

## Domestic violence/domestic abuse

An adult at risk may be the victim of domestic violence or be affected by it occurring within their household. This can have serious effects on a person's physical and mental wellbeing. It is important to consider the additional barriers that adults at risk may face, including barriers to leaving the abusive situation, for example, disability or illness which makes them dependant on the alleged person causing harm, financial insecurity, or lack of knowledge of available resources.

In 2013, the Home Office announced changes to the definition of domestic abuse. It is an *"incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse... by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality"*. It includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour'-based violence; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); forced marriage. The age range has been extended down to 16.

The Serious Crime Act 2015 brought in new provisions relating to FGM and criminalised patterns of repeated or continuous coercive or controlling behaviour where perpetrated against an intimate partner or family member.

---

**If you believe that an adult at risk is being abused, consider the abuse in terms of whether domestic violence is occurring. For example, instead of deeming the case of a man who threatens to hit his mother unless she provides money in terms of physical and financial abuse only, this needs to be considered in terms of domestic violence. In this case, link the mother's support and protection plan into the multi-agency support services to ensure improved outcomes, such as specialist domestic violence support services.**

**Carefully consider any intervention in family or personal relationships. While abusive relationships never contribute to the wellbeing of an adult, interventions which remove all contact with family members may also be experienced as abusive interventions and risk breaching the adult's right to family life if not justified or proportionate. Safeguarding needs to recognise that the right to safety needs to be balanced with other rights, such as rights to liberty and autonomy, and rights to family life. Make sure that if you are considering curtailing contact with a particular person, there is a clear lawful framework for the decision.**

---

**Practitioner:** At the point of concern take steps to support the adult at risk so that they are able to protect themselves from further abuse. When contacting the adult at risk, consider the safest way to make this contact; this may be via the GP, another health service, or educational services if they have children. Discuss with the FGM champions in Adult Social Care, and request their assistance. You may wish to seek advice from a specialist agency or support the adult at risk in doing so – for example, the Family Justice Centre.

**Do not:**

- Alert the person alleged to have caused harm that a safeguarding concern has been raised
- Approach members of the family or the community unless the person expressly asks you to do so
- Attempt to be a mediator.

**Do:**

- Risk assess the adult during the initial assessment.
- Practitioners are advised to consult the [Safe Lives](#) guidance and risk assessment and consider completing the risk assessment in all cases of domestic abuse.
- Raise the matter as a safeguarding.
- Decide whether to contact or to make a referral to the police.

The planning meeting reviews the risk assessment and protection plan, including linking into other appropriate services. Take into account the capacity of the adult at risk to take part in the adult safeguarding process and their safeguarding plan. Consider whether a referral is required to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) if this is a high risk case, using the appropriate referral form on Sharepoint. The MARAC is a multi-agency forum for the sharing of information on high risk domestic violence cases. (Please click for [MARAC referral form](#))

The MARAC is a multi-agency forum for the sharing of information on high risk domestic violence cases.

To assist risk assessment please see the following high risk indicators as provided by Pinnacle. (Please click for [One Page High Risk Factors](#))

To further assist risk assessments with clients then please consider the [Power and Control Wheel](#).