
Overview

This standard is about supporting individuals affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence to provide evidence. It involves gathering evidence and providing information to individuals with regard to forensic medical examinations and taking samples prior to the court process. It includes obtaining consent from the individual to provide evidence. It also includes arranging the equipment for evidence gathering and taking steps to prevent evidence from being contaminated.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. use appropriate risk and needs assessment to support individuals to provide evidence in line with organisational policies and procedures
2. gather evidence in ways that does not take priority over the welfare of individuals
3. provide accurate information to individuals on:
 - how to preserve forensic evidence
 - what samples may be taken in line with individuals needs
 - the police process for achieving best evidence
4. discuss and agree with individuals their understanding of the information provided in line with organisational policies and procedures
5. maintain confidentiality of individuals in line with organisational policies and procedures
6. provide information on the forensic medical examination process to individuals in ways that meet their needs
7. explain to individuals the process of taking and storing samples
8. assess the ability of individuals to make informed consent for early evidence gathering
9. obtain consent from individuals where appropriate and in line with organisational policies and procedures
10. check the appropriate equipment and supplies are available and functioning correctly to facilitate the evidence gathering process
11. take steps to prevent contamination of evidence, in line with organisational policies and procedures
12. determine whether the forensic examination needs to take place and arrange this where appropriate
13. provide support during the forensic examination, where appropriate
14. collect, seal and clearly label forensic samples, in line with organisational policies and procedures
15. store forensic samples according to the required conditions, national guidelines and organisational policies and procedures
16. keep records in line with organisational policies and procedures
17. update information with ongoing communications and new information in line with your organisation's policies and procedures

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. legal, organisational and policy requirements relevant to your role, the role of others in your organisation and the activities being carried out
2. the relevant national and local guidelines, policies, and procedures available and how and when they should be accessed
3. organisational policies and procedures for obtaining consent
4. the consequences and available options when an individual refuses to give consent
5. the stages of the criminal justice process to allow individuals to make informed choices and manage their expectations
6. the different reasons where records may be required in conjunction with the criminal justice process
7. data protection issues surrounding the evidence gathering process
8. how to maintain clear, accurate and factual records
9. the information which can be made available to individuals
10. what constitutes domestic abuse and sexual violence, and its prevalence in the community
11. the impact upon all those affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence, including individuals, children and dependents
12. the importance of being aware of your own values and beliefs, and their impact upon your ability to challenge discriminatory or potentially damaging attitudes and behaviour
13. how to be sensitive and flexible in your approach, using various techniques appropriate to the behaviour and attitude of the individual
14. how intersectionality impacts on how an individual experiences services
15. the correct methods for using evidence kits used by your organisation
16. the current guidance available on forensic evidence gathering and how to apply this
17. ways in which to respond to potential physical and sexual health needs
18. correct methods and equipment required to collect and preserve forensic evidence
19. correct ways to deal with anonymous forensic evidence collection, storage and preservation
20. the requirements of your support role during forensic medical examination, and where agreed, the video interview

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21. when it is appropriate to take forensic samples and the limits to the storage timescales
 22. the forensic medical needs of the individual

Glossary

Domestic Abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

The abuse can encompass but is not limited to, a combination of psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

This definition also includes so-called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Children also experience domestic abuse when witnessing domestic abuse.

Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage

Needs led approach

a way of working to ensure that the support offered to someone experiencing domestic abuse is offered based on their needs and that builds on their strengths and resources available to them. It recognises the knowledge they have of the person who is using abuse. With the rights the non-abusive person can build their independence, recover from the trauma they have experienced and gain their life back and source change that lasts

People at risk

An individual who is defined as in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, risk of abuse or neglect

Sexual Abuse

Undesired sexual behaviour by one person to another. This is often carried out by force or by taking advantage of the other person. This term is generally used when the sexual behaviour is regular or over a prolonged period of time.

Sexual Assault

Any unwanted sexual behaviour that a person has not consented to.

This can range from rape to voyeurism or exhibitionism, to unwanted touching above or under clothes.

Sexual Violence

Similar in nature to Sexual Abuse, but this term is more often used to describe brief or single incidences, such as if sexually assaulted by a stranger.

Strength based approach

Is an approach to working with individuals that recognises their strength to overcome their experiences

Trauma Informed

an approach to health and care interventions which is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact on a person. Practitioners in a way so as to not inadvertently retraumatise impacted individuals; and with an emphasis on client safety, choice, collaboration and empowerment.

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