What to do if you suspect domestic abuse or a pattern of coercive control

You suspect domestic abuse / violence / a pattern of coercive control

Create safe space with victim

Investigate further (asking questions based on awareness of risk factors)

Make a safe enquiry (see list on next page)

- No evidence of domestic abuse
- Evidence of situational violence
- Evidence of domestic abuse / coercive control

Complete full DASH- RIC (by trained professional)

- Standard / medium risk – Produce safety plan
- High risk – refer to MARAC – Produce safety plan
- Review risk – New safety plan

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Tool 6 - Principles for reflection on religion and belief

This tool sets out the principles that underpin good social work practice around religion and belief. You can use the questions below to reflect on your practice:

1. Are you sufficiently self-aware and reflexive about your own religious and spiritual beliefs or the absence of them and your responses to others?
2. Are you giving the individuals/groups involved sufficient opportunities to discuss their religious and spiritual beliefs and the strengths, difficulties and needs which arise from them?
3. Are you listening to what they say about their beliefs and the strengths and needs which arise from them?
4. Do you recognise individuals' expertise about their own beliefs and the strengths and needs which arise from them?
5. Are you approaching this piece of practice with sufficient openness and willingness to review and revise your plans and assumptions?
6. Are you building a relationship which is characterised by trust, respect and a willingness to facilitate?
7. Are you being creative in your responses to individuals' beliefs and the strengths and needs which arise from them?
8. Have you sought out relevant information and advice regarding any religious and spiritual beliefs and practices which were previously unfamiliar to you?


Making a safe enquiry

Ensure confidentiality and safety by making sure you:
- are alone with the person
- can't be interrupted and have sufficient time
- only use professional interpreters
- don’t pursue the conversation if the person lacks capacity or consent to an interview unless you've already arranged an advocate
- record the person’s response (but not anywhere that the perpetrator may have access to)

Give opportunities to disclose by explaining your reasons for enquiring into domestic abuse, for example:
- explaining it is common and lots of people experience it, so it’s normal for you to be asking
- explaining it's not just about physical violence, and is underpinned by controlling and coercive behaviour.

Explain the limits of your confidentiality

Ask direct questions, for example:
- Has anyone close to you made you feel frightened?
- Does anyone close to you bull you, control you or force you to do things?
- Has anyone close to you ever hurt you physically (hit, pushed, choked you?)
- Has anyone prevented you from getting food, clothes, medication, glasses, hearing aids or medical care?
- Has anyone prevented you from being with people you want to be with?
- Has anyone forced you to sign papers against your will?
- Has anyone talked to you in a way that made you feel ashamed or threatened?
- Has anyone taken money belonging to you?