Practitioners' Guide to Domestic Abuse - participant pack

Domestic abuse can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviours), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental/emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family or friends). Children are witness to and subjected to much of this abuse: there is a correlation between domestic abuse and the mental, physical and sexual abuse of children.

Domestic abuse is associated with broader inequalities in society, is part of a range of behaviour constituting male abuse of power, and is linked to other forms of male violence, such as rape and child abuse. Domestic abuse occurs in all social groups, is not caused by stress, unemployment, poverty, alcohol or mental illness, nor by the woman who experiences the abuse.
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Background information - what is domestic abuse?

Domestic Abuse (DA) is one form of a group of violence referred to as Violence Against Women (VAW). All forms of VAW, which include (but are not limited to) prostitution, rape and sexual abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, are understood as Violence Against Women because they are:

A. Either directed at women principally because they are women, or

B. Are experienced by women disproportionately (compared to men)

This suggests that an understanding of gender is central to considering any form of VAW (including DA). Gender is not the same as biological sex, but is the collection of characteristics, traits and behaviours which are socially constructed as associated with a particular sex. For example, phrases such as 'boys don't cry', and 'he's very effeminate' are both phrases which say something about the gendered expectations of the speaker: first, that there are behaviours associated with particular sexes (that society views it as more acceptable for girls to cry), second, that there is an ideological and normative value placed on gendered behaviours (that society expects men to behave in certain ways, and if they behave in ways socially associated with females, this will be reflected in phrases reflecting this social expectation).

Gendered expectations of both men and women have the effect of enforcing and reinforcing set 'roles' for either gender; these roles are evident in popular literature, adverts, films, education and more. These gendered expectations do not mean that people cannot act out with their gender-role, but rather that the expectations made of either gender will be made clear to the person by the socialised reactions of others (perjorative comments made in the playground, abusive or insulting remarks in the public arena).

We relate gender expectations and power relations to domestic abuse because this form of abuse is one of the forms of violence used to maintain women's subordinate status within all aspects of society (which is reflected in interpersonal relationships). There is a strong correlation with rigid expectations of gender roles and perpetration of domestic abuse (which means that most perpetrators will hold rigid
expectations about women. This does not mean that people choosing traditional gender roles in relationships are being abused. There is no difficulty with women selecting a traditional gender role, the difficulty comes when there is a rigid expectation that the women must behave as such.

In terms of domestic abuse and gender, we are often asked ‘but what about men?’. The popular press publishes (and thus reinforces the credibility of) statistics which purport to reflect numbers reported of domestic abuse. The numbers ‘show’ that 85% of people reporting domestic abuse are women, and 15% are men. This leads participants to wonder why we talk about ‘women’ throughout the day, as 15% of victims are men. These numbers in fact reflect reports of episodes of interpersonal violence. This is rather different to domestic abuse for the following reasons.

Within interpersonal violence (one or more individual episodes of violence) there are actually three sub-types:

- *intimate terrorism*: this is what we mean as domestic abuse, and consists of a relationship in which there is a dynamic of fear and control, where one partner holds a position of power over the other.
- *violent resistance*: whereupon a person has been abused, and tries to protect themselves or their children by fighting back. This is very different to being a domestic abuser in their own right, clearly.
- *situational couple violence*: this can be described in terms of a couple who might perpetrate acts of violence towards each other (sometimes on different occasions), but this violence is not set in a context where one partner holds control over the other. The violence therefore originates from poor handling of a situation (argument etc), but does not have the function of trying to exert power over the other. The violence is seen as ‘expressive’ violence.

We can see that these reports of episodes of violence do not actually tell us whether there is domestic abuse in the relationship - episodes cannot tell us this. We need to know the context of the relationship to understand what kind of violence was being used - was she defending herself? Was he abusing her to control her? Were they both in an argument which escalated into violence?

Studies which look at reported violence within relationships over a period of years (following couples through a period of time, not just ‘snapshots’ of single episodes) show that there is a rather different pattern of women and men experiencing...
domestic abuse to that reported - this is covered during the course. Such studies show that domestic abuse within heterosexual relationships is significantly more likely to be perpetrated by males against females, that violent resistance is overwhelmingly employed by females, and that situational couple violence is less related to gender. Only by mixing these 3 categories of violence together do we achieve the statistic of a large minority of those experiencing domestic abuse to be male.

In addition to the above, research shows that when men do experience interpersonal abuse, the context (the way by which this abuse happens) and the consequences (how this affects men) has some important differences than when this occurs to women. Whilst these differences require more explanation that there is scope for in this section, it is important to note that these differences mean that we cannot equate the abuse that men and women experience as 'the same'. This, of course, is not to say that any form of abuse is acceptable, but rather that there are often differences in men and women's experiences of abuse when looked at as groups - these are seen in terms of differences in context, consequences and causes.

For the purposes of attending more advanced training, the area which you will need to be conversant with is 'why women stay' or return to abusive relationships.

Reasons for remaining in an abusive relationship are myriad, complex and deeply individual to each woman. One commonality amongst domestically abusive relationships is the dynamic of power, manipulation and control that the perpetrator holds over the perpetrated-against.

The assumption is commonly made within mainstream myths that women in abusive relationships are as free to leave a relationship as women in non-abusive relationships. We imagine our own, usually affirming and respectful, partner hurting us one day, and imagine our rightful feelings of hurt and outrage at being treated in such a way. We then imagine that we would 'give them their marching orders' at once, and find it hard to understand why women experiencing abuse do not.

The problem that we fall into is to be thinking about what the episode of violence has meant, rather than the context. The episode is the immediate moment/episode of violence or abuse, the context is an ongoing relationship in which the victim is powerless, and the perpetrator ensures a continual experience of fear and control.
The analogy I use to explain this in training is to think about boiling a frog (not a recipe suggestion). If a frog is put in a pan of boiling water, he will immediately try to jump out to save himself. This is similar to those of us in affirming relationships, imagining that we are suddenly thrown into the abuse, and would of course leave immediately.

If, however, a frog is put into a pan of cool water, which is slowly enough raised to boiling point, he will never try to save himself, and will boil to his death. Think now about relationships of abuse, which might start with a derogatory comment, or subtle put-downs over a period of time. Would any of us leave our partner, and possibly children, because our partner had made an offensive comment? Possible, but deeply unlikely. Imagine now that our partner goes quiet and cold whenever we phone our friends. We are likely to still call the friends. Now imagine that our partner does this for so long that we have to ‘cheer up’ our partner, and mollycoddle them, and run around after them for an hour after we call our friends until our partner speaks to us again. Over a period of time we will lose the energy and motivation to work this hard just to make a phone call. We will stop calling our friends. In the context of a relationship of emotional abuse and control, episodes of violence are not always experienced as the frog put in the pan of boiling water. The water temperature in this relationship is already raised, and raising incrementally over a period of time. Simultaneously, the woman’s agency, or ability to leave, is slowly eroded.

On researching the accuracy of the ‘frog boiling myth’, it was discovered that some experts dispute the idea that the frog would remain in the slowly-heated pan once it had reached a dangerous temperature. One expert instead stated that he ‘[had] no doubt that the frog would climb out of the pan - if it had the resources to do so’. This raises an interesting point - is it that women choose to remain, or no longer recognise that they have the resources to do so?
Forms of domestic abuse

Physical
Shaking, smacking, punching, kicking, presence of finger or bite marks, starving, tying up, stabbing, suffocation, throwing things, using objects as weapons, female genital mutilation, 'honour violence'. Physical effects are often in areas of the body that are covered and hidden (ie breasts and abdomen).

Sexual
Forced sex, forced prostitution, ignoring religious prohibitions about sex, refusal to practise safe sex, sexual insults, sexually transmitted diseases, preventing breastfeeding.

Psychological
Intimidation, insulting, isolating a woman from friends and family, criticising, denying the abuse, treating her as an inferior, threatening to harm children or take them away, forced marriage.

Financial and other spheres of control
Not letting a woman work, undermining efforts to find work or study, refusing to give money, asking for an explanation of how every penny is spent, making her beg for money, gambling, not paying bills.

Emotional
Swearing, undermining confidence, making racist remarks, making a woman feel unattractive, calling her stupid or useless, eroding her independence.
Statistics about intimate partner violence:

Scotland’s Chief Statistician publishes the statistics entitled Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland, 2009-10. The publication presents key statistics on the number of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by police forces in Scotland.

The main findings are:

- There were 51,926 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland in 2009-10, compared to the 53,931 incidents recorded in 2008-09. This equates to a 4 per cent decrease in the number of incidents recorded in 2009-10 as compared to 2008-09.
- 62 per cent of the incidents recorded by the police in 2009-10 (32,066) led to a recording of a crime or offence; this was up from 55 per cent (29,526) of incidents in 2008-09.
- Where a crime or offence was recorded in 2009-10, the most common was minor assault, accounting for 43 per cent (13,740). The second most common crime or offence was breach of the peace at 33 per cent (10,489) of all incidents where a crime or offence was recorded.
- The overall incidence of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland in 2009-10 was 1,000 per 100,000 population: this compared to 1,043 per 100,000 population in 2008-09.
- For incidents where information was available, 57 per cent of incidents (25,602) in 2009-10 involved victims who had previously been recorded as a victim of domestic abuse. This compared to 61 per cent (30,595) in 2008-09.
- When looking at the incidence per 100,000 population in 2009-10, females are at most risk of being victims of domestic abuse when aged between 22 and 25 years old and males when aged between 31 and 35 years old.
- Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2009-10 involving co-habitees or partners accounted for 44 per cent of all cases (22,496, (each at 22 per cent (11,117 and 11,379, respectively)) where relationship was recorded. Incidents involving spouses accounted for a further 15 per cent (7,632).
- In 41 per cent of cases (20,953) in 2009-10 where relationship details were recorded, the victim and perpetrator were ex-partners or ex-spouses. This has been steadily increasing from 30 per cent (10,509) in 2000-01.

The overwhelming majority of incidents of domestic abuse took place in the home/house (89 per cent (45,532) of all incidents where the location was recorded). This was more likely if the victim and perpetrator cohabited i.e. were a 'spouse' or 'co-habitee' (94 per cent (17,537) of all incidents where location was recorded).
Myths and realities about domestic abuse

There are many myths about domestic abuse. Most tend towards victim-blaming or are based on a need to seek out reasons or excuses to explain what is happening. A clear understanding about the cause of domestic abuse, intentional behaviour used to gain power and control over the victim, will help workers in all agencies to provide a more effective service to women, children and young people who are experiencing or have been affected by domestic abuse.

Women who experience domestic abuse sometimes provoke it
If we accept this we blame the woman for the abuse and absolve the man of his responsibility. There can be no justification for using violence, unless your life is in danger. No one deserves to be abused – there is always an alternative, no matter how angry you are.

Domestic abuse mainly happens in problem families
Men from all walks of life, all ethnic backgrounds and all ages abuse their partners. There is no typical abuser and no typical woman who experiences domestic abuse. Most women who go to Women’s Aid for support have no problems in their lives other than those arising from their partner’s abuse.

Most men who abuse their partners must be mentally ill or have a drink problem
For a lot of people it is easier to believe that an abusive man is mentally ill rather than to accept that he knows exactly what he is doing when he assaults, rapes or emotionally tortures his partner. Most men who abuse their partners are only abusive to them, never to anyone else.

Alcohol and/or drug misuse are frequently believed to “cause” domestic abuse. Studies show that alcohol (less commonly, drugs) may be a factor in many incidents of domestic abuse but are never a root cause. Alcohol is a disinhibitor and can provide an easy excuse for violent behaviour. There are many abusers who do not use alcohol and many abusers who use alcohol do not assault anyone other than their partner while others knowingly use it as an excuse. Women may use substances as a way of blotting out the violence. Substance misuse and domestic abuse are problems that need to be treated separately.

There is no reason for any woman to remain in a violent relationship.
Contrary to some perceptions of abused women, most who survive in abusive relationships leave many times and routinely act in conscious ways to try and minimise abuse directed at them and their children. Leaving is not an event – it is a process.
It is difficult to leave an abusive relationship. Leaving involves accepting that there is nothing the victim can do that will change the abuser’s behaviour. Women can also be faced with lack of choice of anywhere to go and the absence of appropriate support.

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Women who experience domestic abuse have no predominance of abuse present in their histories.
The prime risk factor for domestic abuse is being female – women are far more likely than men both to experience domestic abuse and to be physically and emotionally damaged by the experience. Other risk factors include being young, having dependent children, pregnancy, financial pressures, alcohol and/or drug misuse, disability, ill-health, relationship breakdown and separation.

Children who experience domestic abuse often grow up to become abusers or victims of abuse as adults.
This theory is disempowering when working with children and young people. A boy who has witnessed domestic violence does not have to grow up to be an abuser and a girl does not have to become a victim of domestic violence in later life. Some surveys have established links, but the research is, at best, inconclusive. Children who witness abuse do not automatically grow up to be abusive towards their partners – many completely reject the use of abusive behaviour as a result of their experiences. Many men who abuse, and whose fathers were abusive, have brothers and uncles who do not abuse. Evidence suggests that within families most victims of maltreatment do not go on to abuse their children (Kaufman & Zigler, 1993; Egeland, 1993)

Domestic abuse occurs because sometimes the man just loses control.
Domestic abuse is a demonstration of absolute power and control. Abusive men are seldom abusive in front of other adults. They often deliberately avoid marking their partner’s face or other visible areas of the body and they manage to control who they abuse – not friends, workmates, the boss, only their partner.

Anger management is useful in helping perpetrators change their behaviour.
Anger management, couples counselling, mediation or restorative justice are not appropriate responses to men’s abusive behaviour towards women. Any response to domestic abuse must acknowledge the real and often fatal dangers present in bringing victim and offender together. (WAFE website www.womensaid.org.uk) Domestic abuse is not caused by a problem with anger (see above). Such interventions imply a position of equality and equal bargaining power and support the abuser’s view that he is not entirely responsible for stopping his violence.

Women could stop the abuse if they just stood up to the abusive partner.
Research shows that a woman is most likely to be killed by her partner if she fails to obey orders or mounts a challenge to his self-esteem and power (Browne 1987; Gelles 1974; Luckenbill 1977). Murder can be the final act of men seeking to re-establish control over their partner’s behaviour and/or affections. (Katz 1988; Zhan 1989)

Domestic abuse is accepted in minority ethnic communities
This is a myth linked to stereotypes e.g.
• Compliant Asian women controlled by men

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• Arranged marriages being seen as more oppressive than other marriages
• Lack of distinction between arranged marriage and forced marriage.

Domestic abuse is experienced by many women, irrespective of age, race, class, sexuality, culture, religion, mental and/or physical disabilities. Women, children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities, including the travelling community, face the added oppression of racism in seeking and obtaining help from agencies. In fleeing the abuse they may isolate themselves from community support networks and may also face additional discrimination when moving to a new neighbourhood.

If it’s just an isolated incident and the man is sorry, then it’s unlikely to happen again.
The abuser may apologise and say that it was a one-off incident that won’t ever happen again. In reality, although there may be periods of calm, most men continue to abuse, the incidence and severity of the abuse escalating through time.

Children need a father – women should stay for the sake of the children.
Children need love and security, which they can get from their mother, more than they need a ‘father figure’, particularly one who they know to be abusive to their mother. Children who experience domestic abuse suffer emotionally and some may also be physically or sexually abused. Many women leave when they see the effects their partner’s abuse is having on their children. Some children of women who experience domestic abuse do, however, have a good relationship with their father and want to continue seeing him. Access visits can be arranged to allow this to happen. Many abusers deliberately exploit contact arrangements with children to further control and harass their partners but women and children have a right to a life free from abuse.

Domestic abuse usually reduces or stops during pregnancy
On the contrary, abuse often begins or intensifies during pregnancy. It is often particularly directed towards the unborn child and is regarded as one of the commonest complications in pregnancy (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists). The abuse may cause miscarriage, premature labour, stillborn babies or low birth weight infants. Studies also show links between violence against women and either physical or learning disabilities in children (Kelly, 1992)

Children are generally unaware of domestic abuse going on
It is Women’s Aid’s experience, backed up by children’s writing and testimony, that the majority of children can describe in detail assaults that their parents were unaware they had witnessed

In most cases the abuse ends when the woman leaves the relationship.
Women are most likely to be killed or seriously injured as they try to leave or after they have left the abuser, which suggests that some women may be trapped in a violent situation because of threats to murder them if they attempt to leave.

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Recognising indicators of domestic abuse:

Physical effects

- Bruising
- Recurrent sexually transmitted infections
- Broken bones
- Burns or stab wounds
- Death
- Gynaecological problems
- Tiredness
- General poor health
- Poor nutrition
- Chronic pain
- Miscarriage
- Maternal death
- Premature birth
- Babies with low birthweight/
  stillbirth/injury/death
- Self-harming behaviour

Psychological effects

- Fear
- Increasing likelihood of misusing drugs, alcohol or prescribed anti-depressants
- Depression/poor mental health
- Wanting to commit or actually committing suicide
- Sleep disturbances
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Anger
- Guilt
- Loss of self-confidence
- Feelings of dependency
- Loss of hope
- Feelings of isolation
- Low self-worth
- Panic or anxiety
- Eating disorders
Examples of the effects on women

Domestic abuse impacts on a woman’s health potential. For example, women may:

- turn to drugs, alcohol or other substances in an attempt to cope with their situation;
- become isolated from friends and family – important sources of support;
- lose their independence – especially if they are financially dependent on their abuser;
- avoid taking opportunities that arise or taking up new interests and activities for fear they might provoke their abuser;
- have problems at work due to increased time off or inability to concentrate.

Domestic abuse also affects the quality of the relationship a woman is able to have with her children.

Domestic abuse can affect a child’s educational opportunities, through:

- developmental delay;
- disrupted schooling or truanting;
- concentration difficulties;
- or memory problems.

It has serious consequences on a child’s ability to relate to other people and can affect their chances of living a healthy, rewarding life – now and in the future.
Understanding the needs of women experiencing domestic abuse:

As professionals supporting those who are experiencing domestic abuse, we have to be able to accept that sometimes women will make decisions that we might find hard to understand. Overcoming our own frustrations and misperceptions forms an important part of providing support. Domestic abuse is always the responsibility of the perpetrator. Never blame the abused woman—it’s not her fault.

Why don’t they just tell someone?

- They might be worried about stigma surrounding domestic abuse.
- Using the label ‘domestic abuse’ might make them uncomfortable.
- They might be afraid of the consequences of telling someone.
- Some women don’t recognise their situation as domestic abuse.
- The consequences of talking might seem worse than staying silent.
- Perhaps the perpetrator has threatened worse abuse if she talks to someone.
- Women might be worried about losing their children if social services are involved.
- They might worry that nobody will believe them particularly if there are no physical injuries.
- There might be cultural or religious barriers.
- They might be worried about their immigration status.
- The abuser might never leave her alone.
- Some women can’t find the words to describe their experiences.
- Maybe nobody’s ever asked.
- Always remember that a woman is the only person who has all the information about her own particular circumstances.

Continued support and understanding are crucial

For a lot of women coping with domestic abuse, speaking to somebody about it and finding ways to create a safer life can take a long time. It’s a long process—not a single event.

Sometimes women try different ways of dealing with their problem over a long period of time before finding a way that’s right for them—which is why it’s important to continue supporting them. They may make decisions that we do not understand, but professionals should adopt a non-judgemental approach and women’s decisions should be respected.

As with all important life-changing decisions, women will consider their options carefully and over time before taking action. It can seem frustratingly slow and women may return to their abuser on several occasions.

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Pushing them into action is reflective of the abuser's behaviour towards her and is not helpful.

**What do survivors of domestic abuse want?**

- To be safe.
- To be believed, taken seriously and respected.
- Timely and proactive interventions such as routine enquiry and the provision of information.
- Independent advocates (from the voluntary sector, for example) to oversee their case and liaise with the different agencies that provide them with support.
- A single person or agency to get help from so that they don't have to keep repeating intimate details of their abuse.
- Options based on their circumstances explained to them clearly.
- Contact with other survivors.
- To be kept informed of developments – such as when an abuser is released from a police station or turns up at the child's school.
- Support to cope with the effects of abuse on their children.
- To have their views incorporated into services that are offered to them.
Asking the question and dealing with the response:

This next section looks at 'asking the question' and responding to any disclosure, and was written by Highland Training Consortium for their own training pack. It is kindly reproduced here with their permission.

Open, Indirect, Non-Threatening Questions

- How are you feeling, generally?
- How are things going at home?
- Are you getting much help at home?
- Who is there to help you at home?

Follow up Questions

- I notice you have a number of bruises/scratches, how did they happen? (if explanation seems improbable continue to probe, e.g., "Did someone do this to you?")
- We all argue at home. What happens if you and your partner argue or disagree?
- Has your partner ever destroyed things you cared about?
- Have you ever been in a relationship with a partner who hurt or threatened you – is that happening now?
- Does your partner ever stop you from doing the things you want to do?
- Has your partner, ex-partner, or anyone close to you, ever called you names, or said things to make you feel bad about yourself as an adult?
- Has your partner, ex-partner, or anyone close to you, ever put you down in front of others?
- Have you been afraid of your partner, ex-partner, or anyone close to you?
- Have you been forced to have any kind of sexual activity by your partner, ex-partner, or anyone close to you that you were uncomfortable with?
- Have you or your children, been kicked, hit, slapped or otherwise physically hurt by your partner, ex-partner, or anyone close to you?
- Has your partner, ex-partner, or anyone close to you, ever left you short of money or control the amount you spend?

Introducing the Question – General
We know that many women experience abuse at home or in their community at some time during their lives. If this is happening to you, I will be able to offer some help and useful information about services available if you wish.

Many women who use our services have lived with people who have made them afraid. Is this an issue for you?

Introducing the Questions – Pregnancy
It is very common for women who are pregnant to be experiencing domestic abuse – research suggests a third begins at this time. We are asking every one about their relationship with their partner because of the numbers of

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women who are living with domestic abuse. How are you getting along with your partner at the moment?

Introducing the Questions – Substance Misuse

Many women who use drugs or alcohol do so to cope with things that have happened to them in their life. Many of these things can be difficult to talk to anyone about, like sexual assault or domestic abuse. Has anything like this happened to you?

Introducing the Questions – Mental Health

There are lots of things that can have an impact on people’s health. One thing that has a big impact on many women’s lives is if they have ever been abused. We ask all women who come to our service if this has ever happened to them. Can you tell me about your experiences?

Remember

• It is important to explain options and procedures at the earliest opportunity so that women can make an informed decision about how to proceed. Some people are concerned that women might become angry as a result of being asked personal questions. In most situations, women will appreciate why you are asking these questions and won’t take offence. The small risk of offending someone is far outweighed by the risk of adding to a woman’s sense of isolation by not asking. If a woman is offended or angry a possible response might be to say something like:

“We know in Scotland many women have experienced gender based violence – it is likely that 1 in 3 will have experienced some form, such as domestic abuse, rape or child sexual abuse. If any of these are an issue for you it might make a difference to the options/services I can offer you.”

• Not all women will disclose what is happening. The timing might not be right or the barriers too great. In this situation it is not appropriate to keep pushing the issue, but it is important to leave the way open for her to get back to you. It might be appropriate to offer her some information to look at and/or take away.

Respect & Validation

It may have taken a woman months or years to reach the point of disclosing her abuse, so how she is treated is likely to have an impact on whether she is able to disclose more and find help. Fear of being blamed or not being believed can stop her talking about her experiences. You must ask yourself if your intervention will leave the woman and any dependants she has in greater safety or greater danger. This requires the following good practice:

• Ensuring the safety of the woman (and any dependants) is of paramount consideration. A woman is deemed to be ‘safe’ once she feels she is.
• Respond empathically – women who have experienced gender based violence are often trying to find a solution to a dangerous and frightening situation. How you respond can, crucially, affect whether she can escape the abuse and make appropriate choices about her future. Acknowledge her courage in telling you about it. Asking for help is never easy, particularly, if you are feeling vulnerable and powerless, so your response is especially important on each and every occasion she makes contact, whether it is by phone or face to face.

• Believe her.

• Remember that physical abuse is only one part of the problem so you should never ask a woman to prove the physical violence has taken place.

• Breaking the links with an abuser can be a long process. Be careful not to seem to pass judgement or blame the woman for her situation. Don’t ask her to justify her actions, e.g., “Why on earth did you go and see him?” Accept that she will have had her reasons for making any such decision.

• Seek to empower the woman to make informed decisions and choices: give her time to consider the options that you present to her and try not to put pressure on her to do anything that she isn’t ready to do.

• Respect confidentiality and privacy and recognise the real dangers that may be created if this is breached. Experience shows that perpetrators who are trying to track down women are often very persistent and vindictive. Let her know in advance the limits to the level of confidentiality you can offer her.

A' Foighneachd nan Ceistean mu Fhoirneart An Aghaidh Bhoireannach - Pasgan Tréanaidh
Asking the Questions about Violence Against Women - Training Pack

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Additional barriers faced by some women:

Asian Women
Why might an Asian woman experiencing domestic abuse not approach agencies for help?

☐ Might not know where to go for help
☐ Fear of racism in mixed/mainstream refuges.
☐ Agencies are predominantly white-led; lack of specialist support services and may lack understanding of BME women’s experiences of domestic abuse
☐ There is a low level of awareness among BME women about the existence of refuge services
☐ Agency workers may not be able to speak Asian community languages
☐ Even if Asian, workers might not speak right language, agency may not be able to access interpreters
☐ Interpreters may be male or may be from the same community and may not be properly qualified
☐ Agencies may be racist
☐ May be lack of cultural awareness in agencies
☐ May fear religious and cultural stereotyping by individuals and agencies
☐ May believe it is not acceptable to talk about her business outside of the family/community
☐ May fear being reported to Home Office if has unsettled immigration status

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?

☐ May not have access to information about support services
☐ May have no recourse to public funds, unsettled/insecure immigration status and fear being deported
☐ Abuser may have essential documents such as passport, marriage certificate, correspondence from Home Office
☐ May be under pressure from family/community/elders/religious leaders not to leave
☐ May fear loss of community support and social networks – being ostracized or isolated
☐ May believe that wherever she goes, he will find her through community networks by word of mouth or because ethnic minority women more visible in different communities
☐ She may be being abused by in-laws and kept isolated
☐ Betraying the family honour (izzat) and shame (sharam)
☐ To leave will affect the honour of other family members who are already married and those who are not
☐ Abuser interprets religious teachings to suit his own ends

African Caribbean Women and Domestic Abuse
Why might an African-Caribbean woman experiencing domestic abuse not want to approach agencies for help?

We are aware that a number of people who attend our course may have experienced, or be experiencing domestic abuse. If you would like support, your trainer can help you to find appropriate agencies to offer you the support you require.
Fear of racism, based on experience e.g. of discriminatory work practices, harassment
- Racist treatment by agencies: inadequate housing, inaccessible protection
- Fear of cultural stereotyping
- Most agencies are white-led; lack of specialist support services
- May fear that agencies won't be aware of cultural issues
- May fear being judged
- Only a small number of Black-led agencies
- May fear betraying partner if goes outside family/community
- May believe it's not acceptable to talk about family business outside the family
- May fear children being removed

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?
- Might not know where to go for help
- Abuser might threaten to tell family/community/church that it's her fault if she leaves
- Fear that is betraying partner, family, community
- If partner is Black, fear that he might be more severely dealt with than if he were white
- Fear of losing support of partner, family and community especially in dealing with effects of living in racist society
- Feeling responsible for protecting a community already subject to racism
- Fear of deportation, the slow asylum-seeking process, curtailed right to claim benefits

Domestic Abuse and Issues for Women who use Drugs or Alcohol
Why might women who use drugs or alcohol not want to approach agencies for help?
- Fear that she won't be taken seriously
- Fear that she won't be believed
- Fear that she will be seen only in terms of her drug or alcohol use
- Treated by agency only in terms of her drug or alcohol use
- Fear that she will be labelled
- Fear that nobody will help her
- Believes that she doesn’t deserve to be helped
- Abuser might make counter-allegations against her
- Agencies believe that she is as bad as him and don’t help
- Believes agencies won’t take women in who use drugs/alcohol and are in chaos or don’t have support for drug/alcohol use

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?
- Her abuser may be her supplier
- Fear that she may lose her supply and have to face withdrawal
- Fear that the children will be removed
- Fear that once the agency get to know about her drugs/alcohol use, they will withdraw their support
- She believes or is told that there is nowhere to go that can help her
- Fear of leaving support and social networks

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Issues for lesbian and bisexual women Living with Domestic Abuse

Why might lesbian and bisexual women experiencing domestic abuse not want to approach agencies for help?

- Homophobia and fear of homophobia
- Belief that agency will assume she’s heterosexual
- Fear that agency won’t believe that domestic violence occurs in same sex relationships
- Fear that the agency will judge her
- Not wanting to reinforce prejudice against women in same sex relationships
  - e.g. that all lesbians are violent, or “masculine”
- Fear that she might lose her children, that courts will give residence to father/husband
- Might be faced with agency assumptions and stereotypes about lesbian and bisexual women
- May not know which agencies to approach

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?

- Partner might threaten to ‘out’ her to family, friends, children, community and workplace
- Female partner might accuse her of being abusive too
- Taboo of talking about domestic violence in same-sex community so might not receive support
- Shared circle of friends means escape from violence equates with loss of community
- Female partner might approach same agency for help
- May fear that the family courts will judge her ability as a mother based on their stereotypes of her as a lesbian (Mullender, 1996)
- Fear of being easily found / tracked by mixing in lesbian/gay communities
- Fear of not being taken seriously if she approaches agencies
- No specialist refuges for lesbians
- Internalized social homophobia, perhaps adding to a sense of shame, guilt or powerlessness
- Sense of duty to protect the community by keeping silent about domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse and Mental Health

How might domestic abuse affect a woman’s mental health?

- May become depressed or anxious
- May feel worthless and have low self-esteem
May feel or become suicidal
May self-harm
May become more isolated
May develop an eating disorder

How could an abuser use a woman's mental health issues to further abuse her?
- Might tell her nobody will believe her
- Might tell her (and others) that she is mad
- Tell her she could not cope on her own
- Refuse to let her go anywhere on her own, and say it's for her own good
- Might threaten to have her sectioned
- Might threaten to tell Social Services she can't look after the children
- Might withhold her medication
- Might give her an overdose of her medication

Why might a woman with mental health issues not want to approach agencies for help?
- Fear of not being believed
- Lack of confidence: maybe she IS the one with the problem?
- May have panic attacks when she goes out
- May fear that she will be seen only as a 'mad' woman
- May fear that children will be removed
- May fear that she'll be made to see a psychiatrist or even sectioned
- May fear that things will be taken out of her control once she has told people
- May fear that people will be sympathetic to abuser and see her as the cause of the problem

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?
- Fear
- May not know where to go
- May not be unable to find a suitable refuge place
- May believe no refuge will take her
- May believe that she is the problem and that the abuse is her fault
- May feel dependent on abuser
- Fear of repercussions
- Fear of being found
- Fear of losing children

Young Women and Domestic Abuse
Why might young women find it difficult to approach agencies for help?
- Lack of trust in an adult dominated society
- Fear they may not be believed
- Don't know where/who agencies are
- No transport
- No money
- Lack of entitlement to benefits and tenancies (16-18 year olds)

We are aware that a number of people who attend our course may have experienced, or be experiencing domestic abuse. If you would like support, your trainer can help you to find appropriate agencies to offer you the support you require.
They may feel intimidated by agencies or their GP
Fear of being 'caught' asking for help
Peer pressure to have boyfriend
Passing the problem between agencies; lack of specialist support

What attitudes, stereotypes and discrimination might young women face?
- The relationship/problem is not serious as they are just kids
- They are making it up as a form of attention seeking
- Go home to your parents
- There are 'plenty of fish in the sea'
- There may be a high regard for the perpetrator in the community
- She deserved it because she is a slag, flirt etc
- Financial discrimination imposed by government restrictions on benefits
- Age discrimination involved with being homeless
- He is only young and may grow out of it, 'phase'
- My son would never do a thing like that
- It is only domestic violence if you are living together, married.
- Friend dismissive or 'I told you so' attitude
- Feeling that police will not assist because of age

What other issues might young women face?
- Abuser may be older and better able to manipulate and exert power
- Health, contraception, and parents etc. knowing GP or that GP might tell
- Trying to complete education
- Housing
- Money
- Job or training
- Lack of awareness about the issue in school, youth clubs, etc.
- Immigration status may be dependent on perpetrator
- It doesn't happen to my friends, therefore it must be me
- Fear of parents finding out and imposing restrictions, or shame, especially if they disapproved of the relationship
- Abuser offered an escape route from family or isolation in care system

Older Women and Domestic Abuse
Why might an older woman experiencing domestic abuse not want to approach agencies for help?
- Lack of knowledge about welfare benefits and support services
- Most service providers are younger
- Most services users are younger
- Feel embarrassed about disclosing to much younger women
- Lack of specialist support services
- May feel the pressure to offer stability to those around her

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?
- May feel there is no point in trying to leave now
- May feel she cannot leave after having built up home and possessions over so many years
- Pressure by others including grown up children

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Women with Disabilities and Domestic Abuse

Why might a disabled woman experiencing domestic violence not want to approach agencies for help?

- Lack of accessible services
- Agency may not be able to locate accessible accommodation suitable to woman’s needs
- Fear that agency will place her in residential care
- Fear of bureaucracy and delays around applying for funding from Social Services if she wants to live independently
- May need to recruit personal assistants if wanting to live independently
- Agency may not be accessible
- Agency may collude with abuser
- Agency may not believe her
- Fear of children being removed
- Specialist disability services may not be aware on domestic violence
- Domestic violence services may not be aware on disability issues

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?

- May not know where to go for help
- May fear that she won’t be believed or treated as credible
- He may have total power and control over her access to outside world
- May not be able to get help because agencies are inaccessible
- May believe it's her own fault
- Loss of employment or community group (e.g. deaf community) geared to meet her needs, particularly if partner is part of community
- If abuser is her carer, she may be totally dependent on him for care
- Fear of not being able to look after children if abuser also her carer and father of children
- Her home has been specially adapted to meet her needs
- Refuges and other safe accommodation that have accessible accommodation may not be right for her needs

Class and Domestic Abuse

Working class Women

Why might a working class woman experiencing domestic abuse not want to approach agencies for help?

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Previous experience of class discrimination
May feel daunted about approaching professionals
May feel frustrated or patronized in the past
May feel inferior, unworthy or self-doubt reinforced by negative attitudes from professionals

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?
- Less access to employment prospects
- Less educational opportunities
- Further financial challenges for single parent
- Day to day struggles of dealing with poverty, childcare, bad health, bad housing take precedence

Middle class Women
Why might a middle class woman experiencing domestic abuse not want to approach agencies for help?
- Reluctance herself to believe ‘I am that type of woman’ (her belief in a stereotype that violence is a working class phenomenon)
- She may fear she will not be believed by others – particularly if her abuser is a respected member of the community, e.g. minister of religion, G.P. or surgeon, M.P., etc.
- Lack of knowledge of support services, welfare services and benefits available
- Embarrassment and shame

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?
- Home and standard of living dependent on abuser’s income
- Private schooling for children dependent on abuser maintaining payment
- Used to staying at home; employment prospects daunting or curtailed
- Reluctance to get caught in the poverty trap

What stereotypes and discrimination might she face?
- Disbelief by others including service providers that upper/middle class men can be violent (due to their ‘respectability’ or profession e.g. teacher, policeman, doctor, priest, lawyer)
- Pressure to be grateful for expensive holidays, ‘being so well off’

Traveller Women and Domestic Abuse
Why might a woman experiencing domestic abuse not want to approach agencies for help?
- Her community’s previous experience of the police
- Fear of the way police would treat the perpetrator
- On-going treatment by society e.g. that place her community on municipal sites alongside industrial units, factories and waste tips; poor facilities in a brutalized environment

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?

We are aware that a number of people who attend our course may have experienced, or be experiencing domestic abuse. If you would like support, your trainer can help you to find appropriate agencies to offer you the support you require.
Women who are involved in prostitution and Domestic Abuse

Why might a woman experiencing domestic abuse not want to approach agencies for help?

☐ Previous lack of support, history of abuse
☐ Disrespect from authorities
☐ Forced drug addiction

What might stop her from leaving an abusive relationship?

☐ Financial pressures
☐ Fear of the perpetrator who has immense power over a number of women
☐ Fear of her children being removed
☐ Fear that she would suffer discrimination both in a refuge or elsewhere
☐ Difficulty in obtaining employment: lack of references, educational qualifications and training
☐ Addiction to drugs and difficulty in obtaining effective treatment
☐ May be unable to find place in a refuge – or may fear that refuge will not take her because of her involvement in prostitution and/or drug use.

What stereotypes and discrimination might she face?

☐ Inappropriate advice from professionals who do not understand her living circumstances
☐ Judgment and condemnation for her ‘life-style’
☐ Women who are involved in prostitution should expect assault and rape
☐ Women who are involved in prostitution do not experience the effects of violence to the same extent.
Public training courses January - June 2011

The Tayside Violence Against Women Training Consortium provide training for public and professionals. Most courses are free at point of access, however we do levy a cancellation fee of £30 for free courses* if cancellation is within 5 full working days of the course, and if we are unable to fill the space (you are very welcome to make your own substitution at no charge).

In addition to the courses outlined below, we would be happy to discuss your organisational training needs, and to work with you on providing training to your team. We are particularly committed to the mainstreaming of training, and can provide training for trainers on a variety of topics. Please make contact at the address above for further details.

Violence Against Women - Exploring the Issues
(formerly 'An Introduction to Violence Against Women')
9:00 - 4:15 - Free Event*

This full day foundation level course covers the root causes and consequences of violence against women, drawing the links between such diverse forms of violence such as forced marriage, sexual abuse and domestic abuse. Participants will be given the opportunity to explore attitudes and beliefs, define violence against women, and understand the needs of women and children affected by violence.

Trainers: Sarah Watts (Tayside Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women Training Consortium) and guest co-facilitators.

17th March - Angus - Canmore Suit, Forfar Town Hall, Forfar
9th June - Perth - Murray Room, Salutation Hotel, Perth

A Practitioner's Guide to Understanding Domestic Abuse
(formerly 'An Introduction to Domestic Abuse')
9:00 - 4:15 - Free Event*
This full day foundation level course looks at one specific form of violence against women, domestic abuse, in detail. The course explores the dynamics of domestic abuse, and common myths and attitudes around domestic abuse. Participants consider the additional barriers and vulnerability of particular populations, and explore routes to accessing help.

Trainer: Sarah Watts (Tayside Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women Training Consortium) and Fran Coutts (Dundee Police)

3rd February - Angus - Canmore Suite, Forfar Town Hall, Forfar
1st March - Dundee - East District Housing Office, 169 Pitkerro Road
19th April - Perth & Kinross - Murray Room, Salutation Hotel, Perth
3rd May - Angus - Canmore Suite, Forfar Town Hall, Forfar
30th May - Dundee - East District Housing Office, 169 Pitkerro Road

Risk identification in domestic abuse
9am - 12:45pm - Free Event*

This two-part course supports practitioners to effectively identify risk when working with clients experiencing domestic abuse, and to apply these skills to practice. In Part A of the training, participants will explore the theory of risk identification, including high risk factors. Part B of the course offers the opportunity to put learning into practice, using the model to risk identify a case. This session looks at the fluid and dynamic nature of risk assessment, and highlights the challenges of safety planning.

Participants may attend Part A alone, or both parts of the training. We ask, however, that all participants attend part A prior to attending part B.

Trainers: Sarah Watts (Tayside Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women Training Consortium) with local co-facilitators (Anne Brown - AWARE; Kathryn Sharp - DVAWP)

Part A: 18th January - Angus - Canmore Suite, Forfar Town Hall, Forfar
Part A: 9th February - Dundee - East District Housing Office, 169 Pitkerro Road
Part A: 9th March - Perth & Kinross - Murray Room, Salutation Hotel, Perth
Part B: 24th March - Dundee - East District Housing Office, 169 Pitkerro Road

We are aware that a number of people who attend our course may have experienced, or be experiencing domestic abuse. If you would like support, your trainer can help you to find appropriate agencies to offer you the support you require.
Rape/Sexual Abuse – Responding to Disclosure
9:45am - 1pm

Community workers, Health Visitors, Social Workers etc all play a vital role in supporting the colleagues and members of the community. It is our experience that all it takes for a survivor of Child Sexual Abuse or Rape to disclose is trust. The overall aim of this multi-agency training is to provide a basic awareness of some of the difficulties and issues that survivors face as a result of their experience and equip participants in enabling them to deal with disclosure sensitively and appropriately.

The training will enable participants to understand the short & long term effects of rape or sexual abuse. Discuss anxieties, concerns and organisational practice, in relation to receiving a disclosure, as well as receiving training on useful skills.

This training is free.
Venue to be confirmed.
To book a place or for further information please contact: WRASAC P&K: 01738 626290 or email: info@perthshirerapecrisis.org

31st May - Gateway: North Methven Street, Perth
17th May - Gateway: North Methven Street, Perth

Focusing on Male Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse
9.30 - 4.30 - Free Event*

This course is not aimed solely at professionals whose role involves directly working with perpetrators, but is suitable for all professionals working with families or children in any context. The course will provide delegates with an opportunity to define the problem of domestic abuse and explore the reasons as to why some men abuse. It will facilitate a discussion around 'Can perpetrators change?' and allow delegates the opportunity to experience an example of perpetrator group work.

Trainers: Alastair Robertson (Consultant Trainer)

8th March - Angus - Room D, Bruce House, Wellgate, Arbroath
Working with women who experience substance-misuse and domestic abuse
9.30 - 3.00 - Free Event*

This full day intermediate-level session allows participants with practical experience of working with substance misusing women experiencing domestic abuse to explore the conflicts and challenges of professional practice.

Trainers: Gillian Ferguson (Dundee City Council) and Sarah Watts (Tayside Violence Against Women Training Consortium)

30th March - Dundee - Committee Room 3, 14 City Square
21st June - Perth - Murray Room, Salutation Hotel, Perth

Violence Against Women and Muslim communities
(Culture and practice)

This external training will offer participants the opportunity to explore the cultural dimensions associated with the perpetration of violence against women. It will allow participants to explore the issues surrounding violence against women, such as domestic abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and so-called ‘honour’ crimes.
Participants will deal with practical scenarios, exploring difficult, but not uncommon, situations.

Course fee: £20

18th January - Forfar - 10.00-4.00
15th February - Perth - 10.00 - 4.00
22nd March - Dundee - 9.30 - 3.30

This course is provided and administrated by AMINA - the Muslim women’s resource centre. If you are interested in this course, or would like to discuss any aspect of training at AMINA, please contact Florence Germain at: florence@mwrc.org.uk or call on 01382 224687.

*Most courses are free at point of access, however we do levy a cancellation fee of £30 for free courses* if cancellation is within 5 full working days of the course, and if we are unable to fill the space (you are very welcome to make your own substitution at no charge).

*For courses which bear a cost, we charge 50% of the course fee if cancelling prior to two weeks before the course, or the full fee if cancelling within two weeks - if we are able to fill your place, there will be no charge.