



Lambeth Children's Services

Domestic Abuse Policy

May 2022

About this document

Title	Children's Services Domestic Abuse Policy
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Intended Audience

This document has been issued to the following people for Review (R) Information (I) and Review and Sign off (S). The Domestic Abuse Policy is mandatory and must be shared with all managers and practitioners in Children's Services, including schools.

Name	Position	S/R/I
CSMT		S
All staff		I

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1. Introduction

Lambeth Council has zero tolerance for violence and abuse. This policy will set out how the Children's Services will tackle domestic abuse, support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their children and hold the abusive person to account alongside our partners.

Domestic abuse has a devastating effect on victims and survivors and their children, their families and the wider community, and can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation or social background. We support the VAWG's Strategy's recognition that the majority of victims and survivors are women¹, and the majority of abusive partners are men² we also recognise that abuse can take place in any relationship - to any gender and any sexual orientation. People of any gender and sexuality can experience abuse of this nature and the consequences affect everyone. Men can also be victims and survivors of domestic abuse and women also perpetrate abuse. Domestic abuse also occurs in LGBT+ relationships.

Domestic abuse also occurs within familial relationships, which includes and overlaps with Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) and Adult Family Violence (AFV).

This policy sits alongside the vision of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy – 'Lambeth is a borough where everyone is safe'.

This policy also supports the day to day work of Children's Services where a significant proportion of the work we undertake is with families who have been affected by Domestic Abuse. Domestic abuse is the most common risk factor identified by social workers in assessment³.

Identifying domestic abuse early and providing support to victims, survivors and to address the behaviours and reduce harm from perpetrators is a key priority for us. By working together with partners, we will identify where we can provide the most effective support to children and their families.

The Children's Domestic Abuse Policy will be underpinned by the Pan London Safeguarding Procedures and local procedures for children in need and children in need of protection which will provide the detail for how the policy will be practically applied.

2. Context

In Lambeth, domestic abuse is the main presenting need for referrals to Children's Social Care (12% of all referrals), although this may also present itself initially as 'family disfunction' (5%) or 'family in acute stress' (11.5%), and can be accompanied frequently by neglect. It is not always recorded as the primary presenting need.

Between February 2021 and January 2022, 3,465 domestic abuse crimes⁴ were recorded with a further 919 domestic abuse VWI offences (violence with injury). The majority of this crime is recorded in the summer months (May to September).

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenlandandwalesoverview/november2021>

²<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenlandandwalesoverview/november2021#domestic-abuse-in-england-and-wales-data>

³ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need/2020>

⁴ <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/hate-crime-dashboard/>

In many of these cases, children will have been involved, either directly or indirectly as witnesses to abuse (15% of assessments have domestic abuse as a factor for children).

3. Aims of Policy

The aims of this policy are identified below:

- To ensure that CSC practitioners working with children and young people in Lambeth can identify domestic abuse, the dynamics of exploitation and abuse, and respond rapidly and appropriately based on their individual needs and identity.
- To ensure that the child's lived experience of domestic abuse is effectively captured and responded to within case work;
- Intervene early to tackle domestic abuse and prevent further abuse and facilitate the necessary help and support for victims and survivors;
- Hold perpetrators of domestic abuse to account for their actions in a way that is prompt, decisive and proportionate. The focus will be on holding them accountable to understand the impact their behaviour has on the safety and wellbeing of their children and maintaining the safety of the victim and survivor;
- Support the delivery of the priorities of Lambeth's VAWG Strategy;
- To ensure victims/survivors, children and families, and perpetrators receive appropriate trauma, race and gender informed intervention.

4. Who is this Policy for?

This document is for staff in Children's Services who may deal with cases of domestic abuse or facilitate disclosure of domestic abuse. This policy is also for the children and families of Lambeth who are a victim and survivor of domestic abuse and those who are at risk of experiencing domestic abuse, as well as perpetrators.

5. Legislation, Statutory Guidance and links to other policies

Children's Services has a legal duty and obligation to support people affected by domestic abuse under the following legislation and statutory guidance (this list is not exhaustive):

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Children Act 1989
- Working together to safeguard children 2018
- Equality and Diversity Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Lambeth Made Safer Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
- Housing Domestic Abuse Policy
- Employee Domestic Abuse Policy
- Adult Social Care Domestic Abuse Policy

5.1. Children's Social Care levels of need

The levels of need for intervention by Children's Social Care are maintained by the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Partnership and are published on the Lambeth Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) website. They may be found [here](#) including indicators of abuse.

The [Pan London procedures](#) should be followed in all cases of domestic abuse or suspected domestic abuse.

5.2. Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

This policy aligns with the [VAWG Strategy](#) but also builds on the strategy by outlining the Children's Services-specific policy approach to tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims and survivors, whilst holding perpetrators to account.

The priorities of the strategy are as follows:

- **Priority one: specialist support;**
- **Priority two: working together;**
- **Priority three: community response;**
- **Priority four: children and young people;**
- **Priority five: reducing harm from perpetrators.**

5.3. Linking with other policies

Staff should refer to the Employee Domestic Abuse Policy which outlines support for staff who may themselves have been the victim of domestic abuse and the guidance for managers on supporting them. It is of particular importance that staff feel able to access these services, especially when they are working with families that may raise painful memories of their own experiences and can affect them as a result of experienced trauma. The Employee Domestic Abuse Policy may be found [here](#).

All staff are required to attend Domestic Abuse Mandatory training and should continue to develop their understanding of domestic abuse and its impact.

Children's Services practitioners should also be aware of the Housing Domestic Abuse Policy which can be found [here](#). Housing have duties in relation to ensuring that victims are able to be accommodated quickly and safely and will provide support for victims and survivors.

6. Definitions of Domestic Abuse

Lambeth Children's Services adopts the Government's definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) and within the VAWG Strategy.

Domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 created a statutory definition of domestic abuse: 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. Behaviour is 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse

- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse
- and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

A person is “personally connected” if:

- they are or have been married
- they are or have been civil partners to each other,
- they had agreed to marry or enter into a civil partnership agreement with each other (whether or not that agreement had been terminated),
- they are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child (eg if they are a parent to the child or have had parental responsibility for the child)
- they are relatives

Children are explicitly recognised as victims if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim for their behaviour and/or identity, perceived or real.

We acknowledge that within the definition of domestic abuse there are a wide range of different abuses including: intimate partner violence and abuse for people of all ages, genders and sexualities; adult family violence and abuse; so-called ‘honour’- based abuse; forced marriage; child to parent, and adolescent to parent violence and abuse.

While all are gendered (most victims and survivors are women and most abusive partners are men) and coercive control is the main feature of the abuse, there are differences and we need to ensure responses and interventions are tailored and appropriate.

Perpetrator

In line with the Lambeth Made Safer VAWG Strategy we will use this term to describe the “personally connected” person who has behaved in a way that is abusive.

Victim / Survivor

This is the term to describe the person against whom the abusive behaviour is directed. This includes any children who may see, hear or experience domestic abuse.

Female genital mutilation/cutting

Female genital mutilation (FGM)/cutting is a procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, but where there is no medical reason for this to be done. This is a traditional practice in some communities and is sometimes portrayed as a religious requirement although there is no basis for this. It is also known as female

circumcision, and by other terms such as sunna, gudniin, halalays, tahur, megrez and khitan, among others.

Financial or Economic Abuse

Economic abuse – of which financial abuse is a form of – can take many forms and involves an abuser restricting a person's ability to acquire, use and maintain money or other economic resources. It includes:

- Controlling your money or other financial assets
- Spending your money
- Damaging your possessions or property
- Putting debt in your name
- Preventing you from accessing education or work
- Withholding child maintenance payments

[Research](#) undertaken in 2020 by Refuge and The Co-operative found that 16% of adults in the UK adults have experienced economic abuse – and that 60% of survivors are women.

Further information about different types of abuse can be found at:

<https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/forms-of-violence-and-abuse/>

Forced marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, or those under the age of 18, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. This is a form of domestic abuse but can involve people other than family or intimate partners and can be an element of so-called 'honour'-based abuse affecting victims and survivors of all gender identities.

Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is when one person or a group of people abuse or attempt to abuse a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes. This includes but is not limited to profiting financially, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. It is child sexual exploitation when the victim or survivor is under the age of 18 and can include prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery. Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It covers a wide range of abuse and exploitation and is a form of VAWG when the exploitation is of a sexual nature. Trafficking is also a form of VAWG when it involves the recruitment, transportation and exploitation of adults (without their knowledge or consent) and children for the purposes of sexual exploitation across international borders and within countries ('internal trafficking').

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual act or activity. There are many kinds of sexual violence that exist including, but not limited to rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse (CSA) and sexual harassment. Perpetrators range from total strangers to relatives and intimate partners. It can happen to anyone, anywhere – in the family/household, workplace, public spaces, social settings – and at any point in life. Sexual harassment is often first experienced by women when they are girls and young women are at increased risk of sexual violence. Sexual violence can occur online in the form of grooming, sharing intimate images of someone without their consent and using technology such as apps, websites and other online platforms to coerce or distress a victim or survivor.

So-called 'honour'-based violence

So-called 'honour'-based violence is a collection of practices used to control behaviour within families to protect perceived cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs and/or 'honour'. It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture. This is a form of domestic abuse but in most so-called 'honour'-based violence cases there are multiple perpetrators from the immediate family, sometimes the extended family and occasionally the community at large. It is important to note that since the concepts of 'honour', 'purity' and what is 'natural' exist across cultural borders, so-called 'honour'-based violence has been witnessed and reported in every community.

Stalking and harassment

Stalking is unwanted, repeated, obsessive and/or controlling behaviours that make someone distressed or scared. There are many ways stalking can be perpetrated and it is most likely to be someone the victim or survivor already knows well such as an ex-partner. The law states that harassment is when a person behaves in a way which is intended to cause distress or alarm. The behaviour must happen on more than one occasion. It can be the same type of behaviour or different types of behaviour on each occasion.

Tech Abuse

Increasingly **perpetrators – partners and ex-partners – are using technology to facilitate their abuse**. Abusers can and have gained access to women's personal and home devices, their online accounts and even children's toys and devices.

Refuge has found a rise in the number of women whose children's iPads, Xboxes and PlayStation have been hacked by the perpetrator to gain full access to their accounts, to trace information such as the child's location, who they are speaking to and what games they are playing.

Very often perpetrators will use 'find my phone' type apps to know the location of their victim(s) without them knowing and will scrutinise their phones and laptops for messages with or without the knowledge of the owner. Refuge provides resources to better understand this type of abuse and how to keep yourself safe⁵.

7. Children's Services Policy Statement

Domestic abuse and children as victims

It is important to recognise the impact of coercive and controlling behaviour on the victim and survivor. There are many ways in which a victim of domestic abuse may express themselves around the abuse they have experienced, but many will minimise the real extent, because they perceive they are protecting their children from witnessing arguments or violence. However, most children will notice and are frightened of the perpetrator.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Sec 3 of the Act provides that a **child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse**. The Act marks a change in how we conceptualise children affected by domestic abuse – previously they were "witnesses" but are now considered direct victims in recognition that even if children do not witness physical attacks, they live within an environment of power and control and this affects their safety, wellbeing and development.

⁵ <https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/forms-of-violence-and-abuse/tech-abuse-2/resources/>

Domestic abuse always has an impact on children. Children suffer multiple physical and mental health consequences because of living with domestic abuse. Being exposed to domestic abuse in childhood is child abuse. 62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others⁶

Children may experience domestic abuse directly, but they can also experience it indirectly by:

- hearing the abuse from another room
- seeing someone they care about being injured and/or distressed
- finding damage to their home environment like broken furniture
- being hurt from being caught up in or trying to stop the abuse
- not getting the care and support they need from their parents or carers as a result of the abuse (Holt, Buckley and Whelan, 2008).

(NSPCC, [Protecting Children from Domestic Abuse](#), Nov 2021)

The risks to children living with domestic abuse include:

- Direct physical or sexual abuse of the child. Research shows this happens in up to 60% of cases; also that the severity of the violence against the mother is predictive of the severity of abuse to the children;
- The child being abused as part of the abuse against the mother:
 - Being used as pawns or spies by the abusive partner in attempts to control the mother;
 - Being forced to participate in the abuse and degradation by the abusive partner.
- Emotional abuse and physical injury to the child from witnessing the abuse:
 - Hearing abusive verbal exchanges between adults in the household;
 - Hearing the abusive partner verbally abuse, humiliate and threaten violence;
 - Observing bruises and injuries sustained by their mother;
 - Hearing their mother's screams and pleas for help;
 - Observing the abusive partner being removed and taken into police custody;
 - Witnessing their mother being taken to hospital by ambulance;
 - Attempting to intervene in a violent assault;
 - Being physically injured as a result of intervening or by being accidentally hurt whilst present during a violent assault.
- Negative material consequences for a child of domestic abuse:
 - Being unable or unwilling to invite friends to the house;
 - Frequent disruptions to social life and schooling from moving with their mother fleeing violence;
 - Hospitalisation of the mother and/or her permanent disability.

Children who witness domestic abuse suffer emotional and psychological maltreatment⁷

They tend to have low self-esteem and experience increased levels of anxiety, depression, anger and fear, aggressive and violent behaviours, including bullying, lack of conflict resolution skills, lack of empathy for others and poor peer relationships, poor school performance, anti-social behaviour, pregnancy, alcohol and substance misuse, self-blame, hopelessness, shame and apathy, post-traumatic stress disorder - symptoms such as hyper-vigilance, nightmares and intrusive thoughts - images of violence, insomnia, enuresis and over protectiveness of their mother and/or siblings.

⁶ Caada (2014), In Plain Sight: Effective help for children exposed to domestic abuse. Bristol: Caada.

⁷ (Note: Section 31 Children Act 1989: impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another [amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002] extended the definition of 'significant harm to include children who see or hear the ill treatment of another).

The impact of domestic abuse on children is similar to the effects of any other abuse or trauma and will depend upon such factors as:

- The severity and nature of the violence;
- The length of time the child is exposed to the violence;
- Characteristics of the child's gender, ethnic origin, age, disability, socio economic and cultural background;
- The warmth and support the child receives in their relationship with their mother, siblings and other family members;
- The nature and length of the child's wider relationships and social networks; and

The child's capacity for and actual level of self-protection.

[\(Pan London Procedures – Safeguarding Children against Domestic Abuse\)](#)

Unborn babies

Pregnancy can be a risk factor for domestic abuse and experiencing domestic abuse can put a pregnant woman and her unborn child in danger. It is important to consider this as domestic abuse in pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, infection, premature birth, low birth weight, foetal injury and foetal death. Furthermore, a quarter (25%) of children in high-risk domestic abuse households are under 3 years old.

There are varied ways that children are affected by domestic abuse depending on their age and developmental milestones. Professionals need to consider that different behaviour may be a warning of domestic abuse at home, and the detrimental impact this still may have on the child. This can include inconsistent regulation of emotions, including becoming distressed, upset or angry' or applying themselves intensely to their academic or artistic pursuits. Specific consideration needs to be given to children victims with special educational needs and disability (SEND). Abuse during pregnancy can lead to health issues for the expectant mother, the unborn child, infants and siblings.

Studies often find that domestic abuse starts or worsens during pregnancy and the postnatal period. Professionals need to be mindful of this when working with young parents in particular. **Source: Department of Health (2005)**

- A pre-birth assessment is indicated in any situation where there is domestic abuse (see also [Pre-Birth Assessment Protocol](#)).

Young people who are in abusive relationships

Young people may be in relationships in which they experience domestic abuse in their own right. MARAC referrals are accepted for 16 and 17 year olds who are in abusive relationships. Support is also available via a referral to Gaia.

Young people – showing early signs of abusive behaviour

Young people using harmful behaviour towards their parents or in their own relationship. Young people experience abuse at the highest rate of any age group. Teenage relationship abuse is often hidden because teenagers typically:

- have little experience of relationships
- can be under pressure from their peers to act 'cool'
- have unrealistically 'romantic' views of love
- see abuse as 'normal behaviour' within a relationship
- Gender can play out strongly in relationship expectations
- Best practice is to focus on building trust and safety, on discussing positive and healthy relationships, whole school approach in schools. Participatory approaches are particularly effective

Working with families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

Those families with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) face additional vulnerabilities where there is domestic abuse, particularly where there is or there is perceived to be reliance on someone for asylum status.

The NRPF team will be encouraged to undertake risk assessments and working alongside colleagues to support those at risk of domestic abuse. Staff will ensure that consideration is given to assessing and supporting these families under s17, working alongside partners to and specialist services to provide culturally sensitive wrap-around support to families.

Working with perpetrators

- We will ensure that perpetrators have their behaviour (and the causes for their behaviour) challenged and are held to account for their actions, and not victims and survivors.
- To prevent ongoing violence and protect future victims and survivors, perpetrators will be encouraged to access support to help them to recognise, address and stop their abusive behaviour at the earliest available opportunity. These responses will be gender responsive, trauma informed and culturally competent.
- When perpetrators access support, or approach services, we will ensure practitioners have the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately, that practitioners know what services are available to perpetrators of all forms of VAWG and organisations actively refer and signpost to these.

We will ensure that staff understand and respond to the additional vulnerabilities a perpetrator may experience while remaining clear that violence and abuse are always a choice.

Expectations of staff

It is the expectation of all staff that:

- They will attend mandatory Domestic Abuse training;
- They will understand the levels of need for Children's Social Care intervention and how this applies to victims of domestic abuse;
- They will regularly update themselves on best practice in relation to domestic abuse via training and development opportunities and continued professional development opportunities. This will include skills and knowledge to work with perpetrators.
- They will recognise and name domestic abuse for what it is where it exists as part of the work they are undertaking with children and families, whichever part of the service they are working in;
- They will work alongside partners to support victims of domestic abuse to a shared goal, although different approaches may be employed, including making referrals to specialist agencies with consent;
- They will consider the risk of domestic abuse and the impact of it on the child(ren) and the non-abusive partner in terms of parenting dynamics and will undertake a SafeLives DASH Risk Assessment and Multi-Agency Risk Identification Matrix for all families where there has been a concern about domestic abuse⁸. This must be recorded on the child's record and reviewed regularly;

⁸ If domestic abuse is correctly identified at an early stage, the risks assessed and a clear plan for intervening or recommendations for contact and residence identified, the risks of harm to the children and victim and survivors can be reduced. Incorrect identification or inconsistent assessments are likely to increase the risks of harm. Guidance on how to complete SafeLives DASH including Young People SafeLives DASH can be found here: [Resources for identifying the risk victims face | Safelives](#)

- They will make referrals through the Children's Social Care MARAC Representative for all cases that meet the criteria, including repeat referrals;
- Where victims and survivors move out of the local authority area, clear plans are in place that consider the harm from technological abuse (such as tracking or access to email accounts etc) and particular consideration is made to whether or not it is safe for the child(ren) to attend school and what the plan is if the perpetrator attends the school site. This includes ensuring that the case is transferred and accepted by the relevant departments and organisations in the area so that they can offer continuous support;
- They will appropriately consider translation and interpreting services to communicate with the victim(s) and be clear about their first language, commissioning the correct resource for them. Family members and friends are **not to be used** particularly where there is concern for the safety of the victim(s) and children are **never** to be used as translators or interpreters;
- They are aware of the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#), also known as Clare's Law and use it when appropriate;
- They will have consideration for the sensitive nature of any contact details for the victims, particularly where they have moved out of the local authority area and will not divulge this except to partner agencies with whom they are working;
- They will proactively search and put in place support for children affected by abuse to help them recover from the trauma and support their rehabilitation;
- They will offer a trauma, race and gender informed approach to safeguarding families; that avoids victim blaming and putting complete onus on them to safeguard;
- They will offer accessible services that encourages families that face additional inequalities and/or have protected characteristic, to encourage engagement with the service and manage needs.
- They will follow best practice and proactively support destitute families (NRPF), by considering their duties to assess and intervene under section 17.
- They will offer appropriate support and intervention to perpetrators to encourage behaviour change and reduce harm; this may include working with other agencies to employ actions to disrupt offending behaviour.
- They will be equipped with skills and knowledge to assess and manage cross allegations appropriately and seek support from specialist services and partners.
- Where Children's Services involvement are to cease with a family or does not meet threshold, there is a clear step-down plan to manage any ongoing and/or future risks and needs. This will be clearly communicated with the family, referrer and any professional network supporting them where appropriate.

Additionally, the Pan London procedures state that:

- Professionals will work with many women who are experiencing domestic abuse and have not disclosed. Research suggests that women usually experience an average of 35 incidents before reporting it to the police (Yearnshire [1997]).
- Professionals should offer all children and women, accompanied or not, the opportunity of being seen alone (including in all assessments) with a female practitioner, wherever practicable, and asked whether they are experiencing or have previously experienced domestic abuse
- Professionals in all agencies are in a position to identify or receive a disclosure about domestic abuse. Professionals should be alert to the signs that a child or mother may be experiencing domestic abuse, or that a father / partner may be perpetrating domestic abuse.
- Professionals should never assume that somebody else will take care of the domestic abuse issues. This may be the child, mother or abusing partner's first or

only disclosure or contact with services in circumstances which allow for safeguarding action.

- Professionals must ensure that their attempts to identify domestic abuse and their response to recognition or disclosure of domestic abuse do not trigger an escalation of violence.
- In particular, professionals should keep in mind that:
 - The issue of domestic abuse should only ever be raised with a child or mother when they are safely on their own and in a private place; and
- Separation does not ensure safety - it often at least temporarily increases the risk to the child/ren or mother.

(Pan London Procedures – Safeguarding Children from Domestic Abuse)

It is the expectation that managers will:

- In addition to the mandatory training available for all staff, will ensure that they maintain a robust understanding and knowledge of the impact of domestic abuse on children and families and the support services that are on offer in Lambeth;
- Regularly introduce the topic of domestic abuse to their teams through all staff, service and team meetings;
- Use supervision as an opportunity to encourage best practice and explore learning from domestic abuse and domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) and implement within the cases raised therein;
- Ensure that plans are robust, SMART and address the needs of children who are victims of domestic abuse before they are signed off;
- Support staff who themselves have been victims of domestic abuse by showing consideration and support in supervision and by offering support through the Employee Domestic Abuse policy and guidance;
- If a perpetrator is identified to be a council employee, volunteer and, or contractor follow Employee Domestic Abuse policy and guidance; and if a perpetrator has a position of trust to a child/ren you should additionally follow the LADO processes⁹.
- Regularly review performance in relation to domestic abuse, with particular reference to the numbers of families being worked with and the timeliness and efficacy of interventions employed
- Review the primary and additional reasons for referral and whether staff are appropriately recording the prevalence of domestic abuse at point of contact, referral and assessment
- Ensure the service is accessible to families with additional needs and protected characteristics, and promote partnerships and pathways with specialist and culturally specific services.

It is the expectation that CP Chairs will:

- Review the plans where children are victims of domestic abuse and have clarity about the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in discharging the plan, that they are all working towards the same goals, although some partners may use different approaches to get there.
- Ensure that safe arrangements are offered when facilitating meetings, conferences and contact with the family; and appropriate information sharing are considered with

⁹ **You MUST send Referrals or Contacts to the LADO inbox:** LADO@lambeth.gov.uk and immediately phone it through on Tel: 020 7926 4679 and Mobile: 07720 828 700 and also email helpandprotection@lambeth.gov.uk and help.protection@lambeth.cjsm.net. Out of Hours Service: EDT@lambeth.gov.uk

the perpetrator and family, in particular that the perpetrator is not present when the safety plan is formulated.

Approach to partnership working

Key to our approach is the partnership working we undertake alongside professionals both within the council and outside of it. Having a shared understanding of the goals of our plans with victims and survivors of domestic abuse, the roles and responsibilities of each agency are clearly defined

- We will work in partnership to provide a coordinated response to preventing and tackling all forms of domestic abuse, in particular VAWG,
- We will maintain a multi-agency approach to safeguarding victim and survivors, and work in collaboration with partner agencies within statutory and non-statutory sectors.
- We will ensure all Children's social care staff are aware of local referral pathways for specialist support including the Gaia Centre¹⁰ and what to do in an emergency.

It is the expectation that partners will:

- Attend Child Protection Conferences, Core Groups, CIN Reviews and CLA Reviews where they are providing an intervention and provide a written report, that if they cannot attend, someone from their agency will be appraised of the work and will be able to contribute towards the meeting and be able to present the report.
- Work with Children's Services to identify any personal risks towards workers and communicate these effectively between agencies.

MARAC

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

After sharing all relevant information they have about a victim, the representatives discuss options for increasing the safety of the victim and turn these into a co-ordinated action plan. The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the victim and their children. The victim/survivor does not attend the meeting but is represented by an Independent Gender Violence Advisors (IGVA) or Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) who speaks on their behalf and represents their views and wishes

- We will ensure all Children Social Care staff are familiar with the correct process for responding to victims and survivors who are at high risk of harm, including making MARAC referrals and collaborating as a MARAC partner agency

Sexual Exploitation and Harm Panel

The Sexual Exploitation Harm Panel (SEHP) is a multi-agency case review meeting where professionals share information on individuals at high risk of harm as a result of being involved in sex work/prostitution and/or sexual exploitation to ensure they have a robust package of support in place, including a risk management plan. The aim of the meeting is to address the safety and support needs of individuals discussed and to identify trends in support provision and gaps in interventions to enable the prevention of harm and hold perpetrators to account.

¹⁰ Lambeth residents and staff experiencing gender-based violence including domestic abuse and sexual violence can get practical, and emotional support from the [Gaia Centre](#). In an emergency always call police on 999.

- We will ensure that wherever victims are identified who are at high risk of harm as a result of being involved in sex work/prostitution and/or sexual exploitation they will be referred appropriately to this panel and a copy of the plan for support will be shared.

8. Equalities statement

Lambeth will work against inequality, disproportionality and discrimination against the nine protected characteristics in the Equality and Diversity Act - race, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, sex and marriage and civil partnership. We will ensure that service delivery is compliant with policy surrounding equality and diversity including the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 Equality and Diversity Act).

In accordance with the VAWG Strategy, we recognise the link between VAWG and other forms of discrimination and inequalities faced by victims and survivors and their children. We also recognise that these can lead to some perpetrators being reported or subject to enforcement disproportionately.

- We will challenge and address all the forms of inequality and discrimination that cause VAWG, particularly among children and young people so they are safe and have healthy relationships.
- We also know that children and young people are the victims and survivors of VAWG in their own relationships, from adults and their peers, and that these overlap with experiences of other forms in inequality and discrimination.
- We will ensure that the impact of children and young people's experiences of VAWG is understood in the context of wider violence, structural inequalities, and discrimination. We will ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate and able to minimise trauma and allow all children and young people to lead happy and healthy lives.
- We will ensure that our interventions to hold the perpetrator to account for their actions considers any vulnerabilities that the perpetrator might have that may increase the risk and could be minimised with the right help and support. This means assessing the potential impact of the various legal measures available to avoid discriminating against the perpetrator before we identify the preferred measure. We will ensure that whatever measure we use will be proportionate and reasonable for tackling the abuse and will never be in consequence to a protected characteristic¹¹.

At the same time, we remain clear that violence and abuse are always a choice and we will always avoid discriminatory intervention towards the perpetrator, while at the same time maintaining the safety of the victim and survivor.

Learning from DHRs demonstrates the importance of culturally relevant services, in particular the use of interpreters where someone's first language is not English.

9. Training and Development

All staff are required to undertake mandatory online Domestic Abuse training. This is a comprehensive 1.5 hour online training, access via Oracle/Learning Pool. This forms part of the induction package for new starters in Children's Services, but existing staff are also required to undertake the training and remain up to date with this training.

Domestic abuse must be part of practitioners' continued professional development. Line managers must have oversight of this in supervision and appraisal sessions.

¹¹ [Equality and Diversity Act 2010. Chapter 2. Section 19 – Discrimination](#)

At the time of writing this policy the following is also available to all practitioners:

- [Open VAWG training programme](#) – including classroom-based and virtual learning on a wide range of VAWG topics, also a range of free webinars available
- VAWG Reflective Space- unstructured online 1.5 hour monthly sessions, facilitated by VAWG team, joined by specialists, provide advice, information and guidance on cases, available services and areas of VAWG
- VAWG Forum - independently chaired, quarterly half day conference, mailing list – regular updates on available training, resources and support for Lambeth practitioners Email: VAWGEvents@lambeth.gov.uk to sign up
- Research in Practice & University of Huddersfield has launched a site of resources for CSC practitioners

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) England Domestic Abuse Guidance for Social Workers| www.basw.co.uk

10. Monitoring and Governance

The delivery of this policy will be monitored through the VAWG Strategic Partnership Board but will also be reported on at the LSCP.

11. Resources

<https://www.lambethsaferchildren.org.uk/domestic-abuse-da>

[Violence against women and girls | Lambeth Council](#)

[Domestic Abuse Directory - Womens Aid](#)

[Tech abuse and empowerment service - Refuge Charity - Domestic Violence Help](#)

<https://www.refuge.org.uk/our-work/forms-of-violence-and-abuse/>

Appendix 1: Useful Contacts

Guidance for staff is available on our Practice Toolkit under '[Domestic Abuse](#)'. A quick reference to telephone numbers and support is listed below.

- [Employee assistance helpline](#) – for all staff There are a number of free counselling options available from face to face to online therapy and more. The counselling service is also available to immediate family members for free, please ask for information when calling. To access this confidential service, call **0800 030 5182**
- Gaia Centre - The centre provides confidential, non-judgemental and independent support services for those living in the London borough of Lambeth who are experiencing gender-based violence. The services support women and girls aged 13 and over and men aged 16 and over, of all sexualities. The Gaia Centre also supports transgender clients who identify as male, female, as another gender, or who are questioning their gender identity. The Gaia Centre also offers an Early Intervention Service for children aged 11 – 17, who have been impacted by VAWG. They offer practical and emotional support for all Lambeth residents experiencing VAWG: 020 7733 8724 / lambethvawg@refuge.org.uk, More information about the service is available in [VAWG section](#) on Lambeth website
- Freephone National DA Helpline – 24/7 advice on DA support: 0808 2000 247.
- National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans+ DA Helpline - specialist LGBT+ support: 0800 999 5428.
- Men's Advice Line - specialist support for male victim/survivors: 0808 8010327
- For more information on specialist services that are available visit [VAWG section](#) on Lambeth website

Support for children

Children need to receive specialist domestic violence support, tailored to their needs and linked to the help their parents are getting.

Best practice is to work with children in a trauma informed way

Support services for children

- Barnardo's- Works with families and children; offers counselling, fostering and adoption, support for young carers, training and disability inclusion.
- ChildLine - Provides a free and confidential service for children. Helpline 0800 1111.
- NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) If you are worried about a child, Helpline 0808 800 5000
- Home Start Lambeth-support, friendship and practical help to families with pre-school age children across Lambeth, T: [020 7924 9292](tel:02079249292)
- The Hideout - A website offering support and advice to children whose lives are affected by domestic abuse.
- Safer Space Plus- specialist service for children and young people 5-18y old, Email: Saferspaceplus@victimsupport.org.uk, Tel: 07930 855043