

7 Minute Briefing: Domestic Violence & Abuse

Questions to consider?

Are you confident that you could recognise the signs of domestic abuse with customers you work with?

Do you know how to report concerns of domestic abuse?

Do we routinely ask about domestic abuse?
Are we clear about our responsibility in relation to domestic abuse?

[Domestic Abuse Bill 2019](#)

[Local Government Assoc – Safeguarding & Domestic Abuse](#)

[Coercive Control](#)

Background - What is Domestic Violence & Abuse

The definition is 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over, who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.'

The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse'.

It also includes honour based violence (HBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender, ethnic group or age.

Who is affected?

Domestic abuse can affect anyone from any background at any age.

Research suggests that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse at some point in their life. In year ending March 2018, an estimated 2.0 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year. This is 7.9% or 1.3 million women and 4.2% or 695,000 men.

Based on previous surveys, it reinforces that false assumption that abuse ceases to exist beyond a certain age. However, from the limited pool of [research](#) that does exist on domestic abuse and older people, it suggests that 'older women's experience' of domestic abuse is markedly different'.

It is estimated in the last year that approximately 120,000 individuals aged 65+ experienced one form of abuse. It is thought that victims aged 61+ are more likely to experience abuse from an adult family member, current intimate partner, less likely to attempt to leave and more likely to be living with the perpetrator than those under 60.

What to do - what's my role?

Doing nothing is not an option.

'Ask and Act'. Make safeguarding Section 42 enquiries Safe Enquiries. A safe enquiry means ensuring the potential perpetrator is not and will not easily become aware of the enquiry, maintain confidentiality, ensure you are alone with the person before enquiring into potential abuse, **never ask in front of the alleged perpetrator**, have sufficient time, use appropriate advocates /interpreters (IMCA/IDVA/ISVA). Ask direct questions about domestic violence and abuse.

Make sure you are aware of the domestic abuse and safeguarding policies, how to refer to MARAC and DV hub.

A small scale study of 22 case records completed by Knight and Hester (2014) found that 'onset' of dementia was likely to lead to an escalation in the severity of the abuse, regardless of whether dementia developed in the victim or perpetrator.

Why is it important?

Nationally on average 2 women a week and 30 men a year are killed by a current or former intimate partner (2016). Data from 43 police forces in England and Wales revealed that 173 people were killed in domestic violence related homicides last year (2018). Around ¾ of people killed by a partner, ex-partner, family member were women and suspects were predominantly male.



Recognising the signs - what to look out for?

People affected by domestic abuse may exhibit some of the following signs:
Low self confidence/self esteem, may be withdrawn, submissive, always checking things with their partner, letting their partner speak for them, unexplained injuries, injuries inconsistent with the explanation of cause, multiple injuries at different stages of healing, repeated injuries, unexplained long term gastro problems/symptoms.

There may be an increase in repairs, is there damage to internal walls/doors? Particularly bathroom/toilet doors. Frequently missed appointment including health appointments, is the person vague when engaging?

Recognising the signs – what to look out for? Cont'd

These signs do not automatically indicate abuse, but even if a person chooses not to disclose at a particular time, knowing that you are aware of the issues and are supportive builds trust and lays foundations for them to choose to approach you or another professional at a later time.

In older people there are additional challenges and barriers. Older people may not identify it as abuse, the perpetrator may be their carer and they are dependent on them, unable to contact friends or family, cannot go out without support, fear of going into a care home? Are assumptions being made? Linking injuries, confusion, and depression to age related concerns or signs of care and support rather than domestic abuse?

Older women [experiencing domestic abuse](#) are 'significantly' more likely to report more health conditions than those who are not abused'

Don't just see the medical condition/diagnosis.