

7-minute briefing:

'Domestic Abuse and Connected Persons who are not in an intimate relationship'

1. Non-intimate domestic abuse within families:

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 states that domestic abuse can occur not only between two people in an intimate relationship, but those who are personally connected. For example, two people in a parental relationship, siblings or other relatives. The abuser needs to be aged 16 years or over to be held criminally responsible, therefore not all child to parent abuse will be viewed as domestic abuse.

2. Why it matters?

Agencies need to be aware of the legislation and identify potential abuse more widely in families where two people are not in an intimate relationship. Early intervention and support can reduce the risk to the victim by informing them of their options and enabling them to increase their safety. Left unaddressed, domestic abuse can persist, escalate, and increase the risk of serious harm to the individual as well as wider family members.

3. What are the indicators?

Familial abuse is likely to include a pattern of behaviours which can include physical violence towards a family member, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, damage to property or economic abuse. Abusive behaviour can include but is not limited to humiliation, threats, stealing, gaslighting, manipulation and disrespect. Where potential abuse is suspected practitioners should explore if one family member fears the other, and if confirmed, should determine the patterns of behaviour away from the suspected abuser and wider family.

4. Why is it important?

Every year over 2 million people in the UK experience domestic abuse. Domestic homicides show that not all deaths are related to intimate partner violence and involve wider family members or people connected to the victim. All agencies must ensure their staff are fully aware of the impact that domestic abuse can have on victims (and where appropriate, their children and wider family) and how to safeguard them.

5. Considerations?

Chronologies can be a helpful tool to look at the history of the family and identify any concerning patterns of behaviour such as previous threats, use of weapons, abusive behaviours towards others, or intersecting factors such as unmet mental health or substance misuse needs and lack of engagement with agencies. Safety plans should build on the victim's existing efforts to safeguard themselves and considered based on what will work best for an individual rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. Agencies should also consider using a genogram to understand the wider family and how they can support an action plan or intervention. Practitioners should discuss with the victim which other agencies can support, gain their consent to make a referral and ensure the referral is made promptly. The practitioner should also ensure they engage with the agency for feedback as part of on-going assessment.

6. What is our response?

Domestic abuse will always require a multi-agency response; to ensure effective intervention always engage with key partners. The Right Help, Right Time Guidance for practitioners provides a framework and practice guide on working with families in Birmingham. Ensure the victim of abuse is supported to understand the options of support available to them, including specialist providers of support. Practitioners should use a risk assessment (such as DASH – available at Safe Lives) to provide a framework to establish the level of risk. If the risk assessment or your professional judgement identifies that the risk of harm is high, then a practitioner should refer to MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference) for further advice and support.

7. For more information please see the following webpages:

- [Right Help, Right Time Guidance](#)
- [Safe Lives DASH and MARAC Guidance](#)
- [Concerns about a child](#)
- Visit the [BSCP website](#) for details of free Multi-Agency Training, we currently offer three modules on domestic abuse.