour'-based abuse may be experiencing a spectrum of behaviours from multiple perpetrators.

450. Where Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) statutory interventions are not available, agencies should consider creative options to address the behaviour of the perpetrator, including recourse to Youth Offending Teams, Integrated Offender Management (IOM), Multi-Agency Targeting And Co-ordinating (MATAC), Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes, safeguarding, housing, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the full range of quality assured perpetrator programmes. Any approaches adopted should work closely with existing arrangements, including MARAC to ensure perpetrator management teams have key information from victim-focused panels.

451. Young people perpetrating abuse in their relationships must be supported in an appropriate way that places emphasis on tackling the drivers of their behaviour. Court and responding agencies must consider youth justice guidelines when responding to

cases of teenage relationship abuse, avoid unnecessarily criminalising young people, and identify appropriate interventions to address behaviours that might constitute or lead to abuse. Relevant youth justice guidelines include:

- [Case management guidance for Youth Offending Teams](#)
- [Standards for children in the Youth Justice System](#)
- [Crown Prosecution Service guidance on youth offenders](#)
- [Sentencing Council guidelines on sentencing children and young people](#)

452. Agencies should also ensure multi-agency safeguarding teams receive mandatory training on:

- the full range of behaviours that can be abusive, coercive or controlling;
- recognising the key risk and vulnerability factors and power relationships;
- understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse and the basic typologies of different perpetrators, including dynamics of denial and minimisation and how to appropriately weigh up the credibility of different versions of events. Staff should know that key perpetrator tactics often involve trying to manipulate frontline services making those professionals more likely to identify and be confident to competently address coercive, controlling, and manipulative behaviours;
- recognising the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people, including the impact of being exposed to domestic abuse, and being used by the perpetrator to inflict abuse on the target victim; and
- skills to form alliances with victims and early engagement with perpetrators aimed at behaviour change.

453. This will make those professionals more likely to identify and be confident to competently address coercive, controlling, and manipulative behaviours. Staff need to be aware of the complexity of different forms of perpetration which may not neatly fit into the binary of 'victim' or 'perpetrator.' For example, a young person may be perpetrating domestic abuse but may be a victim of child sexual exploitation themselves or a woman may be perpetrating abuse within a forced marriage context but may also be experiencing domestic abuse herself.

Addressing the behaviour of the perpetrator

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements

454. [Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements \(MAPPA\)](#) are a set of statutory arrangements to assess and manage the risk posed by certain sexual, violent and terrorist offenders. They are established by virtue of sections 325 to 327 of the [Criminal Justice Act 2003](#) and apply to all police force areas in England and Wales. MAPPA

requires local criminal justice agencies and other bodies to work together in partnership in order to deal with sexual, violent, terrorist or other dangerous offenders in order to protect the public from serious harm. MAPPA brings together the Police, Probation and Prison Services into what is known as the MAPPA ‘Responsible Authority’ for each MAPPA Area (coterminous with police force areas). A number of other agencies are under a statutory duty to co-operate with the Responsible Authority (e.g. Children’s Services, Adult Social Services, Health Trusts and Authorities, Youth Offending Teams, Home Office Immigration Enforcement). Local Strategic Management Boards are responsible for overseeing the arrangements of their respective police force areas.

455. MAPPA is for convicted offenders, the conviction does not have to be for a violent or sexual offence but the circumstances surrounding it need to be indicative that there is a risk of harm. Anyone can refer a convicted individual into MAPPA. It is particularly suitable in domestic abuse cases when dealing with serial perpetrators or other offenders who pose a high risk of serious harm where there is need for a formal multi-agency plan to be kept under review. IDVAS and other victim representatives should be included within MAPPA partnerships. See the MAPPA Guidance for more information [Domestic Abuse and Stalking - Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements - MAPPA](#).

Perpetrator Panels

456. All local areas should have a forum for discussion that is focused on the perpetrator; this may be as part of a focused discussion at a MARAC or elsewhere. Many local areas are introducing multi-agency perpetrator panels, such as the Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination meeting (MATAC), which has been piloted in Northumbria and rolled out across six other police forces in the North East and Yorkshire. The Drive programme²¹⁰ has also successfully used perpetrator panels in other forces in England and Wales. Such panels bring together local agencies to identify strategies for responding to the most harmful domestic abuse perpetrators. Interventions identified through MATAC or Drive can include education, prevention, diversion, disruption, and enforcement.

457. The following principles will help agencies deliver effective multi-agency perpetrator forums:

- **Identification** – Panel agencies have the tools to recognise and assess the level of risk and harm posed by perpetrators of domestic abuse, including serial offenders. Individuals convicted of an offence under schedule 15 of the [Criminal Justice Act 2003](#), who are subject to Notification requirements under the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) (commonly known as the Sex Offender Register) or are sentenced to more than 12 months’ imprisonment are automatically eligible for MAPPA management. For other convicted perpetrators who pose a high risk of

²¹⁰ The [Drive partnership](#) works with high-risk perpetrators to prevent their behaviour and protect victims.

harm, consideration should always be given to referring into MAPPA on a discretionary basis.

- **Multi-Agency Engagement** – Agencies involved in offender management, safeguarding, disruption and behaviour change attend the Panel and are involved in governance as appropriate.
- **Information Sharing** – Agencies share relevant and proportionate information, in line with the protocol and UK GDPR.
- **Disruption** – The Panel develops a multi-agency coordinated action plan to disrupt abuse and reduce reoffending, using the full range of tools and actions available.
- **Holding Cases** – The Panel provides oversight and ensures that actions are completed and followed up, that cases are held by the appropriate agency (avoiding duplication with other agencies and multi-agency initiatives such as MAPPA, IOM and MARAC) and are reheard when required.
- **Safeguarding and Victim Voice** – The Panel recognises victim and survivor voices, considers the impact of planned actions on risk to victims, including children and works with the relevant agencies to safeguard.
- **Case Volumes** – The Panel will have clear local criteria which ensures the appropriate volume of cases is heard.
- **Equality** – The Panel recognises the needs of both victims and perpetrators with protected characteristics.
- **Operational Support** – The Panel will have enough support and resources to ensure its effective functioning.
- **Governance** – There is a clear and accountable governance structure and strategic leadership from the relevant agencies. There should be links with the MAPPA Strategic Management Board.

Perpetrator Programmes

458. It is important that local areas commission safe, effective perpetrator programmes which take into account the needs in their areas and are accompanied by support for any associated victims. These should be ‘as well as’ support for victims, not ‘instead of’. There are several different accreditation schemes and standards operating in perpetrator work.

459. The Government has committed to develop a set of overarching national standards and principles for domestic abuse perpetrator interventions. These will provide a framework for commissioners to help determine the quality of perpetrator interventions, particularly on safeguarding and victim and survivor safety.

460. The third sector expert organisation Respect has developed quality standards and an accreditation process for services working with perpetrators. The [Respect Standard](#)²¹¹ is nationally recognised and sets out an evidence-based, safety-focused framework which identifies good practice and offers guidance for organisations to ensure that they are meeting the needs of service users safely and effectively, with the safety of victims, including children at its heart.
461. These programmes should also be accessible therefore relevant needs assessments may be required to allow for identification and appropriate response.
462. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has their own accredited programmes for those convicted and sentenced by the courts. The Correctional Services Advice and Accreditation Panel (CSAAP), an independent committee of international experts, helps HMPPS to accredit programmes by reviewing programme design, quality assurance procedures and findings, and programme evaluations. They make recommendations about whether to accredit programmes based on set criteria and ensure that programmes:
- are based on the latest international evidence and thinking around what works to reduce reoffending;
 - address factors relevant to reoffending and desistance;
 - are targeted at appropriate users;
 - develop new skills (as opposed to only awareness raising);
 - motivate, engage and retain participants;
 - are delivered as intended; and
 - are subject to monitoring, evaluation and review.

Behaviour Change Interventions

463. Programmes such as that ran by Ahisma and 'Talk, Listen, Change' aim to challenge and support perpetrators of abuse to make long term changes to their violent and abusive behaviour. Behaviour change interventions also consider additional needs such as alcohol and substance misuse and mental health difficulties.
464. The Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) model is part of the Whole System Approach to Domestic Abuse piloted in the North East and Yorkshire. The model involves data analysis to identify high harm perpetrators who are then referred into a multi-agency panel to coordinate action including education, diversion, disruption, and enforcement to prevent abuse and reduce reoffending. Findings from

²¹¹ In Wales, refer also to the VAWDASV [Perpetrator Service Standards](#).

one force's two-year evaluation indicate reductions in reoffending across different types of domestic abuse.²¹²

Box 7.2: Case Study – Multi-agency working

Coordinated Community Response Case Study

A [Coordinated Community Response](#) (CCR) offers a comprehensive, inclusive and holistic approach to address domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, by bringing statutory, voluntary and community agencies and organisations alongside specialist 'by and for' services to prevent, identify and respond to the multiple and intersecting needs of victims and children who are subject to this oppression, while holding perpetrators to account.

How partnership working can operate in practice:

K described experiencing emotional abuse from her ex-partner throughout their three-year relationship and states that towards the end of the relationship there was a constant threat of physical violence and K felt that it was only a matter of time before he hit her. During the relationship, the perpetrator was very controlling and jealous. He would sometimes turn up unexpectedly when K was out with friends and always demanded to know what she was wearing, where she was going and who she was with. K described the perpetrator as sexually violent. He was very rough during sex. She did not consent to this and sometimes would cry afterwards – he did not care. The perpetrator had access to weapons and had experience in cyber security, so K was concerned that he may be tracking her or have access to her phone. K was very afraid of her ex-partner.

After they separated, K's ex-partner repeatedly contacted and harassed K and her friends and family. Initially, he contacted her every three to four days by phone. He also sent K unwanted messages and gifts on special occasions, despite K stating that she wished to have no further contact.

As a result of the abuse, K was diagnosed as having post-traumatic stress disorder. She had been accessing private counselling but could not afford to keep doing this.

K was referred to the Angelou Partnership's lead, Advance²¹³, who offered K support from an IDVA. The IDVA began supporting K and helped her create a safety plan. The plan included a referral to Rape Crisis and the Angelou Partnership's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service, provided by Solace Women's Aid, to support K with her experience of sexual violence and abuse. The IDVA also referred K to a Woman's Trust, for specialist domestic abuse counselling that was free for K to access.

²¹² Davies, P, Biddle, P. Domestic Abuse Serial Perpetrator Interventions. Multi Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC): Tackling perpetrators of domestic abuse. Evaluation – Final Report: 2017 Northumbria University.

²¹³ [Information on Advance and its role within the Angelou Partnership is provided on the partnership's website.](#)

The Advance IDVA explained the different options available to K and supported K in the following ways (as chosen by K) in conjunction with external partners: civil court (e.g., obtaining an injunction with the help of a specialised law firm); obtaining safer housing through the local authority's Sanctuary Scheme to target harden her property including improved windows locks and doors; working closely with the police to report the abuse; improving K's digital and technology safety; and putting a safety plan in place with regard to the harassment and stalking.

The IDVA also provided K with emotional support and more in-depth support to understand the dynamics of domestic abuse.

After receiving specialist support for her intersecting experience of violence and abuse from three organisations in partnership, K reported that she felt less alone, her safety had increased, and she felt confident to know where she could access further support if she needed it.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

465. A Domestic Homicide Review (a 'DHR') under section 9(1) of the [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004](#) ('the 2004 Act') is a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were in an intimate personal relationship, or by a member of the same household. Where a victim took their own life (suicide) and the circumstances give rise to concern, such as it emerging that there was coercive controlling behaviour in the relationship, a DHR should also be carried out. Such reviews are carried out in local areas by Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), made up of one or more of the bodies and persons bodies listed in section 9(4) of the 2004 Act. The reviews are undertaken with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death, particularly regarding the way in which professionals and organisations work together to safeguard victims.

466. When a domestic homicide occurs, the relevant police force should inform the relevant CSP in writing of the incident. Overall responsibility for establishing a review rests with the local CSP as they are ideally placed to initiate a DHR and review panel due to their multi-agency design and locations across England and Wales. CSPs are made up of representatives from some, but not all, of the 'responsible authorities' listed in section 5 of the [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#) ('the 1998 Act'), which have the functions set out in section 6 of the 1998 Act in relation to a local government area who work together to protect their local communities from crime. See further [guidance on conducting DHRs](#). It is the duty of any person or organisation listed within subsection (4) of the 2004 Act to have regard to the DHR statutory guidance.

Annex A – Support Available for Victims

- **24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline (England)** – run by Refuge, freephone: 0808 2000 247. British Sign Language access from 10am - 6pm on weekdays. The website offers a live chat service between 3pm - 10pm on weekdays.
- **Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse** – an organisation that supports those who have lost a family member (or friend) through fatal domestic abuse.
- **Age UK** – an organisation that supports older people and victims of elder abuse.
- **Ask for ANI** – a codeword scheme for victims to access support from the safety of their local pharmacy.
- **Broken Rites** – a group offering mutual support and information to separated and divorced spouses and partners of clergy, ministers, and Church Army Officers.
- **Childline** – a free 24-hour service providing support for anyone under 19 in the UK. 0800 1111.
- **Clinks** – an organisation that supports the voluntary sector working with people in the criminal justice system and their families. Clinks have a directory of services, although it is not exhaustive, and are experienced in supporting women who have suffered domestic abuse.
- **Dogs Trust Freedom Project** – a specialist dog fostering service for victims fleeing domestic abuse.
- **Galop** – a specialist organisation and LGBT anti-violence charity offering support to LGBT victims.
- **Hestia Respond to Abuse Advice Line** – a specialist advice line supporting employers to help staff experiencing domestic abuse on 0203 879 3695 or via email Adviceline.EB@hestia.org. 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday.
- **HM Prison and Probation Service Unwanted Prisoner Contact Service** – a service for victims to contact HMPPS to report unwanted letters, phone calls, texts or messages from a prisoner or to proactively seek to stop contact. You may access the service by completing the form on Gov.uk using the link [gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact](https://www.gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact) (24 hr access) or call 03000606699 or via email unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm. The Unwanted

Prisoner Contact service also offers victims the opportunity to contact HMPPS to raise concerns about a prisoner being released.

- **Hourglass** – a specialist organisation aiming to end the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people in the UK. Their helpline can be accessed by phone on 0808 808 8141, text on 07860 052906 or email helpline@wearehourglass.org.
- **Jewish Women’s Aid** – a specialist organisation supporting Jewish women and children affected by domestic abuse. Their helpline is 0808 801 0500 and is open Mondays to Thursdays from 9.30 am - 9.30 pm (excluding Jewish holidays and bank holidays).
- **Karma Nirvana ‘Honour’-Based Abuse helpline** – a specialist organisation supporting victims of ‘honour’-based abuse and forced marriage. Their helpline is 0800 599 9247 and is open 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday.
- **Loving Me** – a specialist organisation providing one-to-one online support and advocacy for high risk Transgender, Gender Queer and Non-Binary victims of domestic abuse.
- **ManKind Initiative** – a specialist organisation supporting male victims of domestic abuse and their children.
- **Men’s Advice Line** – run by Respect. 0808 801 0327 open Monday to Friday 9am - 8pm or email info@mensadviceline.org.uk
- **Muslim Women’s Network** – a specialist organisation supporting Muslim women and girls.
- **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse helpline** – 0800 999 5428 Monday to Friday 10am - 5pm.
- **National Stalking helpline** – run by Suzy Lamplugh Trust. 0808 802 0300 9.30am - 4pm Monday to Friday.
- **NSPCC** – The UK’s leading children’s charity working to prevent abuse, rebuild children’s lives and support families.
- **NSPCC FGM helpline** – 0800 028 3550.
- **Operation Encompass Teachers’ National Helpline** – 0204 513 9990 open 8am - 1pm Monday to Friday. The helpline is for school staff to seek guidance and discuss queries they may have following an Operation Encompass notification and in preparation for supporting a child experiencing domestic abuse.
- **Paladin** – an organisation that provides support for victims of stalking.

- **Parental Education Growth Support (PEGS)** – an organisation that supports victims of child to parent abuse.
- **Rail to Refuge** – a scheme providing free rail travel to refuge accommodation for women, men and children fleeing domestic abuse through a member organisation of Women’s Aid, Welsh Women’s Aid, Imkaan or Respect (which runs the Men’s Advice Line).
- **Rape Crisis England and Wales** – an organisation representing rape crisis centres across England and Wales which provide support for women and girls of all ages who have experienced any form of sexual violence. Their telephone number is 0808 802 9999. Their website also offers a Live Chat service.
- **Refuge** – an organisation operated by an all female staff that provides support for all victims of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.
- **Respect** – an organisation that works with male victims of domestic abuse and domestic abuse perpetrators. Respects operates the Men’s Advice line, a confidential helping for male victims of domestic abuse and the Respect Phoneline for domestic abuse perpetrators and those supporting them.
- **Restored** – a specialist organisation working to tackle domestic abuse by partnering with churches and Christian organisations.
- **Revenge Porn helpline** – open between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday. 0345 600 0459 or help@revengepornhelpline.org.uk.
- **Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs)** – centres providing medical, practical and emotional support to all victims of sexual assault.
- **Sign Health Domestic Abuse Service** – a specialist domestic abuse service to support the health and wellbeing of deaf people.
- **Sikh Women’s Aid** – an organisation providing support for Sikh women and girls.
- **Southall Black Sisters** – an organisation providing support for ethnic minority victims and migrant women. Their helpline is 020 8571 9595 and is open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.
- **Stay Safe East** – a specialist organisation providing support for deaf and disabled victims of domestic abuse across London. Referrals should be made to enquiries@staysafe-east.org.uk.
- **Surviving Economic Abuse** – a specialist organisation dedicated to supporting victims of economic abuse, working in partnership with Money Advice Plus to provide money and debt advice to victims experiencing financial difficulties.

- **UK Forced Marriage Unit (FMU)** – a Government policy unit leading on forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. FMU operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims and potential victims of forced marriage. 020 7008 0151.
- **Victim Support** – a specialist service helping anyone affected by any types of crime, not only those who experience it directly, but also their friends, family and any other people involved.
- **Women’s Aid Federation England (WAFE)** – an organisation supporting women affected by domestic abuse. Their website offers a Live Chat service available Monday to Friday 10am to 6pm and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 6pm. Women’s Aid also provide a directory, listing local support services across the UK, although it is not exhaustive it is updated regularly.

Wales specific organisations:

- **24-hour National Helpline (Wales) ‘Live Fear Free’** – 0808 801 0800 open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Live Fear Free helpline is a free service for all victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence and those close to them, including family, friends, colleagues and other concerned parties.

Live Fear Free can also be contacted in the following ways;

Text: 0786 007 7333

Email: info@livefearfreehelpline.wales

Live chat: gov.wales/livefearfree

- **BAWSO** – a specialist organisation dedicated to supporting ethnic minority communities.
- **Dyn Wales helpline** – an organisation supporting male victims of domestic abuse. 0808 801 0321 or email support@dynwales.org (support for male victims)
- **Meic** – a free, confidential, anonymous, and bilingual helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales providing information, useful advice and support. Meic are open 8am - midnight, 7 days a week, by telephone, SMS text and instant messaging.

Telephone: 0808 80 23456

Text: 54001

Live chat: www.meiccymru.org

- **Mid, West, East and South Wales** the main sexual violence support service provider is **New Pathways** and can be contacted on 01685 379 310 or enquiries@newpathways.org.uk.

- **North Wales** (Anglesey, Conwy, Gwynedd, Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham), there are two main sexual violence support services:
 - **Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC)** provides information, specialist support and therapy to anyone who has experienced any kind of sexual abuse and violence; they can be contacted on 01248 670 628 or info@rasacymru.org.uk.
 - **Stepping Stones** provides therapeutic services to adults who have been sexually abused as children; they can be contacted on 01978 352 717 or info@steppingstonesnorthwales.co.uk.
- **Welsh Women's Aid** – an organisation supporting Welsh women affected by domestic abuse.

Annex B – Glossary of Acronyms

- **ACE** – Adverse Childhood Experience
- **APVA** – Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse
- **CAPVA** – Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse
- **CCR** – Coordinated Community Response
- **CJS** – Criminal Justice System
- **CPS** – Crown Prosecution Service
- **CQC** – Care Quality Commission
- **CSE** – Child Sexual Exploitation
- **CSEW** – Crime Survey for England and Wales
- **CSP** – Community Safety Partnership
- **DA BPF** – Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework
- **DAEHL** – Domestic Abuse Early Help Lead
- **DAHA** – Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance
- **DAPNs** – Domestic Abuse Protection Notices
- **DAPOs** – Domestic Abuse Protection Orders
- **DAPPs** – Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes
- **DASH** – Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and ‘Honour’-Based Violence
- **DDVC** – Destitute Domestic Violence Concession
- **DHR** – Domestic Homicide Review
- **DHSC** – Department of Health and Social Care
- **DLUHC** – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- **DVDS** – Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, also known as “Clare’s Law”
- **DVILR** – Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain
- **DVPNs** – Domestic Violence Protection Notices
- **DVPOs** – Domestic Violence Protection Orders
- **DWP** – Department for Work and Pensions
- **FCA** – Financial Conduct Authority
- **FGM** – Female Genital Mutilation
- **FGMPO** – Female Genital Mutilation Protection orders
- **FOUR** – Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted and/or Repeated
- **HMCTS** – Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service

- **HMICFRS** – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
- **HMIP** – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation
- **HMPPS** – Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service
- **ICB** – Integrated Care Board
- **ICP** – Integrated Care Partnership
- **ICS** – Integrated Care System
- **IDVA** – Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
- **INCADVA** - Inter-Collegiate and Agency Domestic Violence Abuse
- **IOM** – Integrated Offender Management
- **ISVA** – Independent Sexual Violence Advisor
- **JTAI** – Joint Targeted Area Inspection
- **KSS** – Knowledge and Skills Statements
- **LCJBs** – Local Criminal Justice Boards
- **LGBT** – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans
- **MAPPA** – Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
- **MARAC** – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
- **MASH** – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
- **MATAC** – Multi-Agency tasking and coordination meeting
- **NICE** – National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
- **NRM** – National Referral Mechanism
- **NRPF** – No Recourse to Public Funds
- **NSE** – National Statement of Expectations
- **ONS** – Office for National Statistics
- **PCC** – Police and Crime Commissioner
- **PCDAW** – Parent and Child Domestic Abuse Worker
- **RSHE** – Relationships, Sex and Health Education
- **VAWDASV** – Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- **VAWG** – Violence Against Women and Girls

Annex C – Guidance Documents

All resources listed here and within the guidance may be subject to changes and updates. Where impending updates are known at the time of writing indication of this is given.

Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse²¹⁴

<https://www.app.college.police.uk/domestic-abuse-index/>

Child to Parent Abuse Guidance²¹⁵

<https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/HO%20Information%20APVA.pdf>

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476900/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime.PDF

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance²¹⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482528/Controlling_or_coercive_behaviour_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Crown Prosecution Service Guidance on Domestic Abuse²¹⁷

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/domestic-abuse>

DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) toolkit

<http://accreditation.dahalliance.org.uk/>

Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and ‘honour’ Based Violence (DASH) risk checklist

<https://www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/DASH-2009.pdf>

Domestic Abuse Toolkit for Employers

<https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/domestic-abuse-toolkit/>

Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Guidance²¹⁸

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575273/DHR-Statutory-Guidance-161206.pdf

²¹⁴ At the time of writing, it is known that this publication is planned for update.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Guidance²¹⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575361/DVDS_guidance_FINAL_v3.pdf

Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) and Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575363/DVPO_guidance_FINAL_3.pdf

Female Genital Mutilation Statutory Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-statutory-guidance-on-female-genital-mutilation>

Forced Marriage Statutory Guidance and Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-right-to-choose-government-guidance-on-forced-marriage/multi-agency-statutory-guidance-for-dealing-with-forced-marriage-and-multi-agency-practice-guidelines-handling-cases-of-forced-marriage-accessible>

Guidance for Local Strategies (Wales)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/guidance-for-local-strategies.pdf>

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Domestic Abuse Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-policy-framework>

Homelessness Code of Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a969da940f0b67aa5087b93/Homelessness_code_of_guidance.pdf

Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers²²⁰

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf

Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance²²¹

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Male Victims Statement (Crown Prosecution Service)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-public-statement-male-victims-crimes-covered-cps-vawg-strategy>

Supporting Male Victims Document (Home Office)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-male-victims>

²¹⁹ At the time of writing, it is known that this publication is planned for update.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059234/Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance EW Non-Statutory Guidance SNI v2.8.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059234/Modern_Slavery_Statutory_Guidance_EW_Non-Statutory_Guidance_SNI_v2.8.pdf)

Multi-Agency Working and Information Sharing Project

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338875/MASH.pdf

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Quality Standard

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs116>

National Statement of Expectations

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1064571/National Statement of Expectations 2022 Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1064571/National_Statement_of_Expectations_2022_Final.pdf)

Pathfinder Toolkit

<https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/blog-3/pathfinder-toolkit>

Perpetrator Service Standards (Wales)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/perpetrator-service-standards.pdf>

Pre-Charged Bail and Released Under Investigation Guidance²²²

<https://cdn.prgloo.com/media/832fb4a76353450ab555b7db1c93ed48.pdf>

Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721495/Fund for domestic abuse services 2018-20 prospectus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721495/Fund_for_domestic_abuse_services_2018-20_prospectus.pdf)

Respect Standard Accreditation Guidance

<https://www.respect.uk.net/pages/64-respect-standard>

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk in the NHS: Safeguarding Accountability and Assurance Framework

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/safeguarding-children-young-people-adults-at-risk-saaf.pdf>

SafeLives Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) guidance

<https://safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings>

Sanctuary Schemes for Households at Risk of Domestic Violence: A Guide for Agencies

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sanctuary-schemes-for-households-at-risk-of-domestic-violence-guide-for-agencies>

²²² At the time of writing, it is known that this publication is planned for update.

Sentencing Children and Young People Sentencing Council Guidelines

<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/overarching-guides/magistrates-court/item/sentencing-children-and-young-people/>

Sexual Violence and Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges>

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (England)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Stalking Protection Act: Statutory Guidance for the Police

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stalking-protection-act-statutory-guidance-for-the-police>

Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System 2019

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/780504/Standards_for_children_in_youth_justice_services_2019.doc.pdf

Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Services in Wales

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/statutory-guidance-for-the-commissioning-of-vawdasv-services-in-wales.pdf>

Statutory Guidance Framework: Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship²²³

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-guidance-framework-controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-in-an-intimate-or-family-relationship>

Strengthening Families and Protecting Children Programme

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strengthening-families-protecting-children-sfpc-programme>

Tackling Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: A Collaborative Commissioning Toolkit for Service in Wales

https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/media/jmun2m2n/vawdasv-toolkit_wales_web.pdf

The Multi-Agency Response to Children Living with Domestic Abuse [The multi-agency response to children living with domestic abuse \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Violence Against Women and Girls Commissioning Toolkit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-national-statement-of-expectations-and-commissioning-toolkit>

²²³ At the time of writing, it is known that this publication is planned for update.

Violence Against Women and Girls: Sector Shared Core Standards

<https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjls0c4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Shared-Standards-Whole-Document-Final-30.11.2016.pdf>

Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance²²⁴

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Working Together to Safeguard People: Handling Individual Cases to Protect Children at Risk

<https://gov.wales/safeguarding-children-risk-abuse-or-neglect>

Youth Offenders CPS Legal Guidance

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/youth-offenders>

Youth Offending Team and Managers Case Management Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/case-management-guidance>

²²⁴ At the time of writing, it is known that this publication is planned for update.

Annex D – Table of Protective Orders

Jurisdiction	Name	Purpose	Process	Relevant Legislation	Is a breach a Criminal Offence?	Sanction for breach
Civil proceedings (Magistrates' court)	Domestic Violence Protection Orders	Intended to provide immediate and short-term cessation of contact between perpetrator and victim.	Separate from criminal proceedings (if any). Police make an application to the magistrates' court.	Crime and Security Act 2010	No	Maximum two years imprisonment (for civil contempt)
Civil proceedings (Magistrates' court)	Violent Offender Orders	For those convicted of specified serious violent offences to protect the public from the risk of serious violent harm.	Post-conviction. Police make an application to the magistrates' court.	Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum
Civil proceedings (Magistrates' court)	Sexual Risk Order	Protection from harm where risk from person shown to have carried out certain sexual behaviour.	Not dependent on conviction. Police make an application to the magistrates' court.	Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum

Jurisdiction	Name	Purpose	Process	Relevant Legislation	Is a breach a Criminal Offence?	Sanction for breach
Civil proceedings (Magistrates' court)	Notification order	Makes a sexual offender who has been convicted or cautioned abroad subject to the notification requirements. Used where necessary to prevent sexual harm.	Post foreign conviction. Police make an application to the magistrates' court.	Sexual Offences Act 2003	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum
Civil proceedings (Magistrates' court)	Stalking Protection Order	Early intervention to prevent escalation or entrenchment of stalking behaviour. Can be used where there is sufficient evidence of stalking behaviour (but not necessarily conviction) before a charge is brought.	Not dependent on criminal proceedings. Police make an application.	Stalking Protection Act 2019	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum
Civil proceedings (County court or High court)	Injunction	To be used if victims are not legally associated to the perpetrator (e.g. marriage, sharing parental responsibilities, living together), provides for a restraining order	Victim brings civil proceedings.	Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (s.3)	Yes	Contempt two years imprisonment maximum; or conviction five years

Jurisdiction	Name	Purpose	Process	Relevant Legislation	Is a breach a Criminal Offence?	Sanction for breach
		and the victim can claim damages.				
Criminal proceedings(Magistrates' or Crown court)	Restraining Orders	To allow a court to protect a victim from an offender/defendant	Prosecutor applies to criminal court on conviction or acquittal for any offence.	Protection from Harassment Act 1997	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum
Criminal proceedings (Magistrates' or Crown court)	Sexual Harm Prevention Order	To protect the public from sexual harm from an offender.	Post-conviction. Prosecutor applies to criminal court on conviction.	Sexual Offences Act 2003	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum
Criminal proceedings (Magistrates' or Crown court)	Criminal Behaviour Orders	Can be used to prevent further incidents of domestic abuse.	Prosecutor applies to the criminal court on conviction.	Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum
Family proceedings	Occupation Orders	Determines who can and/or cannot occupy particular premises for a period of time.	Victim makes application to the family court.	Family Law Act 1996	No	N/A
Family proceedings	Forced Marriage	Can be used where person has been	Not dependent on criminal proceedings.	Family Law Act 1996	Yes	Contempt two years imprisonment

Jurisdiction	Name	Purpose	Process	Relevant Legislation	Is a breach a Criminal Offence?	Sanction for breach
	Protection Order	subjected to or is at risk of forced marriage.	Person to be protected, local authority, or any other party with the permission of the court, applies to family court.			maximum; or conviction five years
Family proceedings	Non-molestation orders	To prohibit a person from molesting another person.	By a court of its own volition if a child involved otherwise on application. Victim applies to Family Court.	Family Law Act 1996	Yes	Five years imprisonment maximum
Family proceedings or criminal proceedings	FGM Protection Order	Can be used where person has been subjected to or is at risk of FGM.	Not dependent on criminal proceedings. Person to be protected, local authority or any other party with the permission of the court applies to Family	FGM Act 2003	Yes	Contempt two years imprisonment maximum or conviction five years

Jurisdiction	Name	Purpose	Process	Relevant Legislation	Is a breach a Criminal Offence?	Sanction for breach
			or High Court (or can be made by criminal court in criminal proceedings for an FGM offence).			