Assessing the needs of a client with issues of

Domestic Abuse

As a professional working with clients, patients or members of your community, even if you don’t have any specialised training about domestic violence, you are in an excellent position to help someone (hereafter referred to as ‘client’ and as ‘she’, but this does not exclude male victims) who is experiencing or breaking free from domestic abuse. Caring common sense, your professional experience and a few tips about how to approach it are all that you need and you can do this without spending vast amounts of time or resources.

Your role is vital, because you may be the only professional who will pick up on a potential DA problem. Other professionals may focus only on a specialist area of need. Without your intervention your client may not get help, leading to escalation and a potentially dangerous situation. Quick assessment and intervention may make an enormous difference.

Unless you introduce the subject, very few clients will talk about domestic abuse themselves – they remain silent because of fear, embarrassment, shame, or they think they won’t be believed. They may also feel helpless and fear the consequences for themselves, children and perpetrator. You need to have a set of screening questions to introduce and then, if necessary, explore what’s happening.

**RESOURCE: Screening questions – asking the question**

**IN GENERAL:**

Talk with the client in a safe and comfortable place – make time for this;

Make phone calls for you and the client to get information & advice and access to specialist services;

Offer to accompany the client (or arrange for someone else to) to police, courts or other services – help to ask questions, take notes & speak up if they can’t;

Be clear about what you can do and can’t do – have information about specialist services and what they can do; offer to make contact and arrange a referral.

**RESOURCE: Accessing specialist DA services -** [**DA toolkit single docs\DA toolkit - accessing services that can help.docx**](file:///C:\Users\Admin\Documents\NADASA%20DEV%20PROJECT\Project%20documents\TOOLKIT\DA%20toolkit%20single%20docs\DA%20toolkit%20-%20accessing%20services%20that%20can%20help.docx)

See below for specific areas to explore:

|  | **AREA TO DISCUSS** | **CLIENT NEEDS** | **RESOURCE** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | **Identify and prioritise your client’s fears, dangers and needs** – what is their current situation / prioritise the actions that need to be taken to keep them and any children safe. What are their specific fears about violence, retaliation, children, immigration, police, housing, money, etc. Is there immediate danger? Has she spoken to police? Treat all fears very seriously and use the DASH template to assess the level of risk and the SAFETY PLAN template. **Contact a specialist service if you need help to do this:** |  | DASH template  [**DA toolkit single docs\DA toolkit for professionals - templates\dom\_abuse\_caada\_dash.pdf**](file:///C:\Users\Admin\Documents\NADASA%20DEV%20PROJECT\Project%20documents\TOOLKIT\DA%20toolkit%20single%20docs\DA%20toolkit%20for%20professionals%20-%20templates\dom_abuse_caada_dash.pdf)  MARAC REFERRAL  [**DA toolkit single docs\DA toolkit for professionals - templates\MARAC Referral tpl Oct15.doc**](file:///C:\Users\Admin\Documents\NADASA%20DEV%20PROJECT\Project%20documents\TOOLKIT\DA%20toolkit%20single%20docs\DA%20toolkit%20for%20professionals%20-%20templates\MARAC%20Referral%20tpl%20Oct15.doc)  SAFETY PLAN template  [**DA toolkit single docs\Personalised safety plan template.docx**](file:///C:\Users\Admin\Documents\NADASA%20DEV%20PROJECT\Project%20documents\TOOLKIT\DA%20toolkit%20single%20docs\Personalised%20safety%20plan%20template.docx)  Accessing Specialist DA services  Victim Passport  [**DA toolkit single docs\Nadasa adapted Victim Passport V2 GGB.docx**](file:///C:\Users\Admin\Documents\NADASA%20DEV%20PROJECT\Project%20documents\TOOLKIT\DA%20toolkit%20single%20docs\Nadasa%20adapted%20Victim%20Passport%20V2%20GGB.docx) |
| 2 | **Significant others** – are there people in her life that she can turn to? Family, neighbours, teachers, colleagues, religious members? Explore who might be useful – they do not need to know everything, but might be able to offer childcare, transport, place of safety, someone to accompany her to appointments. |  | Other known and trusted people – who? |
| 3 | **Children** – are they safe? Are they having problems? What can be done - can school help? Are custody or child care proceedings needed? Is childcare stable? |  | School /teachers / school counsellor /  Children’s services & Safeguarding [**http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk**](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk)  Family & friends |
| 4 | **Housing** – is it secure – tonight, for the week/month? Does she need a place of safety (refuge). Is it owned or rented and in whose name? Can you speak to the landlord? Does the perpetrator need to be removed? What is the situation about money / food / heating / phone / transport, etc. Does she need an emergency loan? |  | Landlord / Housing Association  Police, courts, solicitor  Refuge services/Women’s Aid (Accessing specialist DA Services)  [**DA toolkit single docs\DA toolkit - accessing services that can help.docx**](file:///C:\Users\Admin\Documents\NADASA%20DEV%20PROJECT\Project%20documents\TOOLKIT\DA%20toolkit%20single%20docs\DA%20toolkit%20-%20accessing%20services%20that%20can%20help.docx)  Family & friends |
| 5 | **Law enforcement** – does the client fear going to the police or continuing with an existing legal case? Explore reasons why and options for support/safety. Does she have a named police contact or a phone number to ring about case information? Make enquiries on their behalf if necessary and to highlight current fears. If they are not already engaged with supportive services offer a referral. |  | Sunflower Centre / IDVA (high risk) [**http://www.voicenorthants.org/support-services/sunflower-centre/**](http://www.voicenorthants.org/support-services/sunflower-centre/)  Police – 101 / 999  VOICE (for victims & witnesses)  [**http://www.voicenorthants.org/**](http://www.voicenorthants.org/)  Citizens Advice Witness Service  [**https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/citizens-advice-witness-service/**](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/citizens-advice-witness-service/) |
| 6 | **Job, Income, School** – does the client have access to money or regular income? What is their position going to be in a week/month? Can they borrow from family? Does the employer/school know what the situation is & are they supportive? If not, what can be done? |  | Employer – sympathetic manager or HR;  School – teacher, counsellor, safe-guarding lead, school nurse;  CAB/Welfare right  Family |
| 7 | **Medical** – are there any medical or health concerns/needs? Are they seeing their GP/other health professional? If sexual violence has been involved, do they have concerns about sexual health / contraception / pregnancy? Is mental health at risk? Do they need counselling or emotional support? Have injuries been documented? |  | GP / Health & Wellbeing service Midwife / Health Visitor  Serenity Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)  [**http://www.nht.nhs.uk/main.cfm?type=SERENITY**](http://www.nht.nhs.uk/main.cfm?type=SERENITY)  Sexual Health & Contraception Service  [**http://www.nht.nhs.uk/main.cfm?type=4**](http://www.nht.nhs.uk/main.cfm?type=4)  Sunflower Centre  [**http://www.voicenorthants.org/support-services/sunflower-centre/**](http://www.voicenorthants.org/support-services/sunflower-centre/) |
| 8 | Immigration – is their status at risk; are they without recourse to public funds; do they have applications pending; do they need to make applications? |  | Women’s Aid services;  CAB  Welfare rights  Nadasa website – services that can help. |