

Domestic Abuse: Risk Assessment and Safety Planning



A briefing for professionals by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee

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Image Credit: [Alex Green](#)

Introduction

The guidance provided in this document is for professionals who do not work in specialist domestic abuse services and whose remit is not to provide a specialist domestic abuse intervention. It is intended to equip professionals across all sectors and areas of work with the basic principles of assessing risk and safety planning when working with known or suspected cases of domestic abuse.

Risk Assessment:

Specialist services use the [DASH RIC](#) (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Abuse Risk Identification Checklist) to assess the severity, frequency and level of risk victims face. Based on the score obtained through the DASH RIC, specialist services can help ascertain levels of risk and decide next steps and actions to support the victim/survivor, including potential referral to the MARAC (for more information, please see the document titled ‘Edinburgh Support Structures’).

For any professional who does not work in a specialist domestic abuse organisation, it is recommended NOT to refer to the MARAC without consulting with a specialist organisation or colleague first. However, it is important to be familiar with the content of the DASH-RIC to better understand what factors are considered key in identifying high levels of risk in domestic abuse, as these may be disclosed unprompted in your interaction with survivors

For the purposes of non-specialist interventions, when assessing for risk from domestic abuse and supporting a victim/survivor to make safety plan, it is important to determine:

- Is the abuse becoming more severe and/or more frequent?
- Is the victim/survivor pregnant or recently had a baby?
- Has the abuse ever resulted in physical injury?
- Has the abusive partner/ex-partner ever put their hands around the victim's neck attempting to choke, strangle or suffocate them?
- Is the victim/survivor very frightened? What exactly are they frightened of?
- How is the victim's/survivor's mental health? Are they feeling anxious, depressed, suicidal?
- Are they self-harming or using alcohol and/or drugs to help cope?
- Is the victim/survivor planning to leave or have they tried to leave the relationship before (check what happened)

If the person responds yes to some or all of the above, this is likely a high-risk case of domestic abuse. **If you consider the person (and dependent children) is at risk of serious harm, you can contact Police Scotland for advice.** If the risk does not appear to be immediate, you can call 101 (non-emergency number). If the risk is immediate and life-threatening, you can contact 999 (Police Scotland emergency number). You can find out more about how Police Scotland can help on the [City of Edinburgh Council website](#) as well as on the [Police Scotland website](#).

Safety Planning

The best next step to follow, if the risk is not immediate and/or life-threatening, would be to contact a specialist organisation for advice, support and onward referral/signposting.

Remember that all such cases have the potential to quickly change and become high level and the victim/survivor may also be too scared/traumatised to answer fully. If in any doubt, follow your instincts and seek further professional support. You will find a list of support services available [through the Council](#) as well as in [the third sector](#) on the [City of Edinburgh Council website](#). Some useful numbers include:

- [Edinburgh Women's Aid](#): 0131 315 8110
- [Shakti Women's Aid](#) (support for women and children from minority ethnic backgrounds): 0131 475 2399
- [FearFree](#) (support for men and the LGBT+ community): 0131 624 7270
- [Feniks](#) (for Polish, Central and East European victims and survivors): 0131 629 1881
- [Men's Advice Line](#): 0808 801 0327
- [Hourglass](#) (for people over the age of 60): 0808 808 8141

If you are working out of hours and cannot reach an Edinburgh-based service, you can always contact [Scotland's Domestic abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline](#), which is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, on 0800 027 1234; via text or WhatsApp on 0740 12 88 595 or at helpline@sdaafmh.org.uk.

If you have assessed the risk as medium or low, there are still things you can do to support the victim/survivor. A really helpful resource is the [Domestic Abuse Safety Planning Booklet](#) available on the [City of Edinburgh Council website](#) – this is a resource created by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee and can be used both by victims/survivors and professionals to assist in the safety planning process.

For more useful contact information, please see the end of this document.

If a person under 18 discloses domestic abuse

Any person under the age of 18 is a child. They may disclose abuse in the relationship between their parents or abuse from their own partner or ex-partner. To respond to a disclosure of domestic abuse made by a child, please refer to local [Child Protection Procedures](#).

The Domestic Abuse Safety Planning Booklet

The [Domestic Abuse Safety Planning Booklet](#) is a resource for both victims/survivors and professionals. It helps people to reflect and understand their circumstances. **Please make sure to familiarise yourself with the booklet before using it with a person you are supporting.** The aim of the Domestic Abuse Safety Planning booklet is to help professionals and people who use services to:

- determine whether they are experiencing domestic abuse
- understand the risk(s) involved with living with domestic abuse (from a current or former partner)
- consider protective factors and sources of support
- plan for how to develop a safety plan whilst in a relationship where there is domestic abuse
- plan for how to leave an abusive relationship as safely as possible
- Consider risks and avenues for support for children, pets and other people in the family/community
- Prepare for a potential emergency or escalation in the abuse
- Understand what support is available through statutory and voluntary services in Edinburgh
- Stay safe online as well as offline
- Address factors that can prevent a victim/survivor from leaving an abusive relationship. For example, this can include immigration issues, pets, and abuse in the workplace.

Useful Contacts

Crisis Response

Call 999 for emergency response if someone's life is in danger

Emergency Social Work service: 0800 032 5968

NHS24: Call 111 for critical physical and mental health support outside of GP opening hours

Edinburgh Crisis Centre: 0808 8010 414 for mental health crisis support

Breathing Space: 0800 538 587 support when you are feeling low, anxious or depressed

The Samaritans: 116 126 to talk about anything that's worrying you.

Scotland's Domestic abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline (24/7): 0800 027 1234

Non-emergency

Call 101 for Police Scotland (non-emergency)

Social Care Direct: 0131 200 2324 for support and advice to anyone experiencing or feeling at risk of domestic abuse

The Access Place: 0131 526 5015 (option 2) Homeless support for people with support needs

Scotland's Domestic abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline (24/7): 0800 027 1234

Specialist GBV support

Aditi: 0131 603 4865/ aditi@sacro.org.uk: Mental health and wellbeing support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women affected by domestic and honour-based abuse.

Beira's Place: 0131 526 3944: available Monday – Friday between 10am – 5pm. Support, advocacy and information on all forms of sexual violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, to women aged 16 and over in any part of the Lothians. The service is free and confidential and available no matter when the violence or abuse has happened. Beira's Place is a single-sex service for women as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Bright Choices: 0131 622 7500: Supports any woman, man, child or family affected by honour-based violence, including forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This service is provided by the Multicultural Family Base.

Specialist GBV support

EDDACS: 0131 315 8122: EDDACS is a support and advocacy service for female victims of domestic abuse crimes going through the court process. EDDACS supports by explaining the court process, completing a risk assessment and individual support and safety plan with each woman. If you are currently going through the court process as the victim of a domestic abuse crime you can phone EDDACS for support.

Edinburgh Women's Aid: 0131 315 8110: Provides confidential information, support and, if needed, refuge accommodation for women and any accompanying children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre:

0131 556 9437 (office hours) or text: 07966 067 301

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline 7 days per week between 5pm – midnight:

08088 010 302 (5pm-midnight) or text 07537 410 027

Email: support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk or webchat: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Offers free emotional and practical support, information and advocacy to women, girls aged 12 and over and all members of the transgender community who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives. Support includes helpline, face to face, long-term, group, advocacy and crisis, email.

There is support for young survivors aged 12 – 18, as well as counselling and support service for women and transgender people involved in prostitution who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives, complementary therapies and alcohol counselling.

FearFree: 0131 624 7266: Support for any man or LGBT+ person experiencing domestic abuse

Feniks: 0131 629 1881. Mental health and wellbeing support for central and east European community members, particularly Polish and Ukrainian. Feniks has a dedicated mental health and practical support service for migrant women affected by domestic abuse.

Hourglass: 0808 808 8141 (24/7 support helpline that does not appear on itemised bills): Support for people over 60 who are affected by any kind of gender-based violence, as well as support to stay safe, reduce isolation, and improve safety and wellbeing.

LGBT Helpline: 0300 123 2523 (available Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 12 noon and 9pm and Thursdays and Sundays 1pm to 6pm): Information and emotional support for the entire diversity of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community across Scotland. This includes families, friends and supporters of LGBT people, and health and social care professionals working with LGBT people.

SARCs – Sexual Assault Referral and Coordination Service: 0800 148 88 88: Help after rape or sexual assault available through the NHS.

Shakti Women's Aid: 0131 475 2399: Shakti helps women who are experiencing domestic abuse. They offer support and information to all black minority ethnic women over 16 years and their children experiencing and fleeing domestic abuse.