

# Domestic Abuse Procedures (Operational)

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## Alternative Formats

This documentation can be made available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio tape or in an ethnic-minority language upon request. Requests for alternative formats can be made to the Probation Board using the following contact information:

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) recognises the serious impact domestic abuse has on victims, children, families and wider society. The Domestic Abuse Policy and these supporting procedures seek to provide staff with clear guidance in dealing with both service users who are perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and victims or potential victims of Domestic Abuse.

### **1.1 Definition**

Domestic Abuse is defined as “*threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.*”

Domestic Abuse happens in all societies, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, religion, cultural background, disability, marital status, age or sexual orientation. It is behaviour which can include physical, sexual or emotional abuse, e.g. undermining self-confidence; threats to others, coercive control, using children; creating isolation of the victim from friends and family; controlling access to money, food, transportation, telephone; destruction of property; and stalking.

### **1.2 Impact of Domestic Abuse**

Domestic Abuse can account for violent crime across a range of offences, including murder. It can also significantly affect children who are witnesses to abuse and can lead to trauma and long-term psychological damage. It can also result in victims and children needing to be re-housed. The level of violence may escalate over time, yet may go unreported or denied. Within heterosexual relationships, while the majority of victims are women, men are also affected. Domestic Abuse also occurs within same sex relationships.

## **2.0 Policy Statement**

The aim of these procedures is to work, in partnership with other agencies, to protect the public from offences of Domestic Abuse and thereby making communities safer.

### **2.1 Aims and Objectives**

- To implement as appropriate relevant research and information available to PBNI in the assessment and management of risk presented by the perpetrators of Domestic Abuse with whom PBNI works.
- To monitor the need for, and plan and implement, new interventions to improve our suite of programmes to address this offending behaviour.
- To contribute to effective partnership working through

participation in regional (and local) Domestic Abuse Partnerships; Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC); Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme (DVADS); Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI).

- To provide victims with relevant information and support via the Victim Information Scheme (VIS)
- To ensure that PBNI staff are provided with the necessary training in relation to policy and procedures; legislation and partnership working arrangements.

## **2.2 Outcomes**

- Victims /survivors of Domestic Abuse will be protected by reducing service users' opportunity and propensity to offend.
- The assessment and management of risk posed by service users in contact with PBNI will contribute to public protection.
- Effective service delivery through reports to courts and Parole Commissioners, case management; delivery of programmes and interventions; and strong partnership working.

## **3.0 Principles**

- The safety of individuals at risk from Domestic Abuse (including children and other dependants) is of primary concern.
- All victims/survivors of domestic abuse will be treated with respect.
- Domestic abuse involves a deliberate decision on the part of the individual service user. PBNI will hold service users to account for their behaviour.
- Misuse of alcohol and/or the actions of other people are not a justification for domestic abuse.
- Work with service users will challenge gender attitudes and behaviour in a constructive manner.

## **4.0 PBNI Interventions**

### **4.1 Pre-Sentence Report Stage**

- ACE (assessment, case management and evaluation) and RA1 are the approved PBNI assessment tools and shall be used in all cases involving Domestic Abuse.
- PBNI's Significant Risk of Serious Harm Policy and Procedures apply to all assessments and management of Domestic Abuse cases.

- In addition to ACE and RA1 the B- Safer assessment Tool shall be completed in all cases where there is a history of intimate partner violence. Its purpose is to identify the most appropriate programme/intervention.
- The completion of ACE, RA1 and B-Safer assessments shall be informed by: the Structured Outline of Case; PBNi records; information from Social Services and multi-agency risk management processes such as PPANI and MARAC.
- Information on a service user's domestic incident call out history should be obtained from the police at the pre sentence stage. The requisite form should be sent to [UrbanOCMT@psni.police.uk](mailto:UrbanOCMT@psni.police.uk) allowing a minimum of 10 working days for the request to be processed.
- The following additional requirement should be requested to enable unmet treatment needs to be assessed during supervision:

*“You must present yourself in accordance with instructions given by your Probation Officer to attend the Intensive Supervision Unit, Belfast or another venue specified by your Probation Officer, to participate actively in a programme of work identified for you during the supervision period and to comply with the instructions given by or under the authority of the person in charge”.*

- Where the assessment indicates a service user is high risk for domestic abuse, they should be referred to the Building Better Relationships (BBR) programme.
- Where the assessment indicates a service user is moderate risk for domestic abuse they should be referred to the Domestic Abuse Intervention Panel. The panel will determine whether the service user is to be offered a place on the Promoting Positive Relationships Programme (PPRP) or required to complete the approved structured intervention, Respectful Relationships Intervention+ (RRI+).
- In cases where the index offence is directly or indirectly linked to domestic abuse, report authors should request the inclusion of the following additional requirement:

*“You must not develop any intimate relationships without first notifying your Probation Officer who will take appropriate steps to ensure that verifiable disclosure has been made and liaise with Social Services in respect of child protection concerns, if appropriate”.*

In the conclusion of the report, MCR/PSR authors should set out clearly the justification for including this requirement and why it is defensible and necessary to manage the risk.

- In cases where a service user has been charged with an offence

relating to domestic abuse (or has a recent history of domestic abuse) and he/she is the parent or carer of children a referral shall be made to Social Services (UNOCINI).

- In all cases in which the index offence has been committed within a domestic abuse context (or where there is a known previous conviction for intimate partner violence within the previous two years), report authors should request the following additional requirement:-

*“To reside at an address approved by your Supervising Probation Officer”.*

- Where a service user has indicated that they will be residing with ‘significant others’ the home visit should include those identified to obtain their informed consent for the service user to reside with them. If a home visit is not possible with the ‘significant others’ telephone contact should be made to obtain their informed consent. If it has not been possible to make these checks prior to the court date, it should be made clear in the pre sentence report that the current address has not been approved.
- Where PBNI is concerned that the service user, victim or other adult member of a household may be an “Adult at risk of harm” or an Adult in need of protection”, a referral shall be made to the appropriate HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service.
- It is essential for all of those involved in the risk assessment and management of the service user to focus on victim safety and ensure that victims’ needs are central. As such, staff shall consider making referrals to Social Services (UNOCINI), PPANI, MARAC and Northern Ireland Women’s Aid Federation, where appropriate.

#### **4.2 Case Supervision: Risk Management and Review**

- The focus of case management shall be on reducing risk posed by the service user and enhancing the safety of victims.
- The supervising Probation Officer shall contact the PBNI Victim Information Scheme to determine if the victim is registered, and if they are, the supervising probation officer shall maintain regular contact with the Victim Liaison Officer.
- The ACE/RA1 assessments and case plan should be reviewed in respect of any arrest or charge for further offending where there is an escalation in the offending type and/or there are concerns in respect of risk of harm to others.
- In the case plan review, any new demands on the service user (to manage the increased risk) should be included. If the service user refuses to consent or subsequently fails to engage with the revised case plan, the supervising Probation Officer should return the Order to court by way of Notice of Application to either vary the Order or to revoke the Order in

the interests of justice.

- Where new information and/or concerns arise during the supervision period a new referral (where appropriate) shall be forwarded to Social Services, MARAC or PPANI.
- PBNI staff must re-refer repeat victims into MARAC. The definition of a repeat case is where there is **ANY** instance of abuse between the same victim and perpetrator within 12 months of the last referral to MARAC. The individual act of abuse does not need to be criminal.
- Risk assessment and risk management meetings shall incorporate information from the following range of sources: PBNI records; PSNI Domestic Abuse Officers; Social Services; multi- agency risk management processes such as MARAC, and PPANI.
- Feedback on the progress of a service user who is participating in a programme and/or intervention shall be obtained and considered as part of on-going risk assessment/management.
- Where a service user is participating in the Building Better Relationships programme the supervising Probation Officer shall attend the multi-agency practitioner forum.
- Where new information and/or concerns about a service user arise during supervision and where he/she is the parent or carer of children a referral shall be made to Social Services using the UNOCINI template. If staff have any queries in relation to this, their line manager should be consulted.
- If the service user has a child on the Child Protection Register (CPR), a Looked After Child (or is living with or is in a relationship with) someone who has a child on the CPR or LAC, contact with the allocated Social Worker shall be no less than monthly. If the service user (or their family/partner) is known to Social Services in any other capacity, the PO shall contact the allocated Social Worker when there has been a significant event, either positive or negative. It shall be agreed in the initial contact with the Social Worker, that the Social Worker will similarly initiate contact with the supervising PO in the event of a significant change that Social Services are aware of.
- Where new information and/or concerns arise during the supervision period and where PBNI is concerned that the service user, victim or other adult member of the household may be defined as an Adult at Risk of Harm or an Adult in Need of Protection a referral shall be made to the appropriate HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service.
- Other court orders, such as: Non-Molestation Orders, Restraining Orders, Violent Offences Protection Orders, Stalking Protection Orders shall be included in PBNI's risk assessment. In cases where the index offence is of Domestic Abuse the allocated probation officer shall contact the PSNI Domestic Abuse officer to check if there are any other relevant extant court orders.



- Staff shall take cognisance of, and respond in a timely manner to, any notifications via the PBNI Reportable Incident arrangements.
- For risk assessment and management purposes information sharing with relevant Statutory and Voluntary agencies is vital. All information gathered shall be recorded on ECMS.

### **4.3 Programme Interventions**

- PBNI currently delivers the Home Office-accredited groupwork programme, Building Better Relationships Programme (BBR) where the B-Safer assessment indicates a service user is high risk of committing domestic abuse. Service users must be aged 18 or above. The BBR Programme is designed to reduce re-offending by adult males convicted of violence against an intimate partner. The programme consists of four modules and 24 group sessions and five individual sessions. A minimum of two years supervision is required to complete the programme. PBNI delivers the Respectful Relationships Intervention (RRI+) where the B-Safer assessment indicates a service user is moderate risk of committing domestic abuse (and the Domestic Abuse Intervention Panel assesses this is the most appropriate intervention). Service users must be male and aged 18 or above.
- The aim of the RRI+ is to develop educational awareness about what constitutes healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships and relationship skills acquisition.

### **5.0 PPANI**

The Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland bring together a number of agencies and departments including the police, probation, prison, social services and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to provide effective assessment and management of the risks posed by certain sexual and violent offenders, including individuals who have committed offences within a domestic setting. The PPANI Manual of Practice states one of the criteria for initial assessment is as follows:

‘Persons who have been convicted of a violent offence, coercive controlling behaviour, harassment or stalking in domestic or family circumstances, or who have a previous conviction for a violent offence in domestic or family circumstances and about whom an agency has significant concerns’.

All offences committed within a domestic setting can be considered for referral into PPANI. However, there must be evidence as to how the case meets the definition of ‘serious harm’. Whilst it’s not possible to be prescriptive in identifying behaviours that evidence ‘serious harm’, examples include: a verifiable pattern of on-going domestic abuse; the nature of the domestic abuse conviction; multiple victims. If a referral is not accepted by PPANI Links the information will be retained and will be referenced should a further referral about the

same individual be submitted.

Practitioners from any of the PPANI agencies can submit a PPANI referral. The PPANI Manual of Practice can be found on PBNI's intranet and all the relevant PPANI forms are attached on ECMS.

## **6.0 MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**

A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives from the police, probation, social services, housing and agencies working with victims. The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult victim. The MARAC will also make links with other fora to safeguard children and to manage the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator.

Referrals into MARAC are based on the completion of a DASH (domestic abuse; stalking; harassment and honour-based violence) assessment. The DASH assessment is a structured professional judgement form based on known 'high risk' factors. The majority of referrals into MARAC follow a PSNI response to a domestic abuse incident.

Any agency which is part of MARAC can refer a victim of domestic abuse to MARAC under professional concerns. The majority of PBNI's referrals into MARAC will arise from contact with the alleged perpetrator. PBNI staff should complete the referral form that can be found on the intranet and forward it to the MARAC administrator. If the victim is unknown to PBNI, another agency who is working with the victim shall complete the DASH form. PBNI staff should not contact the victim to complete the DASH.

Repeat cases should be re-referred into MARAC. A repeat case is where there has been **ANY** instance of abuse between the same victim and perpetrator, within 12 months of the last referral to MARAC. The individual act of abuse does not need to be 'criminal', violent or threatening. Neither does it need to meet the threshold of high risk (DASH), or professional judgment for escalation. Rather the individual act should be viewed within the context of a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. In such circumstances PBNI should re-refer the victim into MARAC using the referral form.

A referral into MARAC does not replace other PBNI policies and procedures. Rather, MARAC is an additional safeguard, for example,

- (a) If there are children in a household, concern about Domestic Abuse must also be relayed to the relevant Health & Social Care Trust; and
- (b) If a service user under PBNI supervision has assaulted a partner, enforcement consideration shall proceed as normal.

Designated PBNI Area Managers attend the MARACs. Where the perpetrator or victim is known to PBNI information will be shared with the MARAC. A summary of the discussion at MARAC shall be shared with the supervising Probation Officer of the alleged perpetrator and recorded on ECMS.

### **Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Scheme (DVADS)**

DVADS is a police operated scheme launched in 2018 that lets a person (aged 16 or over) make inquiries to the police where they are concerned that their partner, or the partner of someone they know (such as a friend or family member), has a history of abusive behaviour. The scheme is important in helping to address risk to potential victims, allowing them to make an informed choice on whether they wish to continue in the relationship.