



Lyn Romeo: Introduction to this resource.

Hello my name is Lyn Romeo and I'm the Chief Social Worker for Adults at the Department of Health. In my role I provide advice and guidance to ministers and officials in the civil service on social work and social work matters; continue the social work reform agenda and also try and tell the story about great social work practice in adult services. Some of this requires challenging practice, but also informing and supporting best practice.

Why is it important for social workers and social care practitioners to be able to effectively recognise and respond to controlling and coercive behaviour? (0.39)

Domestic abuse is a significant issue in the United Kingdom. The Care Act 2014 includes domestic abuse as one of the issues and circumstances that can be considered when responding to safeguarding concerns. This is in relation to an adult with care and support needs who may be at risk. This is the first time that domestic abuse has explicitly been considered a safeguarding issue. Evidence shows that there is a higher incidence of domestic abuse for people who have care and support needs. People with care needs may be isolated and very dependent on the person who is perpetrating the abuse. So health and social care professionals need to know what to look out for and how to respond appropriately.

Why are social workers and social care practitioners well-placed to respond to coercive control? (1.35)

Social workers and others meet with people on a regular basis. Either through undertaking routine assessments, or other contacts and they quickly build empathic relationships with individuals and their carers. This means they are well placed to make safeguarding enquiries and to support and signpost people to services or support they may need. Research suggests that domestic abuse has become a bit marginalised within social work with adults, with the impact of domestic abuse mainly considered in relation to children and family work. However, adult social workers are well placed to support people in situations involving domestic abuse and to work with both the individual, but also their carer and others around them to ensure that any issues are addressed.

What knowledge and skills do social care practitioners need in order to work with people experiencing domestic abuse? (2.34)

Safeguarding section of the knowledge and skills statement for social workers of adults explains that social workers must take an outcome focused, person centred approach to safeguarding practice. This means ensuring that the person is involved from the outset and given choice and control over what happens next. The focus remains on improving their quality of life, their wellbeing and their safety.



Social workers take the lead in overseeing safeguarding enquiries and interventions that do not compromise the person's health and wellbeing. It is their duty to safeguard people from abuse and neglect. And they should be able to recognise and take action where a young person might be at risk in that household as well.

They should be able to use appropriate social work interventions and work within the legal framework. These values chime with Making Safeguarding Personal, the key approach to safeguarding with adults. Above all, practitioners should be informed of the evidence around the experience and outcomes of domestic abuse on people. Likewise, they should keep up to date with effective practice approaches, such as safe enquiry and safety planning. These resources will support practitioners to do that.

What expertise might social workers bring to a multi-agency setting when responding to domestic abuse? (4.08)

Advocating for social work values, that is putting the person at the centre, providing advocacy support for them and ensuring their wishes really are listened to and acted upon in the most appropriate way are key to social work values. The understanding and skills in taking a human rights and social justice based approach, making sure we help individuals lead the lives they want for themselves is what social work is all about. Assessing risk using professional judgment and involving the person, skilfully balancing promoting their independence with protection and positive risk taking when appropriate are the unique skills that social workers bring to this work.

What role might social workers take in a multi-agency setting when responding to domestic abuse? (4.58)

Liaising with colleagues in the domestic abuse sector, police and the criminal justice system, children's services, health and housing, all in order to get the best possible outcome for the person and to ensure a very integrated and cohesive response to people. Participating in MARACS where someone is at high risk, working with the person to devise a good safety plan, seeking advice from specialist agencies, for example, the domestic violence sector. Securing advocacy where needed and looking into support for perpetrators. This is bearing in mind that training should be undertaken before working directly with them.

What guidance would you give to social care practitioners who are working with coercive control? (5.47)

As social workers working with the individuals there are three crucial actions that we must always remember to take. Firstly, reporting the violence. Secondly, assisting the person to escape the violence and thirdly, supporting them to keep safe from the violence.



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It is also important to remember that social workers and social care practitioners must look after themselves where appropriate, and using reflective supervision and reflective practice in situations where we are guiding and advising our colleagues is key. Taking time out to think through the work that you're doing, the impact that it's having on you and how things may be improved is really key.