



Wandsworth Children's Services

Our Practice Approach to Domestic Abuse

Produced by the Domestic Abuse Operations Group
October 2022

*This approach will be reviewed and updated quarterly by
the Domestic Abuse Operations Group.*



1. Our Vision

“Our aspiration is for every child and young person to be safe from harm and abuse and enabled to reach their full potential. Children are at the heart of all we do”.

We know that domestic abuse causes long-term suffering to partners/family members and children. Our aim is to prevent abuse and to support and repair where it has occurred. In Wandsworth we want to collectively supply the emotional, psychological, and practical support that is needed to help children and victims – or families that have stayed together - to get safe, stay safe and move on to reach their full potential. As part of our practice approach, we want to proactively engage and work with fathers.



Wandsworth is committed to developing an ambitious, long-term strategic approach to ending violence against women and girls (VAWG). Our strategy is based on a preventative model and most importantly is informed by survivors [‘The Ending Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Strategy 2022-2025’](#).

2. Introduction

What do we mean by Domestic Abuse?

The United Nations defined violence against women as:

“any act of gender-based violence that results or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women) including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.”

Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse for the purposes of the Act as: – “(2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if— (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and (b) the behaviour is abusive. – (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following: – (a) physical or sexual abuse; – (b) violent or threatening behaviour; – (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; – (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4)); – (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse; – and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct

Although our work in Children’s Services is mainly with mothers and children who are disproportionately affected, domestic abuse can affect anyone in an intimate relationship. This includes women and men; any inter-partner abuse; child to parent violence; same sex relationships and abuse in young people’s relationships.

Who is this Practice Approach for?

This is for all Children’s Services practitioners and social workers. It’s an internal document to inform children’s social care and our partner colleagues and agencies of our practice approach to working with domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

This [legislation](#) sets out the first definition in law of what constitutes domestic abuse and goes well beyond physical violence, recognising that domestic abuse can be emotional, economic, coercive, or controlling behaviour. It defines domestic abuse as occurring where the victim and perpetrator are aged over 16.

For the first time, a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the person being abused or the perpetrator, is also recognised as a victim of domestic abuse in their own right. (*Section 3: 1- 4*). One of the key functions of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will be to encourage good practice in the identification of children affected by domestic abuse and the provision of protection and support for these children. It extends the offence of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Domestic abuse protection orders (DAPOs) are intended to consolidate the existing array of protection orders relating to domestic abuse, such as domestic violence protection orders and non-molestation orders. The Act amends homelessness legislation to give victims of domestic abuse automatic priority need status for settled housing, without needing to fulfil the vulnerability test. It also puts the domestic violence disclosure scheme, commonly known as '[Clare's Law](#)', on a statutory footing for the first time.

Nicole Jacobs is the first Domestic Abuse Commissioner appointed as designate commissioner in 2019. She said, '**social workers have a critical role to play in the response to domestic abuse**'.

In Wandsworth, around one in four social care referrals have a presenting issue recorded as domestic abuse. Additionally, around one in three social care assessments conclude that domestic abuse was a factor of risk to the child, which suggests that we more often identify domestic abuse at the end of an assessment than flag it as a concern at the beginning of the referral.

A woman dies at the hands of a man every three days and nearly 2 in 3 children exposed to domestic violence were directly harmed.

3. Approach

We know that responding effectively to domestic abuse requires a holistic, co-ordinated multi-agency and whole family approach. Our [Outstanding Practice Framework](#) is underpinned by a systemic, relational model, in which we value establishing effective, meaningful relationships with children and families, appreciating an understanding of domestic abuse within the family context rather than in isolation and taking a non-judgemental approach.

Our aim is to implement a clear strengths-based framework, which utilises systemic and trauma-informed approaches to social work practice, whilst keeping children's needs at the forefront of any decision making. We use Motivational Interviewing techniques and are mindful of language. Our core value is that a family is the best place for a child or young person to thrive and meet their potential. Therefore, to create real and sustainable change, we aspire to empower families with the values, attitudes, and skills to get safe, stay safe and move on to reach their full potential, encouraging the development of personal and parental agency around problem solving and ensuring access to appropriate evidence-based interventions.

We also work in partnership with multi-disciplinary agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to safety, which includes but is not limited to, the Wandsworth Safeguarding Partnership

Board, statutory agencies and partners, including health, education, police, and probation as well as Community Safety, and voluntary and faith organisations.

Our Family Safeguarding Approach recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children and families and has specialist domestic abuse practitioners specifically to work with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, co-located in our social work teams.

Intersectionality

“This guide should be read through the lens of intersectionality. An intersectional approach is rooted in an understanding of the lived experiences of those who face multiple forms of oppression – for example relating to their gender identity, race, class, sexuality, disability, age, immigration status, religion [and financial circumstances] and how these experiences intersect and create distinct experiences which require distinct responses and support. As practitioners we must seek to understand the complexity of children’s and parent’s experiences and identities that can act as barriers in terms of how they access support and how professionals relate to them. For example, it is important to recognise the experiences of racism or homophobia that can create barriers to reporting to the police or seeking support from other state authorities.” Taken from [BASW Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance, March 2021](#)

4. Tools and Forums

I. **SafeLives DASH risk assessment tool**

This is the tool that we use in children’s services to assess risk to adult victims of domestic abuse; it can also be used as a referral for MARAC where appropriate. [Click here to view.](#)

II. **Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**

The MARAC is a monthly risk management meeting where professionals share information on high-risk cases of domestic violence and abuse and put in place a risk management plan. Further details and how to make a referral in Wandsworth can be found [here](#). [FAQ’s](#) and resources for MARAC meetings can be [found here](#)

III. **Family Group Conferences (FGC’s)**

Family led decision making meetings making realistic safe plans for children, coordinated by dedicated FGC coordinators who are independent. For further details please [click here](#).

IV. **Family Meetings**

A meeting fostering open communication among family members. Led by a social worker/lead professional working with the family where everyone is supported to say what they think and feel, as they discuss difficulties, make decisions and solve problems.

V. **[Motivational Interviewing](#)**

A strengths-based conversational approach to counselling that encourages families to improve their child’s welfare by enhancing readiness for change

I. **[Genograms](#)**

A pictorial display of a person’s family, relationships, and history co-created with children and families

II. [Chronologies](#)

A skeleton of key incidents; a 'sequential story' of significant events in a family's history which contributes to an emerging picture; significantly, current events are understood in the context of historical information.

5. Training

At present our training offer is being reviewed however, below is training that has been delivered within the borough.

Training Title	Length
Female Genital Mutilation	Half day
Supporting young people harmed through familial abuse	Half day
MARAC briefings (monthly)	Half day
Understanding Young People's Lived Experiences of Sexual Violence	Half day
Honour-based violence and forced marriage: Developing effective responses that safeguard and promote children's welfare	Half day
Key principles in responding to sexual violence	Half day
Young people affected by intimate partner violence – workshop	Half day
Domestic Abuse – CAADA-DASH	Half day
Domestic abuse: Coercive Control	Half day
Dynamics of DA & Economic / Financial Abuse	Half day
International Day for the ending of violence against women and girls. Webinar.	2 hours
Wandsworth MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) on Domestic Violence	
MRC event - Women and Children on the Move: The Journeyscapes of Domestic Violence	2 hours
MRC event - Working with Domestic Abuse: Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews	2 hours
MRC event - Responding to Concerns About Domestic Abuse	2 hours

E-Learning modules:

- Coercive control
- Domestic Abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Honour based violence and forced marriage (children and young people)

6. Key support available to our families

- ❖ A dedicated [Domestic Abuse SharePoint site](#).
- ❖ Specialist practitioners in our [Family Safeguarding](#) service including; Domestic Abuse Practitioners (DAPs) for mothers and children and Domestic Abuse Workers (DAWs) to work with perpetrators
- ❖ A domestic abuse social worker in our MASH
- ❖ [MASH practice standard](#)

- ❖ An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service delivered by Hestia, including IDVAs co-located in MASH x 2 days a week. Hestia also run refuges in the borough (**see Appendix 1**)

A groupwork service that delivers:

- I. [HALT groups for mothers](#) who have experienced domestic abuse. These are termly groups for mothers, 12 weeks in person and 6 week virtual evening groups.
- II. [HALT groups for children](#) affected by domestic abuse in schools and the [CGP group](#) for children.
- III. [Caring Dads](#) groups for fathers who have been violent and abusive in the home.
- IV. Mothers Like Me drop-in for mothers who have a child/ren in care. [Further details can be found here](#)
- V. A domestic abuse children's practitioner and therapist in the groupwork team who coordinates and delivers children's groups and offers 1:1 nondirective work with children unable to attend groups.
Email Wandsworth LINKs for further information.
WandsworthLINKS@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk
- VI. A parent forum of mothers affected by domestic abuse.
E-mail Wandsworth LINKs for further information
WandsworthLINKS@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

Appendix 1

The below [support is available](#) to domestic abuse survivors in Wandsworth with the Community Safety Unit commissioning Hestia, Refuge and Spear.

- **Hestia** – IDVA and refuge accommodation service. IDVA service 0203 879 3544 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).
- Refuge accommodation - contact referral line 0808 169 9975 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) [Hestia's Refuge Referral Line | Hestia](#)
- **Domestic Abuse One Stop Shops** – drop-in services for survivors, no appointment necessary:
 - St. Mark's, Battersea Rise, SW11 1EJ. Every Monday between 10.00am to 12.00pm (excluding bank holidays)
 - Citizen's Advice Wandsworth, Picasso Building, Minstead Gardens, Roehampton, SW15 4EE. Every Wednesday between 10.00am to 12.30pm
- **Refuge Complex Needs service (advocacy)** – supports DA survivors with additional support needs Tel: 0208 547 6046 / outreachSWLCN@refuge.org.uk
- **SPEAR Complex Needs service (accommodation)** – for homeless female DA survivors with additional support needs www.spearlondon.org
- **Storm** - family support service <http://stormempowerment.com/>
- **Al-Aman** - supports victims of DA, FGM, HBV and FM 020 8563 2250

- **Association of Somali Women and Children (ASWAC)** (Based in Battersea) 020 7622 1086 - advice and advocacy for Somali women and children [ASWAC](#)
- **Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation:** 020 7920 6460 - support for Middle Eastern and Afghan women and girls who are living in the UK <https://ikwro.org.uk/>
- **Latin American Women's Rights Service** - advice, advocacy and practical support to Latin American women 0808 145 4909 <https://lawrs.org.uk/>
- **Southall Black Sisters** 0208 571 9595 [Southall Black Sisters](#)
- **EACH counselling** – 1:1 counselling and group work for DA survivors
- infoascent@eachcounselling.org.uk / 0208 577 6059
- **Talk Wandsworth** – therapeutic support [TalkWandsworth](#) or call 020 513 6264
- **SignHealth** is a specialist service for deaf adults and children who have experienced abuse [SignHealth](#)
- **GALOP**- support for LGBT+ 020 7704 2040 [Galop](#)
- **Hourglass** - support for older people who have experienced, or are at risk of, any kind of harm, abuse or exploitation 0808 808 8141 [Hourglass](#)
- **Men's Advice Line** – support for male survivors of DA 080 8801 0327 www.mensadvice.org.uk
- **The Mankind National Initiative Helpline** 01823 334244 mankind.org.uk
- **Jewish Women's Aid** is the only specialist organisation in the UK supporting Jewish women and children affected by domestic abuse & sexual violence 0808 801 0500 <https://www.jwa.org.uk/>
- **RISE Perpetrator Programmes** -. The programmes help men to achieve a better understanding of why they use violence and aggression in their relationships, and to identify better ways to deal with their problems. www.risemutual.org / Navinder.Subherwal@risemutual.org and leila.niknejad@risemutual.org