
Overview

This standard is about communicating with individuals affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence, particularly in the first meetings where the person has approached your organisation, possibly via a referral or an emergency referral.

It includes initial discussions, organising and preparing for meetings and talking with the individuals in a way that builds trust and facilitates disclosure.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. review information prior to meeting individuals including:
 - their personal circumstances
 - any known risk factors
 - reasons for their introduction to your services
2. contact individuals using their preferred means of communication where this is known taking into account the associated risk to their welfare and safety
3. introduce yourself and your organisation, stating the reason for your contact, in line with your organisation's requirements and safe working practices
4. agree meetings with individuals taking into account any risks to health and safety of both you and them
5. prepare safe and suitable environments in advance of meeting with individuals, taking into consideration their physical and emotional needs
6. make relevant sources of information available regarding domestic abuse or sexual violence, including the services your organisation offers
7. explain your role and responsibilities to individuals and provide details of those to contact in your organisation if there are any concerns or questions
8. explain your organisation's confidentiality policy
9. gain consent from individuals to share information with other services in line with organisational policies and procedures
10. forward any information to the appropriate service regarding the safety of individuals or where there is a significant risk of harm to others
11. offer the individual a choice of specialist practitioner where appropriate in line with organisational policies and procedures
12. identify the range of services which you and your organisation can offer to individuals
13. confirm that any persons accompanying individuals understand their role
14. provide a safe space for the individuals to discuss their personal circumstances and:
 - establish their relationship with the abuser
 - the nature of the abuse and the impact of abuse on their health, safety and wellbeing
15. communicate with individuals in ways that meets their needs and abilities
16. listen and respond to points made, acknowledging the effects of their experience and the needs and abilities of individuals

17. explore with individuals their relationships with perpetrators and the nature of the abuse suffered
18. explore aspects that individuals would welcome immediate help with, in line with available guidance
19. encourage questions from individuals and seek confirmation of their understanding
20. inform others when conflicts of interest arise which are outside your role and responsibilities in line with organisational policies and procedures, including
21. discuss with individuals the possible services and ways forward which address their needs in line with organisational procedures
22. identify steps that can be taken which reduce risk to individuals and others in line with policies and procedures, including:
 - using mobile phones
 - using online social media
 - engaging with social networks
23. take steps to safeguard the individual's immediate health, safety and wellbeing where this is under threat, in line with organisational policies and procedures
24. obtain consent of individuals to an agreed course of action in line with organisational policies and procedures
25. explain the criminal justice process to individuals in ways appropriate to meet their needs and abilities
26. discuss and agree future contact arrangements with individuals, in line with their needs and organisational policies and procedures
27. identify where the services available from your organisation may not fulfil individual needs and refer on to other agencies
28. maintain records of discussions in line with organisational policies and procedures
29. maintain confidentiality in line with organisational 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. relevant processes and measures for safeguarding individuals including young people, children and people at risk
4. organisational requirements for allowing others to be present in discussions with individuals, and the relative benefits and disadvantages that the presence of others can create
5. the role of external agencies and stakeholders that provide services and support to individuals affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence in your area
6. the impact of crime on individuals and their need for protection, respect, recognition, information and confidentiality
7. signs of abuse and the methods used by abusers to gain power and control
8. the impact of abuse upon all of those affected by it, including individuals, children and dependents
9. how dependents may be used by abusers as part of their abuse
10. who to inform when you are unable to support individuals within your role and authority
11. the limits of your authority, responsible and professional competence
12. professional support and other services available to individuals when the professional competence of your role may be exceeded
13. the stages of the criminal justice process to allow individuals to make informed choices and manage their expectations
14. types and sources of information and support sought by those affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence
15. the key implications to your role when working with individuals with the same identified perpetrator, including:
 - conflicts of interest
 - maintaining confidentiality and privacy
 - risk of disclosure
 - the support and information needs of such individuals
16. what constitutes domestic abuse and sexual violence, and its prevalence in the community

17. how to be sensitive and flexible in your approach, using various techniques appropriate to the behaviour and attitude of individuals
18. the role and impact of intersectionality in relation to domestic abuse or sexual violence
19. how to apply trauma informed practice in your area of work
20. different trauma responses and their impact
21. how to apply a needs led, strength based approach specific to meet the needs of the individual
22. how intersectionality impacts on how an individual experiences services
23. actions required where disclosure of abuse is identified
24. the importance of being aware of your own values and beliefs and the impact they may have when working with individuals
25. the importance of keeping accurate records including the impact of records requested for third party disclosure
26. different styles and forms of communication and how to adapt them to meet the needs of the individual
27. common barriers to communication and ways to overcome them
28. different means of communication and their associated risks, including:
 - mobile phones
 - use of social media
 - electronic and virtual communication
29. factors that affect individuals' ability to give informed consent
30. the importance of, and methods for, building trust and empathy with individuals
31. the importance of non-verbal communication, such as body language and how different cultures use and interpret body language in different ways.
32. the differences between information and support you provide
33. how to challenge discriminatory or potentially damaging attitudes and behaviour and the importance of doing so
34. circumstances where it is necessary to go against individuals' expressed wishes
35. the importance of ensuring that individuals understand why their expressed wishes are not being met and why
36. the limits of confidentiality applying to your role

Glossary

Domestic Abuse

A 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 form of advocacy that places the survivor at the centre of interventions and support work. This means listening to their story, concerns and struggles and identifying strengths. It results in the collaborative production of support packages that are specific to survivors' individual needs. A needs-led approach is an empowering endeavour that pays attention to survivors' intersectional circumstances, avoiding the traps of institutional bias or ineffective responses

Strength based approach

Recognising that individuals have strengths. These strengths are recognised and built on as part of aiding recovery.

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 Violence (see also definitions below that may be used covering sexual abuse or sexual assault)

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

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.

Trauma Informed Practice

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

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Communicate and engage with individuals affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence



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