

## Children's Services

### Responding to Domestic Abuse and High-Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA)

#### 1. The SafeLives DASH checklist

If you suspect domestic abuse is occurring, you must report this in accordance with your agency child safeguarding procedures.

Remember, even a child who is a witness to domestic abuse is also themselves a victim under the terms of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The lead professional assessing the child and their family should complete the [SafeLives DASH checklist](#) to assess the level of risk involved. Where the completed assessment has fewer than 7 ticks, the family should be referred (with their consent) to [Victim Support](#). Where the assessment has 7 to 14 ticks, the family should be referred to [Paragon Dorset](#) which helps families to escape from domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking. Where the assessment has more than 14 ticks, or where professional judgment dictates, the family should be referred to the [High Risk Domestic Abuse \(HRDA\) pathway](#).

#### 2. The HRDA pathway

HRDA is a multi-agency response to high-risk cases of domestic abuse in Dorset. HRDA combines a range of multi-agency functions which complement one another to increase the safety of people experiencing domestic abuse and their families (or known individuals) who are at high risk of harm / future harm and reducing the risk of domestic homicide.

HRDA enables the available information to be safely shared across relevant partner agencies and multi-agency bodies including MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and both child and adult safeguarding conferences, resulting in a clearer picture of the risk level.

This also supports a more comprehensive action plan to be developed to identify and agree risks plus mitigating factors with clear ownership to reduce the risk of harm to the victim and their children.

At the heart of the HRDA framework is the SafeLives Dash risk checklist, which can be found through the link given above. You may also wish to refer to Guidance on completing the checklist. The purpose of the Dash risk checklist is to give a consistent and simple tool for practitioners who work with adult victims of domestic abuse to help them identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to an HRDA meeting to manage their risk.

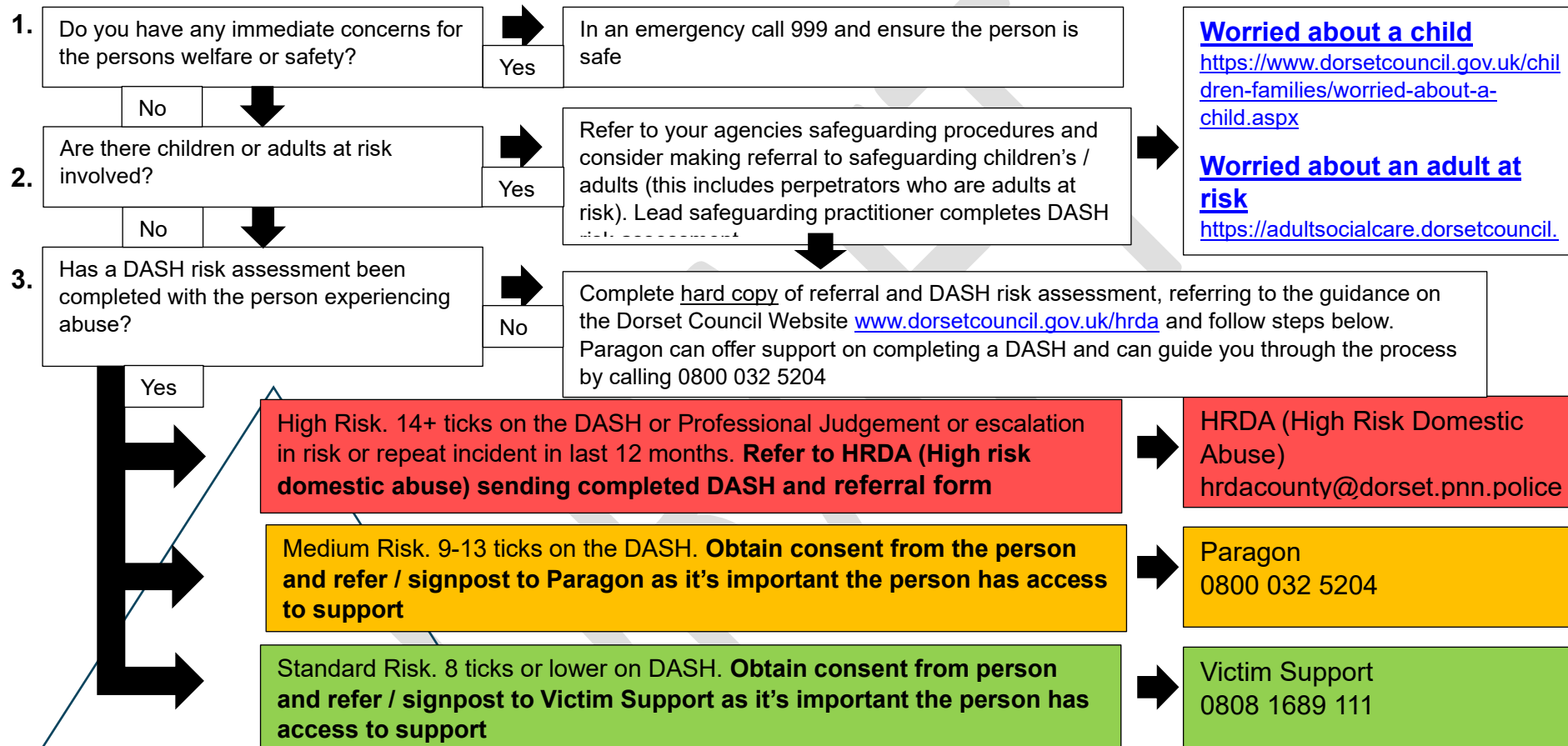
All cases assessed as high risk must be referred to the HRDA single point of contact via [hrdacounty@dorset.pnn.police.uk](mailto:hrdacounty@dorset.pnn.police.uk) including a copy of risk assessment and completed referral form. Where a medium level of risk is identified, the person experiencing abuse will be referred for casework support from Paragon; where the level of risk is low, they will be referred or signposted to Victim Support.

Whilst the HRDA framework contributes to more effective multi-agency working, individual agencies remain responsible for taking all necessary safeguarding actions. This means that where you identify that domestic abuse may be occurring, you should not wait for an HRDA meeting to happen before taking the steps required in our core safeguarding procedures.

- If there is an immediate risk of significant harm, call 999.
- If there is a non-immediate risk of harm, discuss the matter with the Family Support and Advice Line (FSAAL) on 01305 228558; this will allow further discussion to take place with you to determine the level of need, support and next steps required

The flowchart below summarises the domestic abuse response pathway.

**Domestic Abuse – What should I do if a person I am supporting discloses that they are experiencing domestic abuse?**  
(Sep 2024 Final – Designed and agreed by the HRDA (High Risk Domestic Abuse) Quality Assurance Group)



In all cases, undertake the following actions with the person you are supporting

- Talk to them about safety planning;
- Consider what your agency should do to help them and keep them safe, and which other agencies should be contacted;
- Ask if they want further support or information to take away.

**Always consider professional judgement, risk management as risk always remains with the referrer.**

**For more professional guidance and resources visit [www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/hrda](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/hrda)**  
**For more information on services available visit [www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dvahelp](http://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dvahelp)**

### 3. **DASH 2009 – for Stalking, Harassment and Honour-based Violence**

If the family you are working with have experienced Stalking, Harassment or Honour-based violence, it is important that you also complete the [DASH 2009 – 2024 assessment](#), so that these risks are fully assessed.

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