



## **Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

### **Resident Domestic Abuse Procedure for Housing Staff**

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## 1. Introduction

This procedure should be used alongside the Tonbridge and Malling Resident Domestic Abuse Policy. This procedure outlines practical steps that Housing staff can take to respond to cases of domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Domestic Abuse (DA) as the behaviour of a person towards another person if both are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other; and if the behaviour is abusive.

Definition of being personally connected:

- They are or have been married to each other
- They are or have been civil partners of each other
- They have agreed to marry one another (whether the agreement has been terminated)
- They have entered into a civil partnership agreement another (whether the agreement has 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.
- They are relatives.
- A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if the person is a parent of the child or the person has parental responsibility for the child.

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

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

## 2. Indicators of Domestic Abuse

There are many indicators that a someone is experiencing domestic abuse, it is important to look out for these signs when having contact with residents.

Coercive control

- Does the resident appear isolated or unable to see friends and family?
- Is the resident put down or humiliated?
- Have you ever witnessed the resident being told where to go or what to wear?

- Does the resident frequently miss appointments or phone calls?

#### Economic abuse

- Have you noticed a resident asking for money?
- Do you see a resident being given an allowance?
- Has there been an increase in rent arrears?

#### Psychological abuse

- Have you noticed a resident being shouted at, belittled or called names?
- Has a resident ever been threatened?
- Have you noticed a resident not being able to leave their home?
- Has the resident ever been scared into submission?
- Have you noticed that the resident is receiving frequent calls or text messages?

#### Physical abuse

- Does the resident have any unexplained injuries?
- Is the resident wearing a lot of clothing that is ill suited to the weather?
- Are there frequent repairs that need to be done on the property?

#### Stalking

- Have you noticed someone consistently turning up or loitering around the resident's property?
- Does the resident receive lots of calls and texts which cause distress?
- Are the residents' curtains and blinds drawn during the day?
- Has there been any damage to the property caused by a break in?

### **3. Responding to Domestic Abuse**

Victim/survivors may respond differently to professional involvement and may decline support. It is important to understand that there are many reasons why a victim/survivor does not leave the perpetrator.

- Fear of the perpetrator and what they will do if they leave.
- Leaving is the most dangerous time for victim/survivors.
- Economic dependence on the perpetrator, no resources to leave.
- Isolated from friends and family.
- Fear of not being believed.
- Fear of the police or criminal justice system.
- Lack of knowledge around support services.
- Feelings of shame or failure.
- Fear of losing their children if they disclose.
- Cultural or religious expectations.
- Drug or alcohol dependency.
- Low self-esteem and self-confidence.

Officers should understand that there are complex factors which prevent residents from leaving the perpetrator, but none of them are the fault of the victim/survivor.

### Establishing contact

It is vital to ask the victim/survivor what the safest method of contact is. This could be a phone call, email, text message or in-person meeting.

If the victim/survivor requests a phone call, officers should ensure that they ask the resident if they are alone and if it is safe to speak before asking any questions about domestic abuse.

A victim/survivor could request an in-person meeting, it is important that officers can provide a safe place to meet, this can be done at Tonbridge Castle, the One Stop Shop or the Kings Hill office.

Be mindful of accessibility needs for victim/survivors. Ask if they need an interpreting service to make a disclosure or if they require wheelchair access to in-person appointments.

### Responding to disclosures

When responding to disclosure of domestic abuse, officers should always believe the survivor and validate their experiences. Here are some examples of responses:

- *“Thank you for telling me about your experience, I understand how difficult it is talking about DA”*
- *“It is really brave of you to let us know what has been going on, how can we best support you during this time?”*
- *“It is not your fault that this has happened, I believe you. What measures do you feel comfortable putting in place to increase your safety?”.*

A resident may be reluctant to disclose they are experiencing domestic abuse for fear of being evicted or judged.

It is also important to note that young people and those from different cultural background may not use the term ‘domestic abuse’, so using professional curiosity to explore what is going on can be helpful in confirming DA.

When a resident discloses domestic abuse, it is important that officers do not ask for any proof of abuse such as, pictures of physical abuse or crime reference numbers. Many victim/survivors do not want police involvement for reasons including fears of institutional racism or repercussions from the perpetrator.

Confirm confidentiality with the resident and reassure them that the perpetrator will not have access to the information. Explain that information will only be shared with external professionals with their consent or if there is a safeguarding concern.

### Good practice and Language

Language used by professionals has an impact on victim/survivors. It is important that your language is trauma-informed and does not place responsibility on the victim/survivor. Avoid questions such as “why don’t you leave?”, ensure that the perpetrator is held fully accountable in all conversations.

DAHA good practice language guide

<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/media/11452/daha-good-practice-language-guide-for-staff-and-case-management.pdf>

## **4. DASH RIC and Safeguarding**

The DASH RIC (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence Risk Indicator Checklist) is a tool developed by Safelives to identify potential risks indicators; this checklist has been developed using data from domestic homicide reviews.

If a resident makes a disclosure of domestic abuse, it is essential that a DASH RIC is completed by the officer, unless an assessment has already been completed by an external agency. In this case, the officer should contact the agency that completed the assessment to obtain the level of risk, key risk indicators and when the assessment was completed.

Always ask a victim/survivor if they have informed other agencies of the abuse, this will avoid the victim/survivor repeating themselves.

The DASH RIC provides a scoring system to assess whether cases are high risk:

- 0-9- Standard risk
- 10-13- Medium risk
- 14+- High risk

Be mindful of high-risk indicators such as non-fatal strangulation, threats to kill or honour-based violence. If these are present in the RIC but it does not score high, use professional judgment to decide if the case should be escalated.

TMBC also has a co-located Housing IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor), who can provide guidance to officers and complete DASH RIC.

### Safeguarding High Risk Cases

If an officer has completed the DASH RIC and the case has been assessed as high risk, the officer has a duty to complete the necessary safeguarding.

As there is a significant risk to life or serious harm, confidentiality can be breached to safeguard the survivor. It is important to always inform the survivor before this is done, if safe to do so.

#### MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

All cases that score 14+ on the DASH RIC must be referred to MARAC. Cases can also be referred based on professional judgement. At the conference a multi-agency approach is used to share information and create an action plan.

#### MARAC Referral form

[app.oasiscloud.co.uk/OASISDA/Core/Public/Referral/marac\\_web\\_referral.aspx?apikey=c56b468c-0d9d-4c81-89e8-91b774832ba7%u00a0](http://app.oasiscloud.co.uk/OASISDA/Core/Public/Referral/marac_web_referral.aspx?apikey=c56b468c-0d9d-4c81-89e8-91b774832ba7%u00a0)

#### Children Safeguarding

An officer can also consider making a referral to Children Social Care if there are children in the home who have witnessed/heard domestic abuse or have experienced it directly. You do not need consent to refer. It is important to note that many victim/survivors who are mothers are often fearful of Children's Services, believing that their children will be taken from them. In cases of DA, reassure the victim/survivor that the referral is not a reflection of their parenting, but the actions of the perpetrator.

#### [Kent Children's Portal](#)

#### Adult Safeguarding

If an adult is experiencing DA and has other support needs, you may need to make an Adult Safeguarding referral. This could include victim/survivors who are elderly, those with disabilities, substance misuse or mental health conditions.

#### [Adult safeguarding forms - Kent County Council](#)

#### Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM)

There may be instances where a victim/survivor has other support needs but does not require an adult safeguarding referral. In this situation, officers can instigate a MARM. This panel will discuss the case and use a multi-agency approach to safeguard the victim/survivor.

[https://www.kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/final\\_marm\\_approved\\_by\\_kmsab.pdf](https://www.kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/final_marm_approved_by_kmsab.pdf)

## 5. Supporting residents

When supporting victim/survivors it is important to remember that they are experts in their own experience. Any support or safety plan should centralise their needs and the officer should adopt a collaborative approach in building a support plan.

It is crucial not to advise a victim/survivor to leave the relationship immediately, this is often the most dangerous time and can put victim/survivors at risk. First establish a clear safety plan and network of support.

### Housing support

Refuge- If a victim/survivor is fleeing DA and is not safe in the property, officers can suggest a refuge. Officers can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline to ask for refuge vacancies.

Temporary or Emergency Accommodation- Victim/survivors who have approached TMBC as homeless due to DA and have been assessed as eligible for support will be considered Priority Need. In this instance, if a victim/survivor will be automatically eligible for safe temporary accommodation.

SAFER Scheme – Some victim/survivors may wish to remain in their property if the perpetrator does not reside there. In this case, officers can make a referral to the SAFER Scheme which installs security measures in the survivor's home.



Professionals only -  
SAFER Scheme referrals

Rent Arrears- There could be instances where victim/survivors accumulate rent arrears due to DA. If it has been verified that DA is the reason for rent arrears TMBC Housing will consider a waiver of the arrears.

### Domestic Abuse Support

Referral to local DA Services- With the consent of the victim/survivor, officers can make referrals to local DA services such as DAVSS, Lookahead or West Kent Domestic Abuse One-Stop Shop. Here the resident will receive specialist domestic abuse support and advice.

Referral to Housing IDVA- TMBC have a co-located Housing IDVA who works with the TMBC Housing team. If a victim/survivor requires more support and advice on their housing situation, officers can make a referral to the Housing IDVA using the Huume case management system.

Signposting- Housing officers can signpost survivors to a wide range of national specialist domestic abuse services, examples of which can be found in Appendix 1. It is

important to check with the victim/survivor that it is safe for them to store information on their phone or take material back home.

Forced Marriage Unit- TMBC recognises that victim/survivors of domestic abuse can also be experiencing other forms of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls). If a resident discloses, they have experienced forced marriage or are at risk, officers can make a referral to the Forced Marriage Unit.

#### Legal support

Victim/survivors may need support in accessing legal services or information regarding legal protection and civil orders. Housing staff will signpost residents to appropriate legal support services.

Non-Molestation Order- This order can prevent the perpetrator from engaging in specific actions such as contacting the victim/survivor, it can also cover specific addresses such as homes or schools.

Occupation Order- This order is often used to remove the perpetrator from the property, allowing the victim/survivor to remain in the home. This is usually for a set period of time.

Restraining Order- If a perpetrator has been convicted of criminal harassment or an offence relating to abuse, the court can grant a restraining order to protect the victim/survivor.

Claire's Law Disclosure- This scheme allows someone to request information from police on whether their partner has been abusive in the past. If there is a risk to the current partner, police can then consider whether to share the information. An application can be made by the victim/survivor or a third party, but the information would only be given to the person who is at risk.

Legal support services- Officers can signpost victim/survivors to legal services to support with securing a civil order. For example, DV Assist, NCDV, Flows or Courtnav.

## **6. Working with perpetrators**

TMBC Housing Officers may have to work with perpetrators of domestic abuse. There may be instances where perpetrators recognise the harm caused by their abusive behaviour and request support.

Referrals for support- Officers can refer perpetrators to Kent CDAP or Respect's online service or helpline.

### Holding perpetrators to account

There are likely to be times where the perpetrator does not recognise their behaviour as wrong or harmful and may continue to be abusive. It is important that perpetrators are held accountable for their behaviour, while also ensuring that any action is considered in relation to the safety and wishes of the victim/survivor.

Third party report- If an officer has received a disclosure of domestic abuse, it may be appropriate to make a third-party report to police. It is essential that the victim/survivor is informed of this, and steps are taken to safeguard them if police are involved.

Liable for damages- Perpetrators can often engage in property damage such as breaking windows, doors or damaging furniture and walls. It is crucial that the perpetrator is liable for these damages and not the victim/survivor, even if the perpetrator is not a registered tenant.

## **7. Case Management and Information Sharing**

TMBC Housing Officers will use the case management system Huume to record details of domestic abuse cases.

Domestic abuse cases will be tagged on the system so officers can identify DA cases. Cases that have been referred to MARAC should also be tagged.

Case notes should be kept up to date, factual and written with non-judgemental, empowering language.

If a new incident of DA occurs it is important to update the case notes and complete a new DASH RIC, if the risk level has changed because of the incident, the officer should respond accordingly.

### **Case notes should include:**

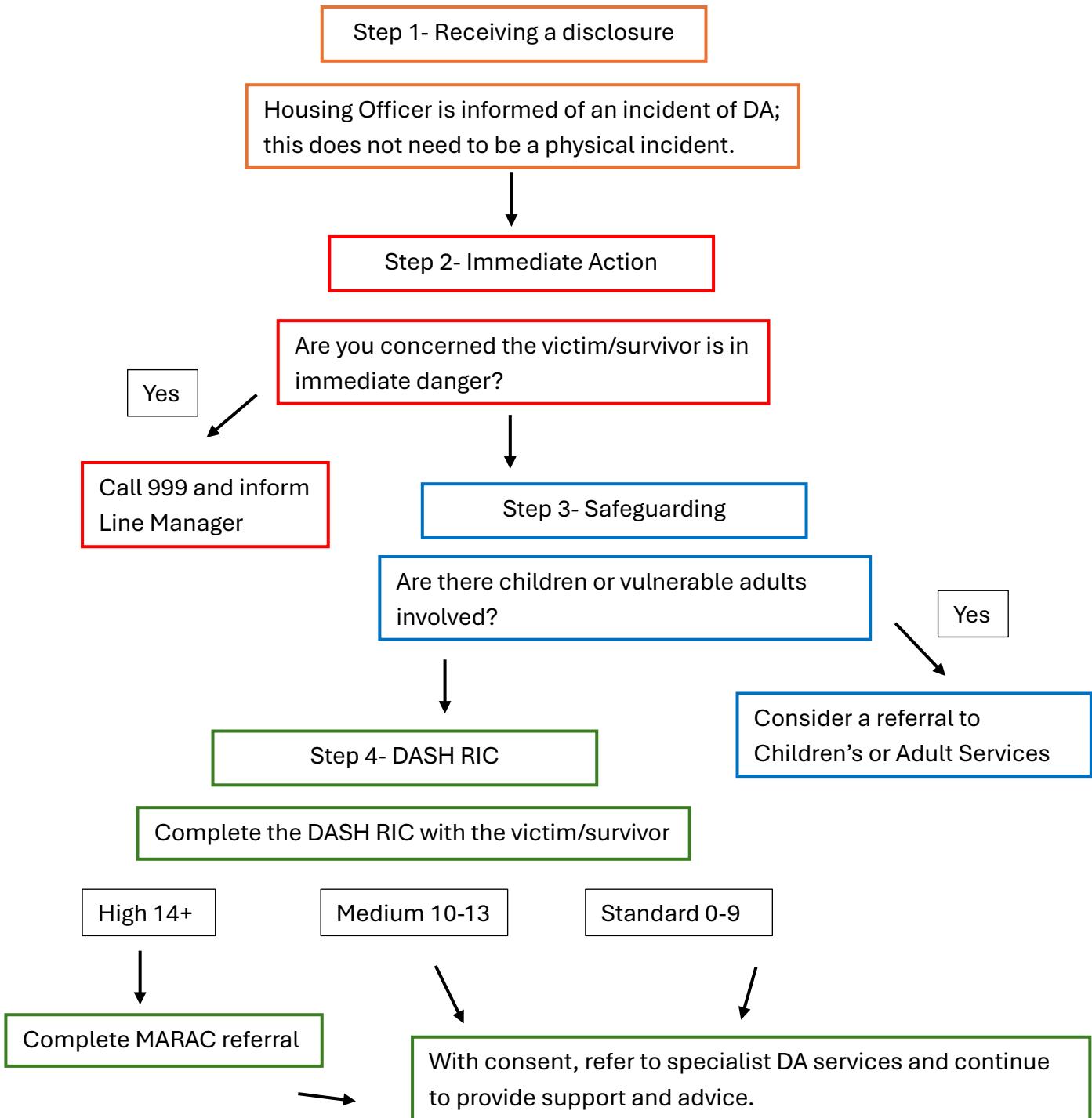
- Nature of disclosure.
- Relationship to the perpetrator, their name, date of birth and address.
- Presence of children in the household.
- Whether the victim/survivor is pregnant and the due date.
- Description of the incident of DA- Including the date, time, location, any injuries sustained.
- Whether this was the first incident of DA, how long abuse has been occurring, what is the frequency of incidents, is the frequency increasing.
- Enhanced risk factors- disability, recently left relationship, pregnancy etc
- Action taken by officer- DASH RIC completed, signposting etc.
- Details of other agencies involved.
- Whether information has been shared without consent and reasoning.

### Information Sharing

Information sharing with external professionals should only be done with the expressed consent of the victim/survivor. If you are sharing information, it is important to only include relevant information and not to go into a high level of detail of events. It is important that victim/survivors are able maintain their dignity throughout the process and do not have personal information shared.

Be mindful that perpetrators may contact TMBC Housing to acquire information about the victim/survivor. If an unknown person or professional asks for information, do not disclose any information without confirmation of who they are. You can ask them to send a follow up email with proof of where they work and evidence of consent from the victim/survivor.

## 8. TMBC Housing Service Flowchart



## 9. TMBC Housing Service support pathway

You have concerns that a resident is experiencing domestic abuse, or a resident wants to make a disclosure.

- Ensure that it is safe and convenient for the resident to speak with you.
- Create a safe and confidential space to discuss the disclosure.
- Meet the needs of the resident by arranging an interpreter or accessible space.
- Explain confidentiality, the resident's information will not be shared without consent unless there is a safeguarding concern.
- Listen to their experiences in a non-judgemental way, ensure they feel believed and not blamed for the abuse.
- Discuss and explore the resident's support needs always ensuring that their needs are at the centre of the discussion.
- Create a safety plan which is specific to the resident. Many victim/survivors will already be implementing safety planning in their own way. Listen to what they are doing and incorporated it into the plan.
- Ensure that all information is recorded in the case notes.
- Throughout the discussion, the perpetrator should be held responsible for their behaviour, and it should be clear that professionals and agencies are responsible for keeping the resident safe.

A disclosure has been made- Discuss what they would like to happen next, options and advice.

- Is the resident in immediate danger? If yes, contact 999. Be mindful that some survivors do not want police involvement but explain that you have a duty of care to keep them safe.
- Consider whether safeguarding referrals are necessary for children or vulnerable adults.
- Complete the DASH RIC if the resident consents. Based on the result, refer to MARAC if necessary.
- With consent of the resident, submit a referral to the Housing IDVA via Huume for ongoing domestic abuse support.
- Ask the resident if they want to complete a safety plan. A safety plan can be created even if resident does not consent to completing the DASH RIC. Ensure the plan is specific to the victim/survivor.
- Provide information on specialist domestic abuse support services and make referrals with resident's consent.
- Provide information on legal options and civil orders such as a Non-Molestation Order, Occupation Order or Restraining Order.
- Continue to provide support and advice around resident's housing situation. Explore appropriate options such as refuge, temporary accommodation, SAFER Scheme.
- Stay in regular contact with the resident throughout the housing process. Ensure you are contacting them via their chosen safe contact method. Stay up to date with new incidents and update the DASH RIC and safety plan accordingly.

- Use Huume to keep case notes up to date with all contact with resident. Ensure that notes are written factually and are non-judgemental.
- If you feel upset or overwhelmed when working on a domestic abuse case, seek support from your Line Manager or Employee Assistance Programme.

## 10. Appendix 1

A list of national specialist services that support victim/survivors of domestic abuse.

### **Ashiana Network**

Advice and support for South Asian, Turkish and Iranian women.

Call 020 8539 0427

### **Kiran Support Services**

Advice and support for women and children from Asian backgrounds.

Call 020 8558 1986. Available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Email: [Info@kiranss.org.uk](mailto:Info@kiranss.org.uk)

### **IMECE**

Advice, information, and support for women from Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot backgrounds.

Call 020 7354 1359. Available from 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday

### **Karma Nirvana**

Advice and support for victims of honour-based violence and forced marriage.

Call 0800 5999 247. Available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

### **Southall Black Sisters**

Advice and support for Black, African, or Caribbean Women, as well as survivors with no recourse to public funds.

Call 0208 571 9595. Available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

### **Latin American Women's Aid**

Advice and support for Latin American Women.

Call 020 7275 0321 and phone number has a web link on it that goes to a mobile number.

Available from 9:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday

Email [referrals@lawadv.org.uk](mailto:referrals@lawadv.org.uk)

### **The Traveller Movement**

Advice and peer support for women from Irish, Gypsy, or Roma Traveller backgrounds experiencing abuse.

Call 0207 607 2002

Email [info@travellermovement.org.uk](mailto:info@travellermovement.org.uk)

### **National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline (GALOP)**

Advice and support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Intersex survivors.

Call 0800 999 5248. Available from 10am to 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Friday 10 to 8pm

Wednesday to Thursday

Email [help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

### **Respect Men's Advice Line**

Advice and support for male survivors of Domestic Abuse.

[Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK](http://Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men | Men's Advice Line UK)

Call 0808 8010327- Monday-Friday 10am-5pm