

The background features abstract, organic shapes in shades of olive green and black. A large, dark green shape is at the top left, and a thick, curved green band runs along the right side. The main text is centered in the upper half of the page.

WOMEN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

Good Practice Guidelines and Pathways for
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGENCIES working with
mental health & substance misuse

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

PURPOSE OF GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

This guidance seeks to increase the safety of women and children experiencing domestic violence through:

- Promoting a shared understanding of the effect of domestic violence upon women's mental health and problematic substance misuse.
- Supporting staff working in drug, alcohol, mental health and domestic violence services to understand the issues outside their own areas of expertise and work in partnership.
- Promoting collaborative and integrated approaches and clear pathways through our services for women and mothers with complex needs.
- Addressing inequalities in access to services.
- Improving health and social outcomes for women and their children.

USING THE GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The following good practice guidance and flowcharts provide evidentially based support to practitioners in each of the sectors in an easy to follow do's and don'ts format. They are designed to sit alongside organisational policies and procedures which will undoubtedly offer more detailed instruction, particularly where safeguarding concerns arise.

GOOD PRACTICE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

WORKING WITH WOMEN WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND/OR DRUG & ALCOHOL USE

Domestic violence is experienced by women with mental health needs and/ or substance abuse issues. These issues can arise due to the violence or may have been present before the abuse started; regardless of how the complex needs occur, we shouldn't exclude women from DV services solely because of these needs.

DO

GENERAL

- Ensure that the environment has visual information available on mental health/drugs & alcohol use, and that information is included within the welcome/information pack. There should be an open acknowledgement about the clear correlation between domestic violence, mental health difficulties and/or the use of drugs & alcohol.
- Ensure your organisation has a policy that includes specifics about working with women with more complex needs and how this will be monitored: no woman should be excluded based solely on a diagnosis of mental illness or on drug or alcohol misuse.
- Keep records about the numbers of women requiring support who have mental health problems and/or drug & alcohol use: whether or not you were able to offer them a service, reasons if you were not able to and the outcomes for these women. This will enable services to evidence that no discrimination is occurring based on mental



health issues as well as outlining any gaps/ barriers that need further consideration.

- Ensure staff receive mental health and drug & alcohol awareness training which should include working with self-harm.

ASSESSMENT

- Routinely enquire about a woman's mental health and any drug & alcohol use in order to ensure the appropriate package of support can be provided – all women living with domestic violence will have a certain level of mental health distress, so the questioning should be in this context, and this should be communicated to the woman to reassure her that this is something she can express and expect support with.
- Assess women on an individual basis – if there are mental health issues and/ or a specific diagnosis, consideration must be given to how this is impacting on her right now, her safety and that of others, and what her support needs are.
- Recognise that women may be wary of discussing their more complex needs for fear that they will be judged negatively and/ or further discredited, and that they will be deemed unable to care for their children. Mental ill health and/ or drug & alcohol use does not automatically mean that women are not capable of parenting, but it may be added stress that needs taking account of when considering support needs.
- Ensure services are aware of the process and pathways in their area for women to receive extra mental health and/ or drug & alcohol

support if they should so need.

- Ask again about mental health needs and/ or drug & alcohol issues at review or if concerns raised.

CHILDREN

- Always establish if children are involved in the family; be aware that mental health and/ or drug & alcohol issues can add complications to a woman's ability to meet her children's needs.
- Always inform the woman if you need to make a child protection referral and explain your reasons, unless this disclosure will increase risk to the child.
- If the threat to the wellbeing of the children does not meet the threshold for child protection referral(s), consider other interventions that will support the family, such as CAF (Common Assessment Framework); discuss with your manager if you are unsure.

RISK

- Use your knowledge and information of other services to demonstrate how she (and any children) can be supported and reassure her that you will work alongside them to support her.
- Ensure risk assessment is an ongoing process which takes account of changing circumstances; this must include mental health issues and/ or drug & alcohol use. This can identify the ongoing individual support needs. Impact of mental health difficulties and substance use can change and services need to be responsive to these changes.
- Ensure self-harming behaviour is assessed and openly discussed

with women to establish the nature, the intent, the frequency and how long the behaviour has been used. This is often a very secret behaviour so services need to convey to women using their services that they are approachable and understanding of this issue. Having information visibly available will assist in reassuring women that this is OK to talk about. Self-harming behaviour must be differentiated from behaviour that intends to end life (as part of risk assessment).

- Ensure all staff know that the police and accident & emergency departments can ensure women receive a timely mental health assessment in a place of safety when circumstances are reaching crisis point and risks have become unmanageable.
- You are not alone in making decisions around children or vulnerable adult safeguarding; seek support and consult your internal safeguarding policies and procedures and/ or the multi-agency guidelines.

NEXT STEPS

- Some women may be asked to leave our service, for instance where there has been the need for crisis care services. Ensure that they are made aware that they are welcome to access services in the future when their immediate crisis needs are met.
- Recognise that no single worker can meet all women's needs – a multi-agency response will increase positive outcomes.

DON'T

- Do not exclude any woman from receiving support from domestic violence services based solely on her having mental health difficulties/ diagnosis or use of drugs/alcohol – establish how it is impacting on each individual woman and her abilities to function.

STAFF SUPPORT

- Acknowledge that there will be occasions when services are unable to sustain their support of a woman due to the level of her mental health need and/ or her drug/ alcohol use. The policy needs to address this and staff should not see this as a failure of themselves, or of their services.
- Ensure regular access to supervision and support

'No woman experiencing abuse of any kind should be turned away when she requires support or refuge.'

(Women's Aid, 2005)

Adapted from Women's Aid Principles of Good Practice
www.womensaid.org.uk

Referral Pathway for Domestic Violence Agencies to Substance Misuse or Alcohol Agencies

Issue of drug and/or alcohol use raised by client or worker during contact.

Routine enquiry included on assessment form and why the worker is asking (e.g. not unusual for women to use substances to cope with DV). Discussion of any previous treatment, services available and current usage/risks.

Offer client referral – client accepts?

NO

YES

Discussion between agencies of info-sharing procedures, confidentiality practices and how the agencies can provide 'shared care' to client.

Discussion of harm minimisation techniques if needed.

Initial telephone conversation with drugs/alcohol agency to discuss referral in consultation with client; discussion of options for appointment: outreach, drop in, in-agency, etc.

YES

Client attends appointment?

NO

DV agency to make arrangements to check up on progress.

Discussion of fears/anxieties of why client does not wish to engage with treatment and re-visit possibility of referral in a later session.

Is the substance or alcohol use putting client or child at high risk of harm?

YES

NO

Raise concerns with both client and service manager.

Follow appropriate agency procedures e.g. child protection, vulnerable adults.

Acknowledge client's wishes and invite to discuss again at any time. Discuss fear/anxiety client may have around engaging with treatment services.

Discuss possibility of harm to children with manager.

Follow up with client periodically reviewing alcohol and substance use issues, impact and possibility of referral.

Referral Pathway for Domestic Violence Agencies to Mental Health Agencies

Issue of mental health raised by client or worker during contact.

Routine enquiry included on assessment for and why the worker is asking (e.g. DV often the cause of mental health difficulties). Discussion of any previous treatment, services available and offer support to access GP.

Offer client referral – client accepts?

NO

YES

If referred onto secondary mental health services from the GP or primary care mental health practitioner: offer support to attend and ensure discussions about informing procedures, confidentiality practices and how the agencies can provide 'shared care' to the women.

Support to attend GP appointment and explore what is available from the GP, e.g. primary care mental health practitioner/psychological services/referral onto secondary mental health services/medication.

Client attends appointment?

YES

Dv agency/client/mental health worker, to make arrangements to ensure communication and shared review of progress.

NO

Discussion of fears/anxieties of why client does not wish to engage with mental health services and re-visit possibility of referral in a later session.

In an emergency, contact GP service/Police or take to A&E – there will be access to psychiatric assessment.

Is the mental health issue putting client or child at high risk of harm?

YES

NO

Raise concerns with both client and service manager. Follow appropriate agency procedures e.g. child protection, vulnerable adults.

In an emergency contact GP/Police/take to A&E – there will be access to psychiatric assessment.

Acknowledge client's wishes and invite to discuss again at any time. Discuss fear/anxiety client may have around engaging with mental health services. Discuss possibility of harm to children with manager.

Follow up with client periodically reviewing mental health issues, risk and impact.

RESOURCES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

Please refer to your own organisations' policies and procedures on Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

BIRMINGHAM REFUGE LINE 0800 111 4223

24 hour service to access domestic violence refuge and emergency accommodation in Birmingham

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE

0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
www.refuge.org.uk

ASHRAM REDUCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT

0121 764 3817
Email: rdvp@ashramha.org.uk
Domestic violence support service specialising in South Asian women

BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL WOMEN'S AID

0800 0732 606 / 0121 685 8519
(minicom)
www.bswaid.org
Provides a holistic domestic violence service for women and children, including outreach service, family support, court support, civil orders, sanctuary and home security, and therapeutic counselling.
Helpline Monday to Friday, 9.30am - 5.00pm.

BHAROSA 0121 303 0368 / 0121 303 0369

Domestic violence services for Asian women and new communities.

BIRMINGHAM ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT

0121 303 1111
Email: contact@birmingham.gov.uk
Supporting victims of anti-social behaviour and domestic violence through civil action.

BROKEN RAINBOW 08452 60 44 60

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk
For lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who are experiencing domestic violence (nationwide service).

FORCED MARRIAGE UNIT 0207 008 0151

www.fco.gov.uk/en/fco-in-action/nationals/forced-marriage-unit
Central government unit providing advice and practical support in the UK and abroad.

FORWARD 0208 960 4000

www.forwarduk.org
Advice and support for Female Genital Mutilation (London based).

HONOUR NETWORK 0800 5999 247

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk
National helpline dedicated to forced marriage & honour based violence.

MABL TRUST 0800 0326317 www.mabltrust.org.uk

Offering support services to people suffering domestic violence in Solihull. Helpline Monday to Friday, 10.00am - 12.00pm.

MEN'S ADVICE LINE AND ENQUIRIES (MALE) 08450 646 800

www.mensadvice.org.uk
National advice line for heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual men experiencing domestic abuse.

RESPECT 0808 801 0327 www.respect.uk.net

National advice line for perpetrators of domestic violence and those working with them.

RSVP (RAPE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROJECT) 0121 233 3818

Services for male and female survivors of sexual and other violence and those who support them.

SHELTER DOMESTIC ABUSE PROJECT 0800 111 4223

Domestic violence advice and support.

STAR SUPPORT & COUNSELLING 0121 378 4700

www.starsupport.org.uk
Domestic violence counselling and support groups.

TRIDENT REACH DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE 0800 111 4223

www.starsupport.org.uk
Domestic violence advice and support.

Victim Support Men's Helpline 0800 328 3623

Helpline available Monday - Friday, 12.00pm - 2.00pm.

Women Acting in Today's Society (WAITS)

0121 440 1443 / 0121 446 5384 |
Counselling
0121 440 7000 | Chinese Support Worker
www.waitsaction.org
Support, advocacy & befriending and a domestic violence service for Chinese women.

WEST MIDLANDS POLICE 0345 113 5000

In an emergency always phone 999

There are also a number of domestic violence services working in local areas. Further information can be found at www.bdvf.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

24 hour mental health services can be gained through the G.P.

MIND IN BIRMINGHAM 0121 608 8001

<http://www.birminghammind.org>

Offering high quality recovery based services to adults and older adults in the Midlands.

SOLIHULL MIND 0121 742 4941

www.solihullmind.org.uk

The local voluntary sector group for mental health in the borough of Solihull.

ALCOHOL SERVICES

BIRMINGHAM DRUG & ALCOHOL TEAM (DAAT)

0121 465 4930

www.bdaaf.co.uk

Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team commission a broad range of high quality treatment and support services throughout the city.

SPOC (SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT)

0800 073 0817

For a full list of the Drug & Alcohol treatment agencies available in Birmingham.

AQUARIUS (BIRMINGHAM)

0121 685 6350

<http://aquarius.org.uk/alcohol/find-aquarius-in-your-area/Birmingham>

There are a range of services

available for individuals and families who are concerned about their own, or others', alcohol use.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ALCOHOL SERVICE

07545 930 063

0121 622 8188

youngpeople@aquarius.org.uk

For 16-21 year olds, giving advice, information and support.

AQUARIUS (SOLIHULL)

0121 711 3732

<http://aquarius.org.uk/alcohol/find-aquarius-in-your-area/solihull>

Provides advice, information and support to individuals and family members who are concerned about alcohol use.

TALK TO FRANK

0800 77 66 00

www.talktofrank.com

Providing information and support around drug use.

SIFA FIRESIDE

0121 666 7023

www.sifafireside.co.uk

Works alongside those who are socially excluded or disadvantaged, addressing alcohol issues and homelessness and empowering and supporting people to meet their short and long term goals.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

National helpline | 0845 769 7555

Birmingham | 0121 212 0111

Facilitating self-help groups for those wishing to give up alcohol.

EMBRACE

020 7264 0510

<http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/servlets/doc/1359>

Alcohol Concern Children, Families & Domestic Violence Project.

DRUG SERVICES

BIRMINGHAM DRUG & ALCOHOL TEAM (DAAT)

0121 465 4930

www.bdaaf.co.uk

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SPOC (SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT)

0800 073 0817

For a full list of the Drug & Alcohol treatment agencies available in Birmingham.

DRUG CONCERN BIRMINGHAM

0845 120 3745

<http://servicesdirectory.alcoholconcern.org.uk/viewservice.jsp?id=939>

Support for anyone affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use.

RELEASE

0845 4500 215

www.release.org.uk

Provides free and confidential specialist advice to the public and professionals on drugs and drug law.

STELLA PROJECT

020 7785 3862

www.gldvp.org.uk/C2B/document_tree/ViewACategory.asp?CategoryID=73

Works across London addressing drug and alcohol related domestic violence and abuse.

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- Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid
- Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust
- Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- Birmingham East and North Primary Care Trust
- Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust
- Safer Birmingham Partnership
- SIFA Fireside

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Safer Birmingham Partnership
Working together for a safer city

