

Guide 3

Best practice when responding



Iùl 3
An cleachdadh
as fheàrr nuair a
thathar a' freagairt

Support Services

The support services recommended by the Violence Against Women Partnership for women, children and young people and men affected by the issues is available at

www.highland.gov.uk/supportservicesbooklet

Additional information about forms of Violence Against Women are included in this booklet. This should help staff to recognise and raise the issues with individuals and provides some tips on how to respond.

Domestic Abuse

It is vital that staff recognise domestic abuse as a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour that may or may not involve the use of physical and/or sexual violence. Focusing on incidents of violence means that we miss the tactics used by an abuser and fail to see the full impact of the abuse on a person's life. Also, if we do not recognise the dynamics of the abuse it makes assessing the needs of the victim (and any children) almost impossible.

Staff should be aware of the possibility of domestic abuse within all intimate relationships, (including same sex and teenage relationships). When domestic abuse is suspected or disclosed, staff should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to risk assessment and safety planning and how they can refer into the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) for domestic abuse. You can provide information about local support services in your area, or with the women's permission make a referral to the local Women's Aid group in your area.

Welfare and Protection of Children and Adults 'at Risk'.

All staff should be aware of welfare and protection issues for children living with domestic abuse. Where it is apparent that a child is living with domestic abuse a child concern form should be submitted to the child's 'Named Person', in accordance with the Highland Practice Model. Where the child has sustained harm or is at significant risk of harm, child protection procedures should be followed.

Child Concern forms, 'Highland Practice Model' and 'Inter-agency Guidelines to Protect Children and Young People in Highland' can all be located on:

www.forhighlandschildren.org

If in doubt, consult your Child Protection Advisor.

Additionally, staff should be aware of protection issues for adults who may be categorised as 'at Risk' by virtue of being less able to protect themselves because of disability, frailty, mental or physical illness or infirmity and who are experiencing, or living in a situation where there is, domestic abuse. Where there appears to be an Adult 'at Risk' staff should follow the 'Inter-agency Procedures for the Implementation of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007'. These are located on:

www.fhcommunities.org/inter-agency-procedures.asp

Rape & Sexual Violence

A significant proportion of women in our society experience rape and sexual violence. Most often the perpetrator is someone known to the woman, and commonly her partner or ex-partner. Men experience rape and sexual violence too and support is available from the national Rape Crisis Scotland helpline and from local services in Highland for both women and men. Experiencing sexual violence can leave survivors with a range of issues, including panic attacks, flashbacks, depression, suicidal thoughts and feelings, issues with intimate relationships, and anger. Rape Crisis Scotland has produced a number of guides for survivors on managing these and other issues as a consequence of rape – they are available on their website at: **www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk** and are useful resources for staff to signpost survivors to.

Stalking

Around half of all stalking cases are perpetrated by an ex-partner (see section on domestic abuse). The law defines stalking as being where a person carries out an 'unreasonable course of conduct', e.g. following, monitoring, contacting or attempting to contact another person. This behaviour is with the intention of causing, or would be likely to cause, fear or alarm. Course of conduct means two or more occasions. This legislation makes stalking a criminal offence.

Advice for what people who are being stalked can do is available on the Action Scotland Against Stalking website:
www.scotlandagainststalking.com

You can also advise those who are being stalked to keep a note of incidents and save text/email messages, no matter how trivial they might seem as this is an important way of evidencing the 'course of conduct' of the stalker. It is also important for those being stalked to note how they felt by the behaviour and how it affected them, e.g. walking home

a different way, not socialising with friends,
how mental health was affected, etc.

Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse

All staff should be aware that child sexual abuse (CSA) is a possibility; recognise signs; initiate discussion; listen and make time; and give correct information about sources of help. If you suspect that an adult may have been affected by Child Sexual Abuse and that they want to talk about this it is your responsibility to ask them about this if you feel able, if not then to help them identify who might be the best person for them to talk to about this.

Don't assume that adults who were sexually abused as children need to talk about the abuse or be referred for counselling. Find out from each individual what the abuse means to them and what response they require from you, for example not being touched, extra time for a smear test or working out a birth plan which they feel comfortable with.

If someone discloses CSA, your response will be determined by the setting you work in, whether this is a one-off or ongoing contact

and whether they want specific help related to the abuse. There may still be safety issues if the abuser is still around.

Always ask:

- What problems, if any, do you think the abuse has left you with?
- What are the main things you would welcome help with now?

Always say that:

- you believe what they say.
- you do not blame them for the abuse.
- you will not put them at further risk of harm.
- whatever they are feeling is a valid response, there is no right or wrong way to feel.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Involvement in prostitution, the making of pornography and other forms of CSE, e.g. stripping, pole dancing, brings with it risks of repeat victimisation. There are some things that you can discuss with those involved in CSE that may help reduce these risks and make them safer:

- Stabilising drug or alcohol use – can help to cease involvement in prostitution (therefore discuss options for substitute prescribing, alcohol detox etc).
- Coercion – is there coercion and if so, who is coercing the person to be involved?
- Personal safety – identify risks and discuss solutions to reduce them.
- Safer sex – advise using condoms.
- Mental Health – how this affects mood, feelings and thoughts.

- Exit – we can help to support the woman to stop being involved when and if she is ready, even though there are no dedicated organisations and services for this in Highland, it could be helpful for her to consider her options, e.g. Women at Work, Home Start, Job Centre Plus.

Useful support agencies, e.g. Samaritans, TARA.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a harmful traditional practice, which is practiced in 28 African countries and in parts of the Middle East. FGM also happens in other communities across the globe. It is more accurate however, to view FGM as being practised by specific ethnic groups, rather than by a whole country, as communities practising FGM straddle national boundaries.

As a result of immigration and refugee movements, FGM is now being practiced by ethnic minority populations in other parts of the world. FORWARD estimates that as many as 6,500 girls are at risk of FGM within the UK every year.

FGM is often carried out on babies or pre-pubescent girls, the age at which FGM is carried out varies across communities and can extend into young adulthood. It can involve a range of procedures, most of which involve removal of some or all parts of the external genitalia, usually the clitoris and possibly parts of the labia. The World Health

Organisation identifies four types of FGM. There are no religious or medical reasons for this, but communities often regard FGM as a method to preserve girls' virginity and make them more marriageable. FGM is illegal in Scotland and it is also illegal to take a girl from Scotland to another country to have FGM carried out on her.

A range of problems can be experienced as a result of FGM, including infection, difficulty in conceiving, flashbacks, pain, and problems having sex. Women should be offered support relevant to their needs and the issues that they are having as a result of FGM.

- Services need to learn about their local communities because the cause/motivation for FGM differs across different groups.
- Don't assume all women from FGM practising communities will have had FGM.
- Don't assume all women survivors of FGM would want their daughters to be cut.
- For asylum seeking women it may be part of their asylum claim.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage takes place when one or both of the parties do not consent to it. Children and adults with incapacity cannot consent to a marriage under any circumstances.

A forced marriage is different to an arranged marriage where the families of both people take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but where the individuals have the choice whether or not to accept this arrangement and are able to change their mind at any point.

As the risks associated with forced marriage can be so severe, staff are reminded that there may only be one chance to speak with a victim or potential victim.

Staff should:

- See the victim on her own – even if she is accompanied by others.
- See her immediately in a secure and private place where you will not be

overheard.

- Reassure her about confidentiality (in line with your organisation's policy) and explain that you will not give information to her family/friends or community.
- Accept what she says.
- Explain all the options to her and their possible outcomes.
- Recognise and respect her wishes.
- Assess the risk she faces by conducting an appropriate and thorough risk assessment.
- Contact, as soon as possible, the lead worker responsible for forced marriage (If she is under 16, refer to child protection inter-agency guidance; If she is an adult at risk, discuss with your adult support and protection lead and refer to inter-agency guidance).
- Agree a way to contact her safely (for example agree a code word).

- Obtain full details to pass on to the lead worker and record these safely.
- Give her (or help her memorise) your contact details and/or those of a support agency such as Women's Aid.
- Consider the need for immediate police involvement, protection and placement away from the family and arrange this if necessary; this includes any action to stop her from being removed from the UK.
- Do everything you can to keep her safe.
- Get immediate advice if you are not sure what to do.

Male Victims

Boys and men can experience all forms of gender based violence (with the exception of Female Genital Mutilation). Whilst it is less likely for men to have these experiences compared with women and their experiences can be different, many men will still require support and services in Highland have a responsibility to provide this. Many male survivors, particularly of child sexual abuse, will already be accessing services such as mental health, criminal justice and substance misuse.

Staff who are concerned that a man is experiencing domestic abuse from his same or opposite sex partner should use the resources published by Respect and the Men's Advice Line to support him available at:

www.respect.uk.net/pages/mens-advice-line.html

Local face to face support services are provided by Victim Support Highlands and Islands who have had specific training to enable them to support male victims of domestic abuse. They are funded by the local authority to provide a support service to men who are assessed as being at high risk of repeat victimisation by their female or male (ex)partner.

Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highlands (RASASH) provide a local service for men and boys who have experienced sexual violence.

