

Guidance for professionals

Identifying and Responding to Domestic Abuse in Southampton

This guidance covers the steps to take to respond to domestic abuse.

It explains the referral routes for domestic abuse at all risk levels.

This is for professionals in any service that has direct contact with the public.

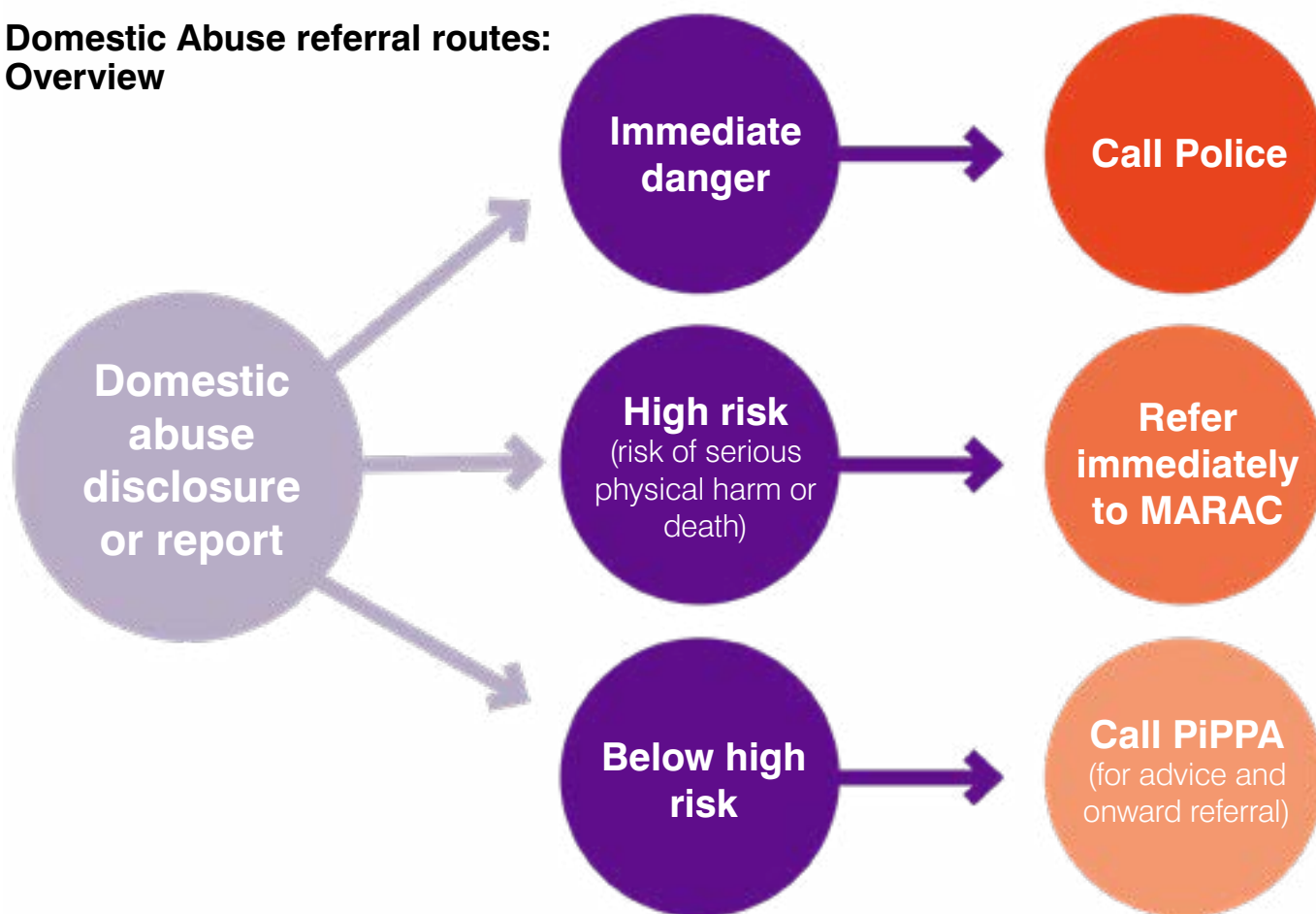
What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are 'personally connected' to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also victims of domestic abuse.

Behaviour is 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following: physical (including non fatal strangulation) or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling coercive behaviour; stalking and harassment; economic abuse; or psychological, emotional or other abuse. This includes incidents where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g. a child).

Domestic abuse includes 'Honour-Based' Abuse and Forced Marriage.

Domestic Abuse referral routes: Overview



Steps to respond to Domestic Abuse



Be alert to the signs of domestic abuse. If you have concerns that it is a 'live' issue happening in a family you are working with, try to speak to the adult survivor (victim) on their own and sensitively ask questions that may help you to identify the issues and risks. Explain duty of care to safeguard families.



Disclosure of domestic abuse is often a very difficult experience and it may follow a long period of abuse. Always listen with respect and sensitivity. It is not uncommon for a victim of domestic abuse not to recognise their experience as abusive. Listen carefully to identify the signs and indicators of abuse.



Reassure your client that confidential and trusted help is available and explain the benefits of seeking help to reduce risks of harm. Wherever possible seek consent, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so. You should inform your client that a high risk assessment could lead to a referral to MARAC to protect their safety and that of any children. This will mean sharing relevant information about risks. Consent from your client may be given verbally to PiPPA but will be carefully recorded to ensure legal compliance.



Complete a risk assessment using the Safelives (DASH) risk assessment tool. This will help to determine the level of risk to your client: high or below high. The next steps to referral differ according to the level of risk.

www.southampton.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-guidance

What is 'High Risk' Domestic Abuse?

'High Risk' indicates the victim is at risk of 'serious physical harm or death'. This risk must be current. The level of risk is assessed using the SafeLives (DASH) Risk Assessment, with 14 or more (of 24) yes 'ticks' considered to be 'high risk'. However, professional judgement or a victim's own assessment of risk may escalate a DASH risk assessment level or identify 'significant harm' that should trigger an immediate 'high risk' response. 'Honour-based Abuse' **is always** considered high risk domestic abuse.



For High Risk Domestic Abuse refer to MARAC. Complete a MARAC referral for a multi-agency response. A MARAC referral may trigger a referral to IDVA for intensive independent domestic abuse advocacy and support for the victim.

Below High Risk Domestic Abuse. Call or email PiPPA for advice and onward referral to specialist domestic abuse support.

Safeguarding Children - If you have concerns for any children in the household, have a conversation with The Children's Resource Service, on Professionals Number 023 8083 2300.

Safeguarding Adults - For adults with additional care and support needs please refer to [Adult Safeguarding](#).



Safety plan with the adult survivor with consideration for the wider family / work.

Keep a record of all actions and discussions. Call/email PiPPA for domestic abuse advice if you need it.



Working together to end domestic & sexual violence In Southampton

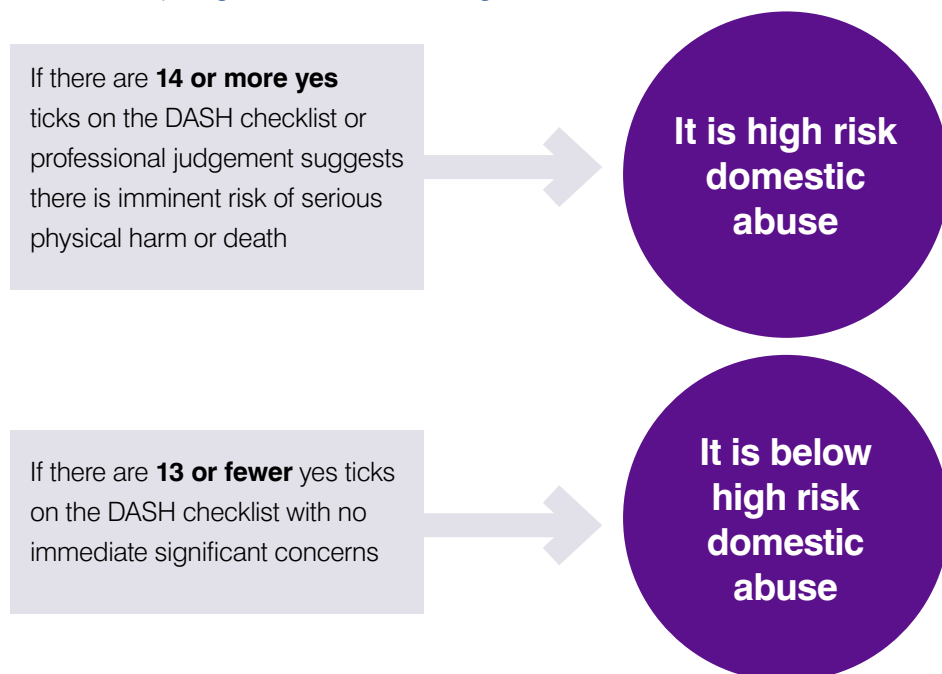


How to do a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment:

- If you need help or advice to assess risks, call PiPPA on 023 8091 7917 or email pippa@southampton.gov.uk

Completing a (DASH) Domestic Abuse risk assessment form:

- The Safelives – DASH Risk Checklist is designed to help practitioners identify high risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour-based' abuse.
- The DASH Risk Assessment form is available with this guidance on the following website www.southampton.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-guidance



‘Professional Judgement’

If you have serious concerns about a client’s situation always seek help and advice, and refer to MARAC. There will be occasions where the particular context of a case gives rise to serious concerns even if the victim has been unable to disclose the information that might highlight their risk more clearly. This could reflect extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues or language barriers particularly in cases of ‘honour-based’ abuse.

You should also recognise the ‘trigger’ factors that often increase risk: pregnancy, coercive controlling behaviour, recent or imminent separation and child contact conflict. And the aggravating factors that increase risk such as non fatal strangulation and use of weapons.

Professional judgement is based on your knowledge of domestic abuse, the victim’s perception of their risk and its manifestations and can be informed by the DASH checklist. However, in addition to using the DASH it is crucial that professionals use their full range of knowledge to make an assessment; this knowledge will usually be gained through experience, reflection and deliberation.

‘Potential Escalation’

The number of Police callouts to the victim as a result of domestic abuse in the past 12 months and/or multiple lower level referrals/reports (relating to domestic abuse) may be indicators of escalating abuse. Where there is a clear pattern of abusive behaviour and/or incidents you should use your professional judgement in determining risks.

Help and advice

- If you cannot complete a DASH risk assessment, for example you have not been trained to or your client is not willing to, seek advice from PiPPA.
- Risk is dynamic and can change very quickly. It is good practice to review the checklist regularly and at the beginning and end of a child or family intervention where domestic abuse is a present factor.



What is MARAC?

MARAC is a multi-agency risk assessment conference held twice weekly to discuss high risk cases, to identify risks, share relevant information and agree actions.

When do I refer?

If you have identified your client at high risk refer to MARAC. High risk domestic abuse could mean your client is at imminent risk of serious physical harm or death.

How do I refer to MARAC

Complete the MARAC referral form. Available [HERE](#).

A completed DASH risk assessment needs to accompany the MARAC referral form.

What will happen to my referral?

Within the MARAC, partner agencies will share what relevant and proportionate information they have to identify domestic abuse risks to the whole family. A multi-agency discussion will follow. This will usually be within one week. Based on the combined risk identification and assessment, outcome decisions and actions will be made and recorded. Relevant agencies will receive and act on agreed actions.

How is my client involved?

The victim or survivor will usually be contacted by an IDVA navigator within 24 hours of receiving the referral to MARAC. They will seek consent for a referral to MARAC and try to understand the context, what risks are being faced, the level of fear and from whom, and the victim's wishes and feelings.

The survivor maybe referred to an IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) and/or other lead professionals for support. The survivor will be informed of the actions agreed in MARAC (usually by an IDVA). The referrer should be updated with the actions agreed in the MARAC.

Safeguarding Children, and Adults with additional care needs (Vulnerable adults)

Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 specifically provides that a child (under 18 years old) who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the victim or the person causing harm is also to be regarded as a victim. If you have concerns for any children in the household, have a conversation with the Children's Resource Service (Professional's number 023 8083 2300).

For adults with additional care and support needs please refer to [Adult Safeguarding](#).

What if your client is using harmful behaviours?

If your client discloses using harmful behaviours towards a partner or other connected people including children, you should call The Hampton Trust (local experts in domestic abuse working with those who cause harm) to seek advice.

Referrals must be based on consent and individuals will be subject to an assessment of suitability.

If the abuse is putting a victim and/or their family at immediate risk of harm call the Police.

Key contacts

MASH

Telephone: **023 8083 2300**

Secure email: **childrensresourceservice@southampton.gov.uk**

For further information:

www.southampton.gov.uk/children-families/childrens-social-care/report-a-concern-about-a-child/

PiPPA

Telephone: **023 8091 7917**

Secure email: **pippa@southampton.gov.uk**

For further information:

www.southampton.gov.uk/domestic-abuse

Adult Safeguarding Single Point of Contact

Telephone: **023 8083 3003**

Email: **adultsocialcareconnect@southampton.gov.uk**

For further information:

www.southampton.gov.uk/adult-social-care/

The Hampton Trust

Telephone: **023 8000 1061**

For further information:

www.hamptontrust.org.uk

MARAC Co-ordinator

Email: **southampton.mash.admin@hampshire.police.uk**

MARAC referral form and DASH available

www.southampton.gov.uk/domestic-abuse-guidance

If there is immediate danger or risk of serious harm call the Police 999



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& sexual violence in Southampton

