



HM Prison &  
Probation Service



Ministry  
of Justice

**Policy name:** Domestic Abuse Policy Framework

**Reference:** n/a

**Re-Issue Date:** 5 October 2026

**Implementation Date:** 2 March 2020

**Replaces the following documents (e.g. PSIs, PSOs, Custodial Service Specs) which are hereby cancelled:** None.

**Introduces amendments to the following documents:** N/A.

**Action required by:**

|   |                                             |   |                                                     |
|---|---------------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------|
| X | HMPPS HQ                                    | X | Governors                                           |
| X | Public Sector Prisons                       | X | Heads of Group                                      |
| X | Contracted Prisons                          | X | The Probation Service                               |
|   | Under 18 Young Offender Institutions        | X | Other providers of Probation and Community Services |
| X | HMPPS Rehabilitation Contract Services Team |   |                                                     |

**Mandatory Actions:** All groups referenced above must adhere to the Requirements section of this Policy Framework, which contains all mandatory actions.

**For Information:** By the implementation date Governors<sup>1</sup> of Public Sector Prisons and Contracted Prisons must ensure that any new local policies that they develop because of this Policy Framework are compliant with relevant legislation, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act, 2010).

**In this document the term Governor also applies to Directors of Contracted Prisons**

**Context:** Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse regardless of sex or gender identity, cultural heritage or ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or disability. There are different kinds of abuse that can happen in different contexts. The most prevalent type of domestic abuse occurs in relationships, but the definition of domestic abuse also covers abuse between family members, such as adolescent or adult child to parent abuse and abuse between siblings.

<sup>1</sup> In this document the term Governor also applies to Directors of Contracted Prisons.

People with disabilities are more vulnerable to domestic abuse for longer periods of time, and experience more severe and frequent abuse than non-disabled people.

Perpetrators are not all the same and the factors that lead them to committing abuse in their intimate or familial relationships can be as individual as the people themselves. There is an increasing understanding that domestic abuse is a child safeguarding issue, and the damaging effects that either witnessing or experiencing it can have on children are well documented.

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is committed to reducing domestic abuse-related reoffending and the risk of serious harm associated with it. The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act is a landmark piece of legislation which:

- raises awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families;
- further improves the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice; and,
- strengthens the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies through a comprehensive package of measures.

The Domestic Abuse Act:

- includes a duty on the Government to prepare and publish a perpetrator strategy. Known as the [Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan](#) this includes key commitments for HMPPS and other government departments in tackling domestic abuse.
- Is supported by [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#) aimed at statutory (including HMPPS) and non-statutory bodies working with victims, perpetrators and commissioning services, to increase awareness and inform their response to domestic abuse.

The government's [Freedom From Violence and Abuse: a Cross-Government Strategy](#) sets out its ambition to halve violence against women and girls everywhere: at home, online and on the streets. Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for the Government. Domestic Abuse and associated crimes disproportionately affect women and girls, however the government recognises in the '[Position statement on male victims of crime](#)' that men and boys also experience abusive and violent crimes that fall within the umbrella of violence against women and girls. These crimes can have a profound and long-lasting impact on victims and the government is committed to a stronger whole system approach focusing on: prioritising prevention, supporting survivors, pursuing perpetrators.

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 specifically addresses violence against women. Its key purpose is to improve the public-sector response in relation to the prevention of acts of gender-based violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, the protection of victims, and support of those affected. The [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: Strategy 2022 to 2026](#) sets out the approach to be taken by the Welsh Government.

#### Associated documents:

- [HMPPS Child Safeguarding Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Home Visits Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Licence conditions Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS MAPPA Level 1 Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Women's Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Manage the Custodial Sentence Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Release on Temporary Licence \(ROTL\) Policy Framework](#)

- [HMPPS Enforcement of Community Orders, Suspended Sentence Orders and Post-sentence supervision Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Home Detention Curfew Policy Framework](#)
- [MAPPA Guidance](#)
- [Risk of Serious Harm Guidance 2020](#)
- [HMPPS Assessing Domestic Abuse within OASys Guidance](#)
- [HMPPS Practitioner Guidance on Disclosure](#)
- [HMPPS Stalking Practitioner Guidance](#)
- [HMPPS Interventions Referral and Suitability Guide \(May 2019\)](#)
- [HMPPS Domestic Abuse & Child Safeguarding Enquiry Staff Guidance](#)
- [HMPPS Working with Women Offenders Guidance](#)
- [Prison Public Protection Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Address Checks \(Post Custody\) Policy Framework](#)
- [HMPPS Management Oversight Framework \(Master\)](#)
- [Interception, monitoring and security of prisoner communications policy framework - GOV.UK](#)
- [HMPPS Probation Court Services Policy Framework](#)
- [Victim Contact Scheme Guidance \(EQuIP page\)](#)
- [Sentence planning: PSI 19/2014, PI 13/2014](#)
- [HM Government - Information sharing: advice for practitioners](#)
- [CRI019 Registrations](#)
- [Prison Safety Policy Framework - GOV.UK](#)

#### **How will this Policy Framework be audited or monitored:**

Public Prisons - Prison Group Directors will monitor their prisons' compliance with the Framework's requirements.

Privately Managed Prisons - monitoring of compliance will be through the standard contract management processes.

Regional Probation Directors (RPDs) will monitor compliance in their region.

Quality assurance is provided by the HMPPS Performance Assurance and Risk Team.

**Resource Impact:** Proper management of perpetrators of domestic abuse will be achieved through supervision, accredited programmes and other interventions, and appropriate referral into multi-agency processes and arrangements. This will ensure they have access to measures designed to support their rehabilitation, and prioritises the safeguarding of adults and children who may be at risk as a result of domestic abuse.

There are no new requirements in this framework. Case management expectations and risk assessments and Home Visits are in line with existing Policy Frameworks and Probation and Prison Service Instructions. The range of interventions, as well as the suitability and eligibility criteria for Accredited Programmes (including intimate partner abuse (IPA)), remain the same. Probation Service staff at Court using the Effective Proposal Framework (EPF) are already expected to propose an Accredited Programme, for example Building Choices, in all cases where perpetrators meet the relevant criteria. There is thus no additional impact as a result of this framework.

No additional resources are required to implement this framework for people in prison. Sharing information in relation to risk is already an expected element of all staff's practice and responsibilities for Prison Offender Managers (POMs) are in line with Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) expectations. No additional training for prison or seconded probation staff is necessary to implement the requirements in the framework. Prisoners will access accredited programmes whilst in custody in accordance with the current arrangements and there are no

changes to the existing public protection measures used by POMs to assess, monitor and manage the risks posed by prisoners. Rather this framework pulls together expectations into one place.

**Contact:** [ppps@justice.gov.uk](mailto:ppps@justice.gov.uk)

**Deputy/Group Director sign-off:** Gordon Davison

**Approved by OPS for publication:** Sonia Crozier, Michelle Jarman-Howe, Joint Chairs, Operational Policy Sub-board, 28 February 2020

## Revisions

| Date                         | Changes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 26 September 2022            | Update to incorporate new Policy Framework publications and new guidance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2024   | Broken hyperlinks updated.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links to 'Associated document's updated (p.2)</li> <li>• Up to date evidence / statistics (s3)</li> <li>• Integration of new policy frameworks including Prison Public Protection PF, Address Check PF, Licence Conditions PF throughout document</li> <li>• Honour Based Abuse legislation added (2.6)</li> <li>• MOJ IDVA service (3.7)</li> <li>• References to Judicial Finding of Domestic Abuse (6.2; within s6)</li> <li>• Removal of expectation that Court Report Writers manage risk post-sentence, inclusion of considering bail conditions to inform sentencing proposals (6.5)</li> <li>• Integration of existing practice expectations including Management Oversight Framework, Closed cases guidance (s13), Data Protection Knowledge Hub (s13), Disclosure (s16),</li> <li>• Updates for accuracy: completing SARA for UPW L1 cohort, handling sensitive information (s15 / 16); details of the Unwanted Prisoner Contact Scheme (s16)</li> <li>• Revision of interventions chapter (s12) to reflect development of Building Choices and SPARKS</li> <li>• Changing the name of Domestic Homicide Reviews to Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, in line with statutory guidance published September 2026 (s19)</li> <li>• Addition to HMPPS process when providing Individual Management Reviews as part of Domestic Homicide Reviews (s19)</li> <li>• Clarity on practitioner expectations: DA identification on allocation of case in the community (s6); liaising with relevant practitioner in circumstances where offender and victim are both under probation supervision (s8)</li> </ul> |

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## 1. **Purpose**

- 1.1. This policy framework (PF) sets out the arrangements for working with people whose convictions or behaviours include domestic abuse and stalking in the context of domestic abuse. It also recognises there are individuals in our care and supervision who have been victims of domestic abuse. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has a key role to play in tackling domestic abuse by bringing together prisons, the Probation Service and partners as part of its wider role of protecting the public and reducing re-offending.
- 1.2. The purpose of this policy framework is to set out HMPPS' commitment to reducing domestic abuse-related re-offending and the risk of serious harm associated with it, to provide interventions to support rehabilitation and ensure staff at all levels understand what is expected of them, and to ensure that action is taken to safeguard adults and children at risk.
- 1.3. This policy framework has been developed to address the work in prisons and in the community. The term Probation Practitioner is used to refer to staff allocated a named individual to be managed on a community sentence and on licence. For those in custody who will be managed through OMIC the term Prison Offender Manager (POM) will be used. In this document the term Governor also applies to Directors of Contracted Prisons.

## 2. **Definition of domestic abuse**

- 2.1. The statutory definition of domestic abuse contained within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021<sup>2</sup> is comprised of three sections:

### **Section 1: Definition of “domestic abuse”**

(1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
- (b) the behaviour is abusive.

(3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
- (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

(4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to –

- (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
- (b) obtain goods or services.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

(5) For the purposes of this Act A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

(6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

## **Section 2: Definition of "personally connected"**

(1) Two people are "personally connected" to each other if any of the following applies —

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));
- (g) they are relatives.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if —

- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or
- (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

(3) In this section —

- "child" means a person under the age of 18 years;
- "civil partnership agreement" has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- "parental responsibility" has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;
- "relative" has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

## **Section 3: Children as victims of domestic abuse**

(1) This section applies where behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is domestic abuse.

(2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who —

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B. Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance Framework 16

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if —

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section — "child" means person under the age of 18 years; "parental responsibility" has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act); "relative" has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

- 2.2. **Controlling behaviour** can involve a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 2.3. **Coercive behaviour** is an act or a pattern of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a person.
- 2.4. The definition of domestic abuse includes intimate partner abuse and wider familial abuse. All individuals committing domestic abuse should be considered for interventions appropriate to their needs and risk management measures as required to reduce the risk of future abuse of any kind.
- 2.5. **'Honour'-based abuse (HBA)** may form part of the domestic abuse experienced or perpetrated by an individual. The Crime and Policing Act 2026 defines 'honour'-based abuse as abusive behaviour motivated wholly or partly by a perception that a person has shamed or dishonoured their family or community, or failed to comply with accepted norms of behaviour. Further information is available in the [Crime and Policing Act 2026, section 144](#)
- 2.6. **Stalking** - Stalking is often, but not uniquely, a characteristic of domestic abuse, particularly once a relationship has ended. There is no statutory definition of stalking, however the police and CPS have adopted the following description, which appears in the guidance on Stalking Protection Orders:

‘a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress in the victim’.

Technology enabled abuse has become a more prevalent characteristic of stalking behaviours, which includes the use of readily available technology (e.g. phones, spyware, tracking devices), previous knowledge of victims' account passwords, to track victims, or the use of fake social media accounts to monitor or threaten / intimidate victims. Even though the actual behaviours exhibited may vary between perpetrators, these behaviours will often share a consistent set of characteristics, using the stalking acronym FOUR:

Fixated  
Obsessive  
Unwanted  
Repeated

### 3. **Evidence**

- 3.1. There is a multitude of statistics about the prevalence of domestic abuse. While they differ in their focus and emphasis, they almost invariably support the view that domestic abuse is widespread. However, domestic abuse is often a hidden crime that is not reported to the police. Therefore, data held by the police can only provide a partial picture of the actual level of domestic abuse experienced. Many cases will not enter the criminal justice process as they are not reported to the police.
- 3.2. There were 352 domestic homicides recorded by the police in the three-year period between year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2023. 65.4% of the victims of domestic homicide were female, of which 74.9% were killed by a partner or ex-partner. The majority of male victims (62.3 %) were killed by a family member.

- 3.3. In November 2024, the Office for National Statistics (ONS)<sup>3</sup> reported that, according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales year ending March 2024, an estimated 1.6 million women and 712,000 men aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year.
- 3.4. Almost a quarter of all domestic abuse related crimes were domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences in the year ending March 2024.
- 3.5. There is a substantial amount of research describing the impact of domestic abuse. Different sources have a different emphasis, but what is beyond dispute is that domestic abuse has a significant and overwhelmingly negative effect on those who experience or are exposed to it.
- 3.6. **Staff Support** – Given the prevalence of domestic abuse, HMPPS recognises that we will work with victims as well as perpetrators and that some members of staff are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse previously. The well-being of staff is of utmost priority and we operate an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is a free and confidential service available to all HMPPS staff who need advice and support. The EAP is available 24 hours and throughout the year and the number to call is 0800 019 8988.
- 3.7. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) offers an **Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA)** service for staff. This is a confidential, independent service provided by Hestia's [Everyone's Business](#). It supports employees who are experiencing, or have previously experienced, domestic abuse. The service supports staff of all genders and risk levels, focusing on safety for individuals and their children. Staff can self-refer or refer someone else and receive advice on the most appropriate support. Referrals and enquiries can be made by emailing [everyonesbusiness.IDVA@hestia.org](mailto:everyonesbusiness.IDVA@hestia.org) or telephone on 020 3869 2770.
- 3.8. Further support is available through '[Reflective Sessions](#)'. These sessions can focus on the challenges and impact of working with domestic abuse. Line Managers can make referrals via the PAM OHIO portal or by telephoning the Client Services Team, with additional information on the process located on [Equip](#).
- 3.9. The MOJ document '[Domestic Abuse – Guidance and support for employees and their managers](#)' provides information for staff experiencing domestic abuse. It also provides handling guidance for managers and colleagues to help and support staff in the workplace and advice for dealing with perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 3.10. The [Safe Space Forum](#) is a network of colleagues, within the MOJ, who offer support to MOJ staff who are affected by domestic abuse. If you are experiencing domestic abuse you can contact the Safe Space Forum who can provide information on your options. The [Safe Space Forum](#) also offer support to line managers supporting a member of their team. You can contact them by emailing [safespaceforum@justice.gov.uk](mailto:safespaceforum@justice.gov.uk) and someone will be in touch – you can communicate via email or they can arrange a time for a Teams/Skype meeting or speak on the phone. If you are at immediate risk please contact the police on 999.
- 3.11. There are national and local organisations that can offer confidential help and support to all victims of domestic abuse and to perpetrators who are concerned about their behaviour and the impact on their partners and children. It is important to note that services, including their contact details, are subject to change from time to time. It is therefore recommended that individuals requiring help and support use the following Freephone helplines who will be

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<sup>3</sup> Source ONS 2024, available at [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

able to assist with identifying services/organisations that are specific to the needs of the individual. There is also information available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help>

Anyone undertaking internet searches should consider whether the evidence of such a search history may put them at further risk.

- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 200 0247
- Live Fear Free Helpline (Wales): 0808 80 10 800

- 3.12. **Interventions** – Overall, international, evidence for the effectiveness of Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA) programmes is mixed. This conclusion is predominantly based on studies conducted in the United States, where programmes are designed and delivered in a very different way to within England and Wales. While methodologically rigorous studies from England and Wales are scarce, one of the largest such studies, conducted by Bloomfield and Dixon (2015), offered promising results. This study evaluated the effectiveness of two historical HMPPS community programmes, the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) and Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP). The evaluation found that both programmes demonstrated small but statistically significant effects in reducing both domestic abuse and general reoffending in the two year follow up period. CDVP also demonstrated a significant effect in reducing non-domestic abuse violent offending.
- 3.13. More recently, HMPPS has published two short term clinical change evaluations of Interventions Services Accredited Programmes suitable for IPA offenders: one for the Kaizen programme, and another for the Becoming New Me Plus (BNM+) and New Me Strengths (NMS) programmes. The aim of both studies was to determine whether programme participants demonstrated positive progress against programme targets reflected in the Success Wheel Measure (SWM), the core metric for measuring participant progress against intervention targets. Overall, the studies suggest that taking part in Kaizen, BNM+, or NMS can have large, statistically significant positive effects on the areas targeted by the programmes. For Kaizen, the main analysis found that SWM increased on average by between 37% to 41% compared to scores provided prior to completing the programme. For BNM+ and NMS, the main analysis found that SWM scores had increased on average by 31% compared to scores provided prior to completing the programme.
- 3.14. HMPPS remain committed to developing the evidence base for IPA interventions in order to determine what works best for whom and under what conditions.

#### 4. **Outcomes**

- 4.1. This PF highlights expectations for working with domestic abuse perpetrators and sets out access to interventions and referral routes including those aimed at protecting victims and children. Governors and Heads of Probation Delivery Units (PDU) are expected to ensure that the mandatory actions are followed so that:
- all staff, in line with their roles and responsibilities, are pro-active in looking for indicators of domestic abuse, i.e. exercising **professional curiosity**, so that it is identified at the earliest possible opportunity in every case;
  - staff maintain an investigative approach to their work with domestic abuse perpetrators and share information to manage risks identified, in order that;
  - current and potential victims, including family members and children, are protected and supported sufficiently;

- a comprehensive risk assessment (using the Offender Assessment System (OASys) or other approved authority tool is completed in every case where domestic abuse has been identified within current or previous behaviour, so that acute risk factors are assessed and where required, a plan is in place to manage the risk;
- a Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) is completed in every case where intimate partner abuse has been identified within current or previous behaviour;
- all eligible and suitable domestic abuse perpetrators are referred to an appropriate accredited programme, so that their criminogenic needs are addressed;
- domestic abuse perpetrators who are not eligible for accredited programmes have a sentence plan with an alternative intervention or Probation Requirement (PR) suitable for their criminogenic needs; and,
- activities to reduce domestic abuse-related reoffending and risk of serious harm are prioritised in every case of intimate partner and familial domestic abuse.

## 5. **Requirements**

5.1. **HMPPS commitment to domestic abuse** - senior managers in The Probation Service and HM Prison Service must ensure that tackling domestic abuse is prioritised by their organisation. This will include:

- ensuring the PF is promoted and adhered to at an operational level;
- nominating a competent manager from within their Region or establishment, to ensure that requirements of this PF and issues relating to domestic abuse more generally are integrated and embedded into all aspects of practice. For establishments this will typically be the Head of Offender Management Delivery (SPO);
- prioritising staff access to required training, appropriate to their role as set out on myLearning, to increase their knowledge around domestic abuse and create an environment in which domestic abuse is understood and actively addressed;
- ensuring prison and probation staff are professionally supported to carry out their role;
- ensure the expectations for the **management oversight** of domestic abuse and safeguarding cases are adhered to; and,
- ensure the expectations for **home visits** for domestic abuse and safeguarding cases are followed.

## 6. **Identification & sentencing**

6.1. **General** - the identification of domestic abuse is not a one-off activity that only occurs at the start of the sentence. Throughout sentence, all staff need to use an investigative approach, being vigilant and inquisitive in seeking out information from a wide range of sources to inform an ongoing assessment of whether domestic abuse features in current or previous relationships, looking more widely than the index offence and approaching the issue with **professional curiosity**:

- The need for professional curiosity is the area of practice most consistently identified in SFO reviews as needing development.
- Being professionally curious is a process of always questioning and seeking verification for the information you are given rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value. It involves being alert to indications of domestic abuse on home visits, social visits in custody, and any other situation where you have family contact.

- 6.2. **The Judicial Finding of Domestic Abuse** has been introduced to improve the identification of domestic abuse across the Criminal Justice System, recognising that domestic abuse can feature in many offence types and is not always apparent from the conviction itself. Criminal courts must formally state, at the point of sentencing, when an offence involved domestic abuse (as defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021) carried out by the offender. The Finding of Domestic Abuse will be visible to HMPPS on Court systems and previous conviction print outs. Further guidance on the Finding of Domestic Abuse is available on Equip: [FODA Guidance](#)
- 6.3. **Stalking behaviours** in the context of domestic abuse may be prevalent without a specific stalking conviction. Some of the behaviours might appear innocent (if they were to be taken in isolation), but when carried out repeatedly demonstrate that the fixation on their victim is of greater concern to the individual than the impact of legal consequences upon them. Breaches of orders / sanctions in place to protect a victim may be indicative of stalking. Practitioners should refer to [HMPPS Stalking Practitioner Guidance](#) for a better understanding of identifying stalking behaviours.
- 6.4. Key workers, staff providing interventions such as accredited programmes, psychology, education, employment, healthcare, unpaid work and Approved Premises will all have regular contact with individuals and, as well as those in offender management roles, will be well placed to identify behaviours that may indicate domestic abuse. Examples may include:
- behaviour witnessed during sessions, visits or phone calls, e.g. jealousy, aggression, threats, degrading comments;
  - attempts to breach restrictive measures designed to protect partners and/or children;
  - individuals suggesting beliefs and attitudes that are supportive of abuse;
  - behaviours indicating stalking e.g. consistent calling, sending letters; or,
  - identification of new relationships especially where commenced whilst in custody.
- 6.5. Given the prevalence of domestic abuse and the likelihood that some staff may have personal experience of it, staff and managers should take time to reflect on personal experiences and the potential for bias. This can help to reduce the chances of those experiences impacting on the likelihood of accurate identification and assessment. For further information and support see 'Appendix 1 Bias in Risk Assessment' in the [Risk of Serious Harm Guidance](#).
- 6.6. **Advising the Court** – The Probation Service report writers must:
- **search** for any available indicators of domestic abuse in **all** cases (not just those where the index offence is obviously one of domestic abuse) based on the available information. This includes checking detail from any relevant previous convictions,

victim statements, witness statements, previous OASys or other assessments, reports, records and interviews;

- where domestic abuse is a feature of current or previous behaviour, **seek information from key agencies such as the police, Children's Services**, and any other partnership agencies in contact with and relevant to the individual and victim, where the information is not already known. This includes making out-of-area requests if the individual or family has recently moved, is transient, or has a history of frequently crossing police or local authority boundaries. Where the information will significantly affect the sentence, but is not available in time, court staff should request an adjournment. The value of domestic abuse and child safeguarding enquiries informing our risk assessments (including the importance of requesting out of area information where relevant) is set out in [DA & CSG Enquiry Staff Guidance](#);
- **complete a SARA** where intimate partner abuse is a feature of current or previous relationships, to ensure critical risk factors are assessed. SARA can be used to assess both men and women involved in heterosexual, same-sex and transgender intimate partner relationships;
- **verify**, as far as is possible, the information given, and not rely solely or predominantly on self-reporting;
- **record** details of the information requested from other agencies, as well as the outcome, clearly on nDelius, marking contacts as sensitive where necessary (see [DA & Child Safeguarding Information Storage Guidance](#) on Equip);
- **select** the appropriate pre-sentence report as set out in [HMPPS Probation Court Services Policy Framework](#);
- **assess** the risk of further domestic abuse related offending and harm posed to the victim and others who may be at risk from the individual (see the [Assessing Domestic Abuse within OASys Guidance](#));
- **use** the Effective Proposal Framework (EPF) to inform recommendations for sentence and propose an accredited programme (e.g. Building Choices) for all individuals assessed as eligible and suitable. Report writers must consider sentence length in making such proposals to ensure there is sufficient time to complete proposed interventions. The eligibility and suitability criteria for accredited programmes, together with other information about programmes are available on [EQuIP](#);
- where an individual is not suitable or eligible for an accredited programme, **recommend** a Probation Requirement (PR) to ensure that rehabilitative interventions for domestic abuse are undertaken, alongside other interventions deemed necessary. Where custody is the most likely sentencing outcome, the report should identify any domestic abuse-related risks and needs which may be used to inform subsequent sentence planning, risk management and rehabilitation during custody and on release; and,
- **consider** what restrictive requirements can support effective risk management and victim safeguarding as part of a community order in all cases, including familial abuse. This includes considering whether protective bail conditions, which may be removed post-sentence, should be replicated in community requirements. Suitable measures may include prohibitive activity requirements, exclusion zones, and location monitoring.

6.7. **Electronically Monitored Curfews (EMCs)** – enforcing residence of an individual with people to whom they may pose a risk is unacceptable. We must also consider the outcome of safeguarding enquiries to prevent offenders who are victims of domestic abuse from being sentenced to reside at the same address as their abuser.

6.8. **In every case** where an EMC is being considered as a proposal for sentencing, Court staff must:

- Request police domestic abuse information and information from children's services, including making out-of-area requests when individuals or families are known to have recently moved areas, are transient, or have a history of frequently moving between police or local authority boundaries;
- Contact the main occupier of the address to ensure they understand the implications of an EMC and assess the risk posed to them;
- Assess the suitability of the proposed address, this may be informed by existing address suitability assessments where available (i.e. Bail Information Services).
- Do not propose an EMC if:
  - required information is not received in time;
  - information shows that the offender would live with a current, former or potential victim of domestic abuse (including other family members) or they would otherwise pose a risk to people in the household

This will prevent perpetrators of domestic abuse being curfewed to live with current or potential victims. Where the assessment supports it, an EMC may instead be proposed at an alternative address.

Further guidance and details are available within the available [Domestic Abuse and Child Safeguarding Enquiry Staff Guidance](#) on Equip.

6.9. **Following sentencing – The Probation Service court staff** must:

- check HMCTS systems for a Judicial Finding of Domestic Abuse recorded against the conviction. Where a finding is recorded, record it on the nDelius Court Appearance outcome (see [FODA Guidance](#) in Equip);
- set the relevant risk registers to flag domestic abuse on nDelius (see [CRI019 Annex A Delius Registers List](#));
- ensure all relevant documentation including responses to police domestic abuse information and safeguarding enquiries (where received) is uploaded to nDelius (see [DA & Safeguarding Information Storage Guidance](#) on Equip); and,
- pass on to the allocated team or prison all the applicable paperwork including police domestic abuse information and safeguarding enquiries (where received) in line with PI 05/2014.

6.10. **In prison** – On reception to custody, allocation must be taken in line with [OMiC POM Allocation Guidance](#)). On allocation of a new case:

POMs must:

- search for any available indicators of domestic abuse in all cases (not just those where there is a [Judicial Finding of Domestic Abuse](#)). This includes checking detail from any available documents i.e. relevant previous convictions, victim statements, witness statements, previous OASys or other assessments, reports, records and interviews with the individual;
- check for any court or police-imposed restrictive measures, such as a restraining order, domestic violence protection order or stalking protection order;
- record any identified concerns about domestic abuse within the public protection screening tool and OMic DPS Case note on P-NOMIS;
- implement public protection contact restrictions in line with the [Prison Public Protection Policy Framework](#); and,
- apply the domestic abuse risk alert to the record where necessary.

Keyworkers should:

- read available records thoroughly; and,
- discuss any concerns they have about domestic abuse with the allocated POM (these could be from contact with an individual or from information within records)

- 6.11. **In the community** – Middle managers must ensure that cases are allocated to practitioners with the appropriate level of skills and knowledge to effectively manage domestic abuse perpetrators. Allocation must align with tiering frameworks and guidance.

**Practitioners must**, on allocation of a new case, or following release on licence, search for any available indicators of domestic abuse in all cases (not just those where there is a [Judicial Finding of Domestic Abuse](#)). This includes checking the relevant case management and risk assessment systems and checking detail from any available documents i.e. relevant previous convictions, victim statements, witness statements, previous OASys or other assessments, reports, records and interviews with the individual to establish whether:

- domestic abuse has been identified either at court or in custody and activate relevant risk registrations on nDelius if this has not already been done (see CRI 019);
- the individual has received any court or police-imposed restrictive measures, such as a restraining order, domestic violence protection order, or stalking protection order;
- there is clear information about the children the person has contact with, and if not, follow up identifying those children and where necessary exchanging information with Children's Services; and,
- there is clear information about the person's residence and who they live with.

## 7. **Assessment and monitoring**

- 7.1. **General** - like identification, assessment is not a one-off activity and in domestic abuse cases, risk can escalate very rapidly: ongoing professional curiosity is essential to inform assessments and re-assessments. In particular, practitioners must reassess a case when it is allocated to them and not rely on previous assessments, especially when they have been completed with access to limited information - for instance at court. SFO review and DHRs have identified the importance of:

- investigating all available sources of information on people convicted or accused of domestic abuse before interviewing them;
- adopting a professionally curious approach when interviewing;

- taking into account prior known incidents of domestic abuse (e.g. police domestic abuse information) in assessments;
- identifying changes to dynamic risk factors, updating assessments; and,
- acting upon changes to risk.

**Guidance** on assessment is available on the [HMPPS Risk of harm intranet page](#) and [risk desk aids on Equip](#), the [Risk of Serious Harm Guidance 2020](#), the [Assessing Domestic Abuse within OASys Guidance](#), the [Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Desk Aid](#) and [Stalking Practitioner Guidance](#).

**7.2. In the community** - in every case where domestic abuse has been identified as a relevant factor, the Probation Practitioner must:

- consider the need to take immediate action to protect victims and children (possibly ahead of formal completion of a risk assessment and RMP), particularly immediately after an individual is released from custody, or when protective bail conditions have been lifted after sentencing. Establish immediately where the individual is living and act where required, to safeguard victims and children;
- assess the risk factors and any protective factors related to serious harm and of the likelihood of domestic abuse-related re-offending using OASys and SARA for IPA;
- be clear about who is at risk, including identified adults and children, and articulate any safeguarding concerns;
- adopt and maintain an investigative approach to ensure that information about the individual's circumstances and risk is up-to-date;
- liaise with people and organisations with an interest in the individual and/or the victim and any children, to gather and share information to aid our risk assessment;
- request police domestic abuse information periodically throughout sentence, making out-of-area requests to relevant police forces when individuals or families are known to have recently moved areas, are transient, or have frequently moved between areas, and record the fact that it has been requested in the relevant case management system as set out in [DA & CSG Enquiry Staff Guidance](#) (staff in Wales should follow the Reportable Incident process as set out in the [Reportable Incident Guidance](#));
- follow up if requested information is not forthcoming;
- for all MAPPA individuals, regularly check for new information on VISOR as detailed in the [HMPPS VISOR Policy Framework](#);
- monitor the individual's relationships and any changes in behaviour or changes in circumstances that might indicate either an increase or a reduction in risk; and,
- act on new information, review and update OASys / ARNS, RMP and SARA where any significant change occurs that may impact on risk of serious harm.

**7.3. Approved Premises (APs)** - AP staff also have an important role to play in the assessment and monitoring of high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators on licence. AP staff will often be in a position to identify changes in risk, given their increased contact with the people in their premises. AP staff must be vigilant and inquisitive in seeking out information about residents' whereabouts from a range of sources to inform an ongoing assessment of whether the individual has entered into a relationship or is having contact with any children under 18 years.

**7.4. In custody** - risk does not necessarily decrease when an individual is in custody. Harassment, stalking and control may increase, presenting emotional and psychological risks, which can be greater when the abuser and victim are separated. POMs must assess, as soon as possible (after arrival at the establishment) whether a prisoner presents a continuing risk to the victim and any children while in custody.

7.5. In line with the [Prison Public Protection Policy Framework](#), POMs must be aware of, assess and undertake relevant actions on all prisoners convicted or remanded for domestic abuse offences, using the following public protection processes:

- **Public protection contact restrictions** - Prisons will restrict prisoners from contacting identified victims, those who are protected by a court order, and witnesses in remand cases which includes prisoners remanded for offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, and anyone who has made a no contact request; and,
- **Assessment of risk to children** - prisoners identified as posing a continuing risk to children from within custody (whether potential or confirmed), should be managed as a Person Posing a Risk to Children (PPRC). They must have all social numbers checked before being added to their PIN phone account. They must have full restrictions placed on social visits (including prison family days), secure social video calls, phone calls and correspondence, with all children until a risk assessment has taken place to determine what, if any, contact the prisoner is allowed.

7.6. **Offender Management in Custody (OMiC)** - Complete risk assessments in line with the [Manage the Custodial Sentence Policy Framework](#) and the [OMIC-OASys Responsibilities and Timings Guidance](#). Where domestic abuse or stalking concerns are identified for a prisoner without an OASys, POMS must:

- undertake any actions to mitigate the identified risks (such as information sharing/safeguarding referrals etc);
- follow actions contained in the [Prison Public Protection Policy Framework](#) to address concerns;
- document all concerns of this nature in the handover report to the COM; and,
- discuss with the Head of Offender Management Delivery and consider risk escalation where appropriate.

7.7. When undertaking an OASys assessment in custody, where domestic abuse has been identified, POMs must:

- assess the risk factors related to serious harm and of the likelihood of domestic abuse-related re-offending and SARA for intimate partner abuse;
- be clear about who is at risk, including identified adults and children, and articulate any safeguarding concerns; and,
- draw on information from court documentation and previous risk assessments, to inform their assessment, including victim statements, police domestic abuse information, safeguarding checks; previous OASys where these are available and keyworker entries.

## 8. **Risk Management**

8.1. **General** – Risk management is taking action to address the risk presented by a person, reducing the likelihood of serious harm occurring and reducing the potential impact of any such harm. Risk Management Plans must be developed within OASys in line with the ‘Four Pillars of Risk Management’ approach. When preparing a Risk Management Plan (RMP) assessors must:

- address all the identified risk factors;
- safeguard identified individuals assessed to be at risk of serious harm;
- use a combination of internal and external controls;
- build protective factors;

- contact partners, family members and other individuals who might be considered as protective factors to determine and discuss their inclusion in risk management plans (see [Relationships - Desistance and Risk on EQuIP](#) for further guidance); and,
- involve all connected agencies.

8.2. Good risk management plans are based on sound, evidence-based risk assessment, and take into account the need to balance support and restriction. The plan must be lawful, proportionate and necessary, but most importantly the plan must be implemented.

8.3. Plans must:

- include clear specific actions on liaison and information sharing with colleagues, both in custody and community including Domestic Abuse Safety Officers (DASOs), treatment managers and other programme staff, Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs), AP staff and other relevant POMS / PPs;
- include clear specific actions on liaison with other agencies including the police and children's services where relevant;
- reflect actions for which HMPPS staff are responsible in a child protection (CP) or child in need (CIN) plan;
- outline clearly how, by whom and how often risk management measures will be monitored;
- set out the circumstances where risk is likely to escalate and what the indicators of risk escalation might be; and
- include contingency plans to support a swift and effective response.

8.4. Risk management is an active process. Measures must be actively monitored throughout the sentence and RMPs reviewed where necessary, to ensure they remain up to date and appropriate to manage the risk posed.

8.5. Detailed information on the Four Pillars approach and how to construct RMPs can be found in found in [HMPPS Risk of Serious Harm Guidance 2020](#). **Further support** for risk management is available on the [HMPPS Risk of harm intranet page](#) (which contains a series of desk aides providing guidance on risk of harm assessment, planning and management), [risk desk aids on Equip](#), and [the Assessing Domestic Abuse within OASys Guidance](#).

8.6. Practitioners should be familiar with the [HMPPS Stalking Practitioner Guidance](#) to inform risk management planning for those who are exhibiting stalking behaviours.

## 9. **Release Planning**

9.1. **General** – individuals released from custody into the community for a period of time to be spent on licence as part of their sentence will be bound by a number of licence conditions. As well as the set standard conditions, additional conditions can be utilised and tailored to manage the risk of serious harm and reoffending posed. These are outlined in Annex A of the [Licence Conditions Policy Framework](#). Licence conditions should also be used to reinforce other victim protection measures such as a restraining order, non-molestation order, domestic violence protection order or stalking protection order.

9.2. **Address suitability** - Probation Practitioners must consider the suitability of the proposed release address in line with the [Address Check \(Post Custody\) Policy Framework](#), considering the risk of serious harm and reoffending.

9.3. In every case where domestic abuse has been identified as a relevant factor, practitioners must:

- request the additional licence condition related to disclosure of information – (sec 6b ‘notify your supervising officer of any developing intimate relationships’). Practitioners must explain what is meant by intimate relationships for each individual, for example whether it includes ongoing relationships, one-night stands and/or the full spectrum of intimacy (see section 16.13 for further information). This should be based on the risk factors identified within the risk assessment. Do not apply this condition to victims of domestic abuse to monitor their future relationships. Doing so implies a propensity to seek out abusive relationships, introduces an inappropriate enforcement on vulnerable individuals, and in some cases, forcing disclosure could increase their risk. Instead, practitioners should encourage disclosure of new relationships through trust-building and professional curiosity;
- consider the need for further additional licence conditions to protect victims such as exclusion zones, restriction of residency, location monitoring or residence at a specified place, liaising with the Victim Liaison Officer (VLO) for Victim Contact Scheme eligible cases;
- impose a licence condition to undertake an accredited programme where eligible and suitable or a non-accredited intervention if this has not been undertaken in custody;
- consider the need for disclosure in all cases where a person convicted of domestic abuse begins a new relationship, including while in custody (see section 16.3 below for further information); and,
- inform the prison about the assigned MAPPA level at least six months before a MAPPA eligible individual is due for release; this release date includes HDCED (as set out within [MAPPA Guidance](#)).

9.4. Where necessary and proportionate, Practitioners may share details of an individual's licence conditions with a member of the public when those conditions are specifically intended to protect that person. This can include the victim of the index offence, or anyone else who has been assessed as being at risk of harm from the individual. See the [Disclosure Desk Aid on Equip](#) for more information.

9.5. **Licence variations** – Practitioners must exercise caution in making variations to licence conditions that have been put in place to protect victims as to vary conditions may have a significant emotional impact. The [HMPPS Licence Condition Policy Framework](#) sets out specific expectations for variations to conditions requested via the Victim Contact Scheme:

- Practitioners must not request variations to any conditions that were requested via the VCS without first liaising with the VLO and allowing for sufficient time for the victim to be consulted;
- Practitioners must not request changes to licence conditions based on a change in the risk of reoffending or serious harm if those risks were not the original reason for the condition. The only exception is when the risk to the victim has increased and the practitioner needs to strengthen the licence conditions to manage that risk.

9.6. **Probation Practitioners undertaking HDC assessments** - Particular care needs to be taken in relation to the release on HDC of an individual with a history of familial or IPA, to the home of a previous or potential victim. When assessing the suitability of a proposed address, practitioners must:

- request police domestic abuse incident information;

- request local authority children's safeguarding information;
- obtain informed consent from the main occupier of the address;
- consider any unintended distress that contact in relation to HDC may have on the address occupier(s), who may be victims of domestic abuse and may not yet be aware of early release processes;
- consider whether there may be issues of coercive control, or vulnerability; are there any signs that the main occupier or others at the address may be fearful to decline the request for the individual to reside there; and,
- determine whether there are adults at risk or children under the age of 18 residing or visiting the proposed address and assess if contact between the person on probation and these people is a concern or a protective factor

You must not approve HDC until you have obtained informed consent and have obtained and reviewed the information requested from the police and children's services. You must not approve HDC at an address where a risk of domestic abuse is identified to others at the address, whether an intimate partner or other family members. This will prevent perpetrators of domestic abuse being curfewed to live with current or potential victims. Detailed guidance is available in the [HMPPS HDC Policy Framework](#).

## **10. Planning and implementing the sentence**

10.1. **General** - the Risk Management Plan and the sentence plan must work together to set actions that help keep individuals safe. The Risk Management Plan must include measures and / or actions to protect victims and safeguard any children and young people who are at risk from domestic abuse. In the context of domestic abuse, practitioners must also consider what sentence planning actions can support a reduction in the risk of serious harm (RoSH) posed by perpetrators of domestic abuse in order to safeguard victims.

10.2. Probation Practitioners preparing sentence plans must ensure that plans:

- set out how the sentence will be delivered;
- include appropriately sequenced, individualised goals, informed by the areas of need identified as risk factors in the risk assessment and SARA;
- include interventions such as accredited programmes or evidence based, non-accredited interventions designed to address relevant risk factors linked to domestic abuse, to reduce the risk of further domestic abuse-related offending;
- set out the outcomes to be achieved through the plan; and,
- ensure goals identified in the plan are actively tracked and record clearly the rationale where these have not been delivered within the timescales set.

For more guidance on effective sentence planning when working with domestic abuse, see the Sentence Planning chapter in [Assessing Domestic Abuse within OASys Guidance](#).

10.3. Practitioners should consider the level of face to face contact required to deliver robust sentence management and to enable sufficient monitoring of risk factors linked to domestic

abuse or stalking and specific to the Person on Probation, in line with the [Blended Supervision Staff Guidance](#).

- 10.4. **Home visits** – Research shows us that individuals feel a benefit when supervision is interactive and engaging, and this includes having home visits (Shapland et al 2012). Home visits should be more than just verification of where someone lives.
- 10.5. Home visits enable us to explore who individuals are living with, understand their unique challenges, and build rapport. This can aid a comprehensive assessment of safeguarding concerns in relation to children, vulnerable adults, and partners in cases of domestic abuse. They are also an important means of responding to their accessibility.
- 10.6. The focus of the home visit must be on the safety and well-being of the individuals at risk of harm. Periodic home visits can also provide valuable information about whether re-offending risks are under control or are escalating, particularly where there are safeguarding concerns (child and/or adult). To be most effective they should be undertaken by the practitioner who has knowledge of the individual and their assessed risk factors.
- 10.7. Where the person on probation states they reside alone, a home visit is still required, not least to validate this.
- 10.8. In line with the [Home Visits Policy Framework](#) where there are concerns about domestic abuse practitioners must undertake a home visit within the following timescales:
  - **High/very high risk of serious harm** – within 15 working days of the start of supervision
  - **All other cases** – within the first 6 weeks of the start of supervision.
  - **Where escalating or previously unidentified domestic abuse concerns arise** – within 10 working days of the identification of concern. Where viable, do the visit sooner and discuss with your SPO.
- 10.9. Practitioners must give careful consideration to the potential impact the visit may have on any others residing with the person on probation and feel confident that undertaking a home visit would not in some way increase the risk to others at the property.

## 11. **Reviewing the risk**

- 11.1. **General** – Risk is not static and all staff must feed into the process of risk assessment and management. Staff working in Interventions, Psychology, Education, Employment and Healthcare, Unpaid Work and Approved Premises should also adopt a professionally curious approach. They should be alert to changing situations and behaviours which may indicate a change of risk, such as changes in relationship status. **All staff** have a responsibility to identify, report and record any such information that indicates a risk. For instance, staff working on the wing / visitor centre in prison or reception colleagues in probation offices may observe behaviour which warrants further investigation and should share this with those managing the individuals, and/or security colleagues so that any necessary action can be taken to protect victims.
- 11.2. Probation Practitioners must seek out information from a wide range of sources to inform their ongoing assessment of risk, re-evaluating assessments with professional curiosity. This will include colleagues or agencies identified within the RMP for delivering activities or interventions, key workers, security staff, wing officers and psychologists who may all have information regarding the individual's behaviour during the review period that would provide a more informed assessment of the current risk.

- 11.3. **Significant changes** - whenever there is a significant change that influences the risk of re-offending and/or serious harm that the individual poses, the risk assessment and the RMP must be reviewed and updated where necessary. In domestic abuse cases, this may include but is not limited to the following circumstances:
- a further incident of domestic abuse (e.g. a police notification of a reported domestic abuse incident; behaviour during a prison visit);
  - victim or partner ending the relationship or seeking to do so;
  - stalking the victim or partner;
  - victim or partner becoming pregnant;
  - entering into a new relationship;
  - having contact with children;
  - breaching a restrictive order;
  - substance misuse (alcohol is an aggravating factor for violence);
  - threatening or attempting suicide;
  - violating the terms of the order and/or licence; and,
  - key transition points - i.e., being released from prison on licence, or being moved on from Approved Premises.
- 11.4. **Reviewing Address Suitability** – Where an individual is on licence, practitioners must review the suitability of the address in response to any significant changes or new information that may indicate a risk of harm, in line with the [Address Check \(Post Custody\) Policy Framework](#). If the current address no longer supports effective risk management, the Probation Practitioner must decide whether the individual should leave the property immediately. If the issue does not require immediate action, use professional judgment to set a deadline for the Person on Probation to move to a new approved address.
- 11.5. Individuals subject to a Community Order or a Suspended Sentence Order must obtain permission before changing their residence. This requirement is legally enforceable as if it were a condition of the order ([Sentencing Act 2020](#)). Practitioners must assess the suitability of any proposed address change and consider its impact on victim safeguarding. Practitioners may refuse an address change if it is likely to undermine compliance with any requirement of the order or hinder the individual's rehabilitation.
- 11.6. **Management Oversight** – the [HMPPS Management Oversight Framework](#) sets out the principles that the Probation Service will adhere to in terms of management oversight (MO). The actual required level of management oversight in a domestic abuse case should be in proportion to both the risk and complexity of the case, the experience and competence of the practitioner and appropriate in response to any significant changes and events.
- 11.7. **Managing risk escalation** – In all cases, where there are indications that RoSH has increased Probation Practitioners / POMs must:
- put measures in place to manage and reduce the identified risks;

- work with partner agencies and decide how best multi agency working can support swift action to safeguard individuals at risk. Refer to the [chapter on domestic abuse and stalking in the MAPPA Guidance](#), the [MAPPA Level 1 Policy Framework](#) and the [MAPPA Thresholding Document](#). Decide whether a referral or re-referral to MARAC or MAPPA level 2 or 3 is required including for those non automatic MAPPA cases where a Category 3 referral would be required;
- notify partner agencies or other colleagues involved in the RMP, i.e. VLO, DASO, IDVA, police and record all information sharing;
- for Victim Contact Scheme eligible cases where the victim has not responded to previous attempts at contact, refer a case back to the Victim Liaison Unit (VLU) so that the VLU can consider whether it is appropriate to make another attempt at contact with the victim (see section 17.4);
- activate contingency plans and record actions taken; and
- recall the individual to custody if additional measures are insufficient to manage the individual's risk in the community.

When the relevant actions above have been taken, review the assessment and the risk management plan to ensure this is up to date with new information.

- 11.8. Further guidance on reviewing risk of harm is available in the HMPPS [Risk of Serious Harm Guidance 2020](#).

## 12. **HMPPS Interventions**

- 12.1. **Interventions** - HMPPS provide a range of interventions available in custody and the community suitable for individuals who have committed domestic abuse. Further details on all HMPPS interventions are available on [EQuIP](#).
- 12.2. **Accredited Programmes** – HMPPS support accredited programmes that, as part of a wider package of rehabilitation, target domestic abuse as well as other types of offending. These programmes have been developed in collaboration with the Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel (CSAAP): an independent and international advisory body of academics and expert practitioners who offer evidence-based advice on the development and implementation of effective criminal and social justice services and programmes. Accreditation of programmes is awarded by the HMPPS Rehabilitation Board.
- 12.3. Accredited Programmes targeting domestic abuse, available in both custody and the community, are as follows:
- **Building Choices** is designed to help participants reduce their risk of reoffending. It focuses on key risks through targeting criminogenic needs that are commonly linked to offending. It is a cognitive behavioural programme (consisting of group and one to one sessions) and the programme helps people recognise how these risks have shown up in their past behaviour (inclusive of offending), how they might present now, and how to manage them. Building Choices takes a person-centred, strengths-based approach by drawing on existing skills and building new skills to support participants live a life without causing harm to themselves or others.
  - Determined by an assessment of risk and need, there is a moderate and high intensity offer for men and women age 18+. The programme is inclusive of people with Learning Disability & Challenges (LDC); **Building Choices Plus** (BC+) is the

programme pathway for people with LDC. Individuals who meet the risk, need, and responsivity criteria may therefore have a range of offences that fall within the government definition of domestic abuse. Building Choices can be delivered via alternative delivery format (individual delivery or small group delivery), for those eligible for the programme but unsuitable for the standard group format.

- A person-centred, needs-led approach enables participants to explore needs across both offence-specific and wider offending behaviour to target the versatility of offending behaviour.
- The Moderate Intensity Pathway is targeted at those who are assessed as medium risk of reoffending or above and medium need. The High Intensity Pathway in custody is for those who are assessed as high/very high risk of reoffending and high need (criminogenic need / dynamic risk across multiple areas). Building Choices Plus (BC+) is the moderate or high intensity pathway for individuals with LDC. The needs and suitability process helps identify whether participants would benefit from accessing this offer.
- Building Choices supports skill development in emotion management, healthy thinking, healthy relationships, sense of purpose, and healthy sex where relevant. Building Choices provides a structured opportunity to learn, strengthen and practice skills and behaviour that targets areas of common criminogenic need without defining or limiting what participants can address by offence labels. A needs-led approach enables participants to personalise criminogenic needs by considering how areas apply specifically to themselves and what skills will personally be important to develop.
- **Moving Forward** is a package of support provided for Prison Offender Managers and Probation Practitioners to help them offer support to participants before, during, and after BC, promoting an 'every contact matters' approach. Information and guidance is provided to practitioners to better enable this support and the maintenance and generalisation of programme learning for the length of the sentence and beyond. Supporting programme work can help promote desistance and provides opportunities to practice, review, and consolidate learning. Practitioners are encouraged to work collaboratively with programmes teams at all stages of the programme journey to share information, ask and answer questions and hold joint appointments where appropriate.

Comprehensive information about eligibility, suitability, and the process for referring individuals to programmes can be found in [EQuIP](#) for Probation Service and public-sector prisons. Alternatively sites can also contact the [IS\\_ProgrammeQueries@justice.gov.uk](mailto:IS_ProgrammeQueries@justice.gov.uk) mailbox for eligibility queries.

- 12.4. **Individuals who are not eligible for an accredited programme** - Not all individuals who have committed domestic abuse will be suitable or eligible for an accredited programme. For individuals who are unsuitable for an accredited programme, practitioners should consider other options such as Structured Interventions (SI) or a referral to a psychologist where available. SIs have been approved by the HMPPS National Framework for Interventions to ensure they meet criteria drawn on the best available evidence around what works. They are only approved for use in the community. Practitioners may wish to use SPARKS supervision conversations, described below
- 12.5. **Structured Interventions (SIs)**- Individuals assessed as low risk on SARA with IPA convictions with community sentences who are not suitable for an Accredited Programme can attend a SI on either a group or individual basis. Four domestic abuse SIs have been

approved for delivery; some domestic abuse SIs are available to women and Probation Practitioners should check suitability with their local interventions team.

12.6. **SPARKS** – SPARKS (Support, Prepare, Act, Reflect, Knowledge, Safety) supervision conversations provide a flexible framework that helps practitioners structure purposeful, evidence informed discussions focused on rehabilitation and public protection. SPARKS supervision conversations can support domestic abuse work by creating space for open, reflective dialogue about relationships, behaviour, and safety. They help individuals explore patterns, triggers, and the impact of their actions, supporting accountability and safer decision-making. Further information is available on Equip: [SPARKS](#)

12.7. **At Court** – Report writers must:

- use Effective Proposal Framework (EPF) to inform recommendations for sentence and propose an Accredited Programme (e.g. Building Choices) for all individuals assessed as eligible and suitable. Consider sentence length in making such proposals to ensure there is sufficient time to complete proposed intervention.

12.8. **In custody** – POMs must:

- use information contained within OASys and SARA to inform a sentence plan that addresses domestic abuse behaviours where they have been identified;
- complete a referral for all individuals who have an Accredited Programme as part of the individual's sentence plan within OASys/ARNS. Referrals to Accredited Programmes are made via the Programmes Digital Service (DPS) which uses the programmes needs and suitability criteria to determine suitability for the programme; and,
- where a practitioner considers there is additional work to be undertaken prior to an individual attending a programme, they should still make the referral and discuss with interventions staff their concerns and / or any responsivity requirements for the individual.

For further information on Accredited Programmes suitability contact your local programmes team or [IS\\_ProgrammeQueries@justice.gov.uk](mailto:IS_ProgrammeQueries@justice.gov.uk). For DPS enquiries contact [ACP.DigitalSupport@justice.gov.uk](mailto:ACP.DigitalSupport@justice.gov.uk). For referrals to psychology, please contact [NationalPsychologyServiceOBPSupport@justice.gov.uk](mailto:NationalPsychologyServiceOBPSupport@justice.gov.uk). Detailed information about custodial processes for Offender Behaviour Programmes is available on [EQuIP](#).

12.9. **In the community** – Probation Practitioners must:

- Where Building Choices is being considered as a licence condition:
  - use the EPF2 as part of pre-release planning and determine initial suitability for the programme;
  - consider the licence period when considering such conditions to ensure there is sufficient time to complete proposed interventions.
- Where an individual has Building Choices as a requirement on their community sentence or a licence condition to address their offending behaviour:
  - refer all eligible individuals for Accredited Programmes within one week of the commencement of the order or licence (if a programme has not been completed in custody);

- where a practitioner considers there is additional work to be undertaken prior to an individual attending a programme, they should still make the referral and discuss with interventions staff their concerns and / or any responsivity requirements for the individual;
- seek advice from Intervention Treatment Managers to clarify the most appropriate intervention where necessary; and,
- for those in scope for the [Domestic Abuse Safety Officer](#) service (see section 17.7), make a referral within 15 days of the commencement of the order or licence, and record the referral on nDelius.

Further information is available on [EQuIP](#)

- 12.10. **Female domestic abuse perpetrators** – Building Choices has been developed by drawing on characteristics of effective intervention in reducing re-offending for women, including the risk, need and responsivity principles, factors associated with desistance for women, a strengths-based approach and principles of gender-responsive practice. Women have been considered in both the design and delivery of Building Choices.
- 12.11. When working with women, practitioners should consider the nature, context and circumstances of the behaviour, including whether experiences of domestic abuse, coercive control, sexual violence, exploitation or trauma may be contributing to offending behaviour. Assessment and intervention should take account of these experiences and be responsive to women's individual strengths, needs, risks and responsivity factors. Where appropriate, practitioners should ensure women can access specialist support and services that address domestic abuse, trauma and wider vulnerabilities.
- 12.12. Women-specific structured interventions, including [Developing Assertiveness for Women in Relationships \(DAWN\)](#) and [Fostering Identity, Resilience and Strength \(FIRS\) for Women](#) are available in some probation regions. Practitioners may also use [SPARKS](#) supervision conversations to support purposeful, strengths-based and trauma-informed discussions about relationships, behaviour, safety, identity and personal change, tailored to individual circumstances and needs.
- 12.13. For further advice, practitioners should refer to the [Women's Policy Framework](#) and the [7 Minute Briefing - Domestic Abuse as a Driver to Women's Offending](#).
- 12.14. **Perpetrators with learning difficulties and learning challenges (LDC)** – Building Choices has a separate pathway for individuals who have LDC, this is called Building Choices Plus (BC+). While the design of Building Choices (BC) ensures explicit attention to the accommodation of the strengths and challenges of individuals with neurodivergence, BC+ has been developed in recognition of the significant differences in cognitive, executive, and adaptive functioning that people with Learning Disabilities and Challenges (LDC) have. To be specifically responsive to LDC needs, a tailored approach is required to support engagement and maximise opportunity for learning. Specific design features of BC+ include:
- additional break time in sessions and greater emphasis on opportunities for brain breaks;
  - smaller group size (maximum six participants);
  - time for additional skills and behavioural practice;
  - combined / reduced content in sessions (e.g., maximum of three exercises per session in addition to the session introduction and session closure); and,
  - more explicit emphasis on responsive communication / working with participants.

- 12.15. **Personality disordered (PD) offenders** - male offenders screened into the Offender PD Pathway who have been convicted of an offence involving domestic abuse might be suitable for an Accredited Programme. Practitioners must discuss referrals for all individuals screened into the PD pathway with the relevant treatment manager to ensure that the programme adequately meets the offender's needs. Detailed information about the treatment pathway for individuals screened into the Offender PD pathway is available in [EQuIP](#).
- 12.16. **Complex needs** - complex and multiple criminogenic needs such as mental ill health and substance misuse problems should not preclude individuals from the relevant Accredited Programme, unless there is evidence that the programme would not be of benefit or would be harmful to them. Practitioners must:
- discuss individuals with complex needs with the relevant treatment manager to ensure that the programme meets their needs (this could be delivered in an Alternative Delivery Format if necessary); and,
  - sequence interventions to ensure their complex needs do not undermine the successful completion of the intervention and risk of harm is addressed.
- 12.17. **Psychology** – Psychology Services Group provide a consultancy service for practitioners in relation to complex and high risk prisoners, they also provide specialised psychological assessment and in some cases bespoke therapeutic intervention where accredited programmes are not deemed suitable for high risk cases. Practitioners should contact the regional psychologist team for further support:  
[NationalPsychologyServiceOBPSupport@justice.gov.uk](mailto:NationalPsychologyServiceOBPSupport@justice.gov.uk).
- 12.18. Where **stalking behaviours** have been identified, practitioners can access support from local psychology teams in both a custodial and community setting. Further information, including contact details, is available on [EQuIP](#).

### 13. **Information sharing and storing**

- 13.1. Relevant personal information can be shared lawfully with relevant partner agencies to keep an individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being. All agencies must be able to demonstrate that they are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) and accompanying Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018. This places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully. Policy and guidance on information sharing and the principles for sharing personal information under the GDPR & DPA 2018 can be found in the [Data Protection Knowledge Hub](#), with information sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers available [here](#).
- 13.2. **Recording** - Record requests for information and information received from third parties in the individual's nDelius case record (see [DA & Safeguarding Information Storage Guidance](#) on Equip for guidance). Where information or requests for information are deemed sensitive and disclosure to the individual would increase risk, they should be recorded using the sensitive contact in nDelius or the 'Information Not To Be Disclosed To The Offender' (INBDTTO) section of OASys. This will ensure sensitive information is more easily identified.
- 13.3. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) minutes and Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) Information must not be stored / recorded within the main Case Management Systems. Storage and recording regarding these referral routes are addressed in the relevant sections below.

- 13.4. **Closed cases** - Record any information received, requested, or shared on a closed case (that is, the person is no longer being supervised on a current order, licence or post-sentence supervision) into the individual's closed case record following the Equip process '[Recording Information Shared or Received on closed cases](#)'

#### 14. **Information exchange**

- 14.1. **General** - domestic abuse is a complex issue and it is unlikely that any one organisation will possess the information, expertise or resources to address it on their own. Agencies working together in a co-ordinated way are best placed to support the successful management of the risks posed by domestic abuse perpetrators.
- 14.2. **Local arrangements for information sharing** - it is important to ensure that agreements for sharing information about the risks posed by those we manage are working effectively at a local level. Probation Service Heads of PDUs are responsible for information sharing processes locally and they must:
- liaise at least annually with the local police lead for community safety;
  - ensure local arrangements are in place for the timely sharing of information in cases where there is a known risk of domestic abuse; and
  - together with prison governors, ensure arrangements are in place for timely information sharing between POMs and community practitioners in domestic abuse cases.

#### 15. **Multi-agency working and referral routes**

- 15.1. **General** - there are a range of arrangements under which multi-agency working is governed and individual cases discussed. Staff will need to be familiar with local arrangements for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), child safeguarding case conferences, and Integrated Offender Management (IOM).
- 15.2. In prisons, Inter Departmental Risk Management meetings (IRMM) and Multi Agency Lifer Risk Assessment Panels (MALRAP) can provide an opportunity for staff from different areas of the business to work together and share information to inform risk management activities and interventions in custody and in preparation for release.
- 15.3. POMs, Probation Practitioners and their managers should expect to work with a variety of other agencies, to manage the risks perpetrators pose and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of victims, potential victims and children. The involvement of other agencies and the need to share information should form part of the RMP, and practitioners will need to consider which multi-agency arrangements are likely to be the most effective mechanism for delivering an RMP.
- 15.4. **Identifying the most effective referral route** – The guidance below sets out some of the differences between MAPPA and MARAC, which along with local information on referral criteria, may help staff to identify the most appropriate approach to coordinating multi-agency working. It may be the case that more than one multi-agency forum is involved with an individual's risk management, in which case staff should ensure there are effective links between forums for robust information sharing and avoiding actions being duplicated.
- 15.5. **Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)** was introduced by the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) 2003 with the express aim of protecting the public from serious harm by individuals with sexual and violent convictions. The arrangements provide a mechanism by

which organisations working with these individuals can work together in partnership to better achieve that aim. Probation and Prison staff are required to follow the [MAPPA Statutory Guidance](#) and the [MAPPA Level 1 Policy Framework](#).

- 15.6. Automatic inclusion in MAPPA is determined by caution or conviction and sentence:
- Category 1 – Registered sex offenders
  - Category 2 – Violent and other sexual offenders
  - Category 4 – Terrorist or terrorist risk offender
- 15.7. **Category 3** – Other dangerous offenders. Those who are not automatically included in MAPPA can be referred where the circumstances surrounding their offending indicate they are likely to pose a risk of harm to the public and where they require management at level 2 or 3.
- 15.8. MAPPA nominals are managed at one of three levels according to the level of risk, the complexity of the management required, and the level of resource required. The majority are managed at Level 1, which always involves active information sharing and may include inter-agency working (e.g. through MARAC or professionals' meetings) but does not require formal MAPPA meetings. They are managed at Level 2 if multi-agency meetings are required to devise a formal MAPPA risk management plan, and at Level 3 if senior representatives of the relevant agencies with authority to commit additional resources are also needed. A level 2 or 3 MAPPA meeting will share information, identify risk and set out an RMP and actions for agencies. It will agree a date on which they will meet again to review progress. Further Guidance is available within the [MAPPA chapter on domestic abuse and stalking available in the MAPPA Guidance](#), and the [MAPPA Level 1 Policy Framework](#).
- 15.9. **Referring domestic abuse perpetrators to Level 2 or 3 MAPPA** – Probation Practitioners are required to assess all individuals with evidence of serial domestic abuse or stalking for management at Level 2 or 3 including those that do not meet the MAPPA criteria for Category 1, 2 or 4. The [MAPPA Thresholding Document](#) will support you in identifying whether those individuals require a multi-agency approach at Level 2 or 3 to manage their risk of serious harm.
- 15.10. **In custody** – The Prison Service is required to provide information on MAPPA offenders at key points in their sentence and on release as set out in [MAPPA Guidance Chapter 15 - Custody](#). POMs must consider whether the individual meets the criteria for 'early allocation' to the community to allow additional time required for the Probation Practitioner to carry out various risk management tasks with other agencies, to ensure robust risk management plans are in place. Detailed information on the 'Early Allocation Process' is available on [EQuIP](#).
- 15.11. **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)** - A MARAC is a meeting to discuss how to help and protect domestic abuse victims at high risk of murder or serious harm. Information is shared on the highest-risk domestic abuse cases and agency representatives discuss options for increasing the victim's safety and turn them into a co-ordinated action plan. Each agency is responsible for carrying out the actions identified for it on the plan, and where available a lead agency is allocated to both the victim and perpetrator to oversee ongoing risk management, as the MARAC does not perform a monitoring or ongoing management function. MARAC is also focussed on individual victims, so a level 2 or 3 MAPPA meeting is likely to be a more appropriate multi-agency forum for drawing up an effective multi-agency risk management plan where:
- there is a risk to multiple victims or partners;

- ongoing multi-agency oversight is required; or
- where the risks to the public are not limited to domestic abuse.

15.12. Unlike MAPPA, MARACs are not based in statute and practices and procedures relating to referrals, resourcing and attendance vary from area to area. [EQuIP](#) provides guidance for Probation Service / HMPS staff on the referral criteria but it is for MARACs locally to set the referral threshold and HMPPS staff working with victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse must familiarise themselves with their local MARAC practices and procedures, in order that they can contribute in a useful and effective way.

15.13. Staff should not wait for the convening of a MARAC meeting to safeguard a victim, when there are immediate actions they can take. A MARAC referral should still be made after safeguarding actions have been taken where suitable, whereby the panel can review actions already taken and identify further gaps or information.

15.14. Probation Practitioners must:

- ascertain whether a case has already been discussed at a MARAC;
- consider a referral to MARAC of all individuals assessed as posing a high risk of harm of domestic abuse to an identifiable person;
- ensure that they attend or feed in to MARAC meetings in line with local arrangements;
- inform the MARAC if an individual is MAPPA eligible, and consider referrals to Level 2/3 management (including under Category 3) as a MARAC action where appropriate;
- complete actions arising from MARAC meetings;
- inform the MARAC co-ordinator when actions have been completed; and
- ensure MARAC registrations have been activated for relevant cases (see CRI019).

Where MARAC and MAPPA co-ordination is in place for the same individual, practitioners must make partners aware of this, and ensure that all relevant agencies involved with victim and perpetrator are included within the continued multi-agency working under MAPPA. Further information about MARAC is provided in the [HMPPS MARAC - Quick Guide](#) available on Equip.

15.15. **Storing/Recording of MARAC information** - Providers of probation services must also ensure that information shared at a MARAC, and the minutes, are stored within Case Management Systems. Reference can (and should) be made to MARAC in Case Management Systems where relevant, however contacts which reference MARAC should be marked as sensitive (see [DA & Safeguarding Information Storage Guidance](#) in Equip). MARAC should not be referred to in the main body of an OASys assessment. Detailed information about MARAC, including the name and contact details of your local co-ordinator, can be found at: <http://www.safelives.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do>.

15.16. **Perpetrator Panels** – Local areas may have a forum for discussion that is focused on the perpetrator as part of a specific perpetrator discussion at a MARAC or as a separate process (such as the Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination meeting (MATAC), piloted in Northumbria and rolled out across six other police forces in the North East and Yorkshire). Such panels bring together local agencies to identify strategies for responding to the most

harmful domestic abuse perpetrators. Interventions identified through MATAC or other forums can include education, prevention, diversion, disruption and enforcement.

15.17. **Persons released on life licence** - DHRs, SFO reviews and inquests have identified a number of cases of individuals who have been released on a life licence for killing a partner going on to kill another, in circumstances where better multi-agency working might have made a difference to the outcome. Therefore, in every case where a lifer who has previously killed a partner enters a new relationship or is released from prison having established a new relationship, the Probation Practitioner must:

- liaise with partner agencies to gather information and gain a multi-agency perspective;
- consider whether level 2 or 3 management under MAPPA is required or whether the risks would be better managed through referral to MARAC and discuss with their manager; and,
- record their decision making.

## 16. **Victim safety**

16.1. **General** - Protecting the public and preventing further harm to current and future victims is a primary purpose of case management. Victim safety in the context of domestic abuse covers both past victims and identified adults or children at risk of becoming victims in the future. Working together with local agencies, domestic abuse services and specialist services is the most effective way of achieving the safety of partners, an ex-partner's family members and children affected by domestic abuse.

16.2. When a POM / Probation Practitioner receives sensitive information from a victim, they must record it on nDelius and mark it as a 'Sensitive Contact'. If it is relevant and safe to do so, staff should include the information in the risk assessment and Risk Management Plan. If the victim discloses a previously unidentified risk of harm, the POM / Probation Practitioner should signpost the victim to appropriate support services and refer the case to the most suitable partnership agency, such as the police, MARAC, or social services, to review victim safeguarding.

16.3. **Contact from prisoners** - To help victims of domestic abuse to live free from abuse and further trauma after a perpetrator has been imprisoned, a victim or any member of the public, police, courts or an organisation on the individual's behalf and with their consent can stop unwanted contact from prisoners by contacting the HMPPS Unwanted Prisoner Contact Team. The relevant prison will look at the information available, and any risks or concerns, in considering whether the restriction is appropriate. Contact details for the HMPPS Unwanted Prisoner Contact Team are: email – [unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk](mailto:unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk); tel – 0300 060 6699, Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm; or go to [gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact](https://gov.uk/stop-prisoner-contact)

16.4. **Identifying a new relationship** - All staff have a role in managing the risk to victims and other individuals who may be at risk. In many instances, both prison and probation staff will have information about apparent new relationships. For example, key workers, wing staff, those delivering activities and interventions, visits staff must all be professionally curious and monitor information relating to a perpetrator's domestic circumstances and share any relevant information with those managing the individual's sentence.

16.5. For keyworkers, POMs and Probation Practitioners, this will sometimes require asking probing questions about relationships in order to monitor an individual's relationship status. When a new relationship is disclosed:

Keyworkers must:

- record any information from their session in the case notes; and
- share the information with the POM in order for them to gather further information.

POMs / Probation Practitioners must:

- gather information related to the new partner including name, address and any children, and record the information on the relevant case management system;
- identify the measures required to reduce the risk of harm to the new partner;
- review the RMP to ensure it remains current and relevant and update as required;
- record decisions made and action taken. This is particularly important where there is a history of serious harm to a previous partner;
- gather and share information with police and other agencies working with the individual (including up to date police domestic abuse incident enquiries); and
- make an active decision about the need to disclose information about the individual to the new partner.

16.6. **Facilitating disclosures** – facilitating disclosure of previous abusive behaviour must be considered when an individual with a history of domestic abuse enters a new relationship or where an identifiable adult is assessed as being at risk of domestic abuse. The [Disclosure Desk Aid](#) provides detailed guidance on how to make decisions about disclosure, the limitations to HMPPS' legal authority in sharing information with members of the public, and how to work with partnership agencies to safely provide the right information to those who need it.

16.7. POMs / Probation Practitioners must make an assessment about whether disclosure is needed on a case by case basis, seeking advice from their line manager and any relevant partnership agencies when unsure. Disclosure will be required when the need to inform and protect potential victim(s) outweighs the perpetrator's right to privacy. When making this decision, they must:

- consider and decide whether a disclosure of the previous abusive behaviour should take place, taking into account incidents and patterns of abusive behaviour in previous relationships, and the risk of not disclosing this information;
- consider the likelihood and degree of harm that might arise from the disclosure, including the impact on the partner of receiving the information and the potential effect on the perpetrator; and,
- record the decision and rationale on the case management system.

16.8. **Informal conversation** - Practitioners may use informal conversations with partners or family members as part of the decision-making process if the opportunity arises, for example during a home visit or an office appointment with a Person on Probation, or if a partner / family member contacts the POM/Probation Practitioner to talk about the individual.

- 16.9. POMs / Probation Practitioners may use these conversations to judge how much the partner or family member knows about the risk posed to them, and to ask relevant questions about residence and children. These discussions may reveal that those at risk are already aware of the offending behaviour, allowing the practitioner to discuss what measures they can take to stay safe. If the conversation shows that they have limited knowledge, the practitioner may need to consider facilitating further disclosure in line with guidance.
- 16.10. **Gateways to disclosure** - The legal power to disclose information about individual's behaviour or offending history to a member of the public lies with police and Children's Services, rather than the Probation Service. If a POM / Probation Practitioner decides that a disclosure is necessary they must determine the best method for the disclosure, specifically whether:
- to refer the case to the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (see section 16.11 below); or
  - where Children's Services are involved with a family, to inform the Social Worker of your concerns and request that relevant information is shared for child safeguarding purposes; or
  - to contact the police and explain that an immediate disclosure is warranted (see 16.14 below).
- 16.11. **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)** – POMs / Probation Practitioners must be aware of the DVDS, often referred to as "Clare's Law" and refer when disclosure is required. The purpose of the scheme is twofold:
- to facilitate disclosure in order to protect a potential victim from harm; and,
  - to provide consistency in the way disclosures are managed.
- All staff must ensure that they are familiar with the process for making a disclosure through the scheme. Staff can also discuss referrals with local DVDS co-ordinators when considering disclosure methods and timescales: in some instances immediate disclosures can be undertaken through this scheme where necessary. Detailed information and guidance on the scheme can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-violence-disclosure-scheme-pilot-guidance>
- 16.12. Following the outcome of the referral to the (DVDS) panel, the POM/Probation Practitioner must record:
- the decision made whether to disclose or not; and,
  - the rationale for that decision.
- 16.13. If the DVDS panel decides to disclose, the POM/Probation Practitioner must:
- record what information was disclosed, who received it, any changes in circumstances following the disclosure, and any safeguarding actions taken for the person at risk;
- 16.14. **Immediate disclosures** - In rare and exceptional occasions, the risk of domestic abuse to a member of the public may be so immediate that waiting for a DVDS referral to be

processed may not be appropriate. Practitioners must not undertake disclosures themselves in these urgent circumstances.

If keyworkers become aware of any immediate risk they must:

- inform the POM and/or Head of Service Delivery and where relevant the duty Governor; and,
- complete a mercury intelligence report.

The POM/Probation Practitioner must:

- agree with their line manager (or available manager) that an immediate risk of harm has been identified;
- notify the police immediately of an immediate risk of harm to a member of the public, clearly setting out:
  - what the risks are and to who;
  - why they are judged to be immediate and urgent;
  - that HMPPS does not have a legal basis to disclose information to members of the public; and
  - a request that police take appropriate action to safeguard the individual.

16.15. **Following disclosure** - Disclosure arrangements such as DVDS include the requirement to consider support for any individuals receiving a disclosure: the information they receive may be extremely distressing and may lead to a period of increased risk (e.g. one of the most dangerous periods for victims of domestic abuse is leaving the relationship). POMs / Probation Practitioners must take the following steps to assess and manage this risk:

- review the risk assessment to ensure it reflects any changes to risk as a result of the disclosure;
- review the risk management plan in light of the disclosure to consider and record (where safe to do so) any additional safeguarding measures that you can take or have been put in place by partnership agencies;
- share your risk management plan with relevant partnership agencies;
- understand whether the person on probation is aware of the disclosure and if so discuss it with them and identify what support they may need; and
- record details of what information was disclosed and the rationale for doing so.

16.16. If the POM/Probation Practitioner believes a disclosure is not necessary or proportionate for effective risk management, they must discuss this with their line manager and record the reasons if no disclosure is made.

16.17. **Licence conditions to disclose new relationships** - at the earliest stage POMs / Probation Practitioners should inform People on Probation that the licence condition to disclose new relationships will enable consideration of whether to disclose previous domestic abuse when a new relationship is reported. In cases where the individual has disclosed partial details but refuses to disclose the full name, address of a partner and/or details of any children in line with their licence condition, the POM/Probation Practitioner must:

- discuss enforcement action with their manager and take action in line with recall guidance;
- liaise with colleagues and partner agencies and take all reasonable steps to identify the name and address of the partner and/or any children the offender has contact with;
- once identified, consider disclosure as above and ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are in place; and
- record all actions taken on the Case Management System.

16.18. **Community Orders** - These steps (apart from recall) will also need to be taken in relation to those on community orders or post sentence supervision where the Probation Practitioner knows there is a partner or children who may be at risk but is unable to secure full details from the individual.

## 17. **The Victim Contact Scheme**

17.1. The Victim Contact Scheme (VCS) arises from Chapter 2 of Part 3 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. Victims of perpetrators who have been convicted of a specified sexual or violent offence and sentenced to 12 months or more in custody have a statutory right to participate in the VCS. Where a victim is in the VCS the POM (prior to allocation) or the Probation Practitioner (post allocation) must:

- keep in contact with the VLO, consulting with them regularly; and,
- pass on information at key stages in the sentence as required under the Scheme and as set out in the document, [VLO Guidance - Key Stages and Disclosure of information](#), on EQuIP.

17.2. **Victim Liaison Officer (VLO)** – the VLO's responsibilities are set out in [the Victims page of Equip](#). If victims have opted in to the VCS and are in contact with a VLO, the VLO must:

- Attend or contribute to MARAC and MAPPA meetings as required;
- pass on to the POMs / Probation Practitioners any information that relates to risk to the victim;
- give the victim high-level information about any potential release of the individual through the sentence; and,
- give the victim the opportunity to have input regarding licence conditions that are relevant to them, such as non-contact provisions or exclusion zones.

17.3. The VCS gives victims who have opted in the right to request licence conditions. This can be particularly important for domestic abuse victims. Probation Practitioners must:

- liaise with VLOs regarding victim-focused licence conditions (e.g. no contact) as early in the release planning process as possible, to ensure that victims can input to licence conditions that affect them; and,
- put forward the conditions requested even if they consider they are not necessary or proportionate, indicating whether they support them (see [HMPPS Licence Conditions Policy Framework](#)).

17.4. **Probation Practitioners** must be mindful that in certain circumstances, where a victim is not participating in the VCS, it is necessary to refer a case back to the Victim Liaison Unit, so that the VLU can consider whether it is appropriate to make another attempt at contact with the victims where one of the following is present:

- The victim and the offender are known to each other;
- The offender presents an ongoing risk to the victim;
- There is an escalation in the risk posed by the offender to the victim;
- The case has a very high media profile.

Re-referrals should be made in advance of a key stage, such as commencement of the parole window or at least 6 months prior to the earliest possible release date or commencement of ROTL. Probation Practitioners may find it helpful to discuss a re-referral with their SPO or the VLU manager to help inform their decision.

17.5. If the victim tells the VLO that their partner or ex-partner is contacting them against their wishes, the VLO must:

- advise the victim to report the harassment to the police;
- provide details of local domestic abuse services and the Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247 in England and in Wales the Live Fear Free Helpline: 0808 80 10 800;
- tell the POM / Probation Practitioner; and
- share information about the HMPPS Unwanted Prisoner Contact Service (accessed by completing the form on Gov.uk using the link [Unwanted Prisoner Contact](#) or call 03000606699 or via email [unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk](mailto:unwantedprisonercontact@justice.gov.uk)) which can be contacted by victims or third-party agencies (including VLOs / POMs / Probation Practitioners) acting on behalf of a victim and with their consent.

17.6. **Recording victim information** - As per the Data Protection Act 2018 records in relation to victims must be kept separately from records that relate to offenders. Information collected from Victims under the scheme is therefore stored separately on the Victim Contact Management System (VCMS). The Victim Contact Report is part of the work undertaken by the VLO, it is a record for the VLO and the VCS member of the discussions during their initial meeting. It should therefore be stored on VCMS and must not be stored on NDelius or on shared drives.

17.7. **Domestic Abuse Safety Officers (DASOs)** – DASOs work in the community with specific victims, current and ex-partners of men who are required to undertake an accredited programme to address domestic abuse behaviour as part of their sentence (e.g. Building Choices). Their role includes victim safety planning to alleviate immediate risk. DASOs must:

- keep in regular contact with Probation Practitioners and share information about changing circumstances promptly;
- contribute to risk management and victim safety planning;
- contribute to planning for any escalation in risk; and,
- ensure victims or partners are aware of local domestic abuse services and refer them for support, advice and assistance.

For more information on the role DASOs and the steps to consider prior to making a referral, see the [DASO Practice Manual](#) on Equip.

17.8. Where an individual is required to undertake an accredited programme (e.g., Building Choices) to address domestic abuse behaviour, the Probation Practitioner must:

- make a referral to a DASO within 15 days of the commencement of the order or licence and record the referral on nDelius;
- keep in regular contact with the DASO and share information regarding changes in the individual's domestic circumstances and RoSH;
- feed new information from the DASO into the RMP; and,
- act on the information promptly where necessary, to reduce the risk of harm to the victim.

## 18. **Safeguarding**

18.1. **General** - safeguarding means protecting an individual's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. A multi-agency approach and effective information sharing are essential to support the development and delivery of the sentence and RMPs that properly safeguard individuals at risk.

18.2. **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** - a MASH co-ordinates and co-locates services to improve information sharing and respond more effectively to safeguarding needs. Not all areas have a MASH, but where they do, Probation Practitioners and POMs must be familiar with their role and purpose and how they can contribute to information sharing and the risk management of individuals they manage.

18.3. Detailed information and guidance about MASH can be found in the Probation Service National Partnership Framework Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) available at: [Partnership Framework - MASH \(Master\) \(rocstac.com\)](#).

18.4. **Adults** - safeguarding encompasses work with an adult who has care and support needs to help keep them safe from significant harm. A significant proportion of people who need safeguarding support do so because they are experiencing domestic abuse. The effect of domestic abuse is often especially acute where the abusive partner is also the victim's carer. In cases where a domestic abuse perpetrator is the carer of an adult who has care and support needs, the POM / Probation Practitioner must:

- make a safeguarding referral to adult social care;
- record the information received on nDelius, P-NOMIS or other case management system;
- activate appropriate flags on nDelius, P-NOMIS or other case management system; and,
- ensure that sentence plans and risk management plans both address the risk posed to the victim.

18.5. **Individuals in our care with support needs** - prison and probation staff must identify whether an individual is at risk of, or a victim of, domestic abuse. The women we work with are twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse as the men and staff must ensure that assessment, induction and interventions meet the specific needs of women. Assessors must also ensure that for all those who require it, sentence and risk management plans:

- include measures to protect them from further domestic abuse; and,
  - address their care and support needs.
- 18.6. Individuals may require a safeguarding referral and one outcome of such a referral may be the formulation of a safeguarding plan. Practitioners must be clear about their role and any actions assigned to them within a safeguarding plan. They must also ensure any relevant actions are reflected in the individual's risk management and sentence plan.
- 18.7. **Children** - The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse if the child sees, hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse, and is related to either the victim or perpetrator. This recognition is distinct from child abuse, whereby abuse is perpetrated by an adult towards someone under the age of 16. Children who live with domestic abuse are more likely than other children to experience a wide variety of mental health, social and educational problems.
- 18.8. The [HMPPS Child Safeguarding Policy Framework](#) sets out what staff are required to do as part of their safeguarding responsibilities and includes a guidance section which provides general information and advice on child safeguarding expected practice; POMs / Probation Practitioners must familiarise themselves with this framework to ensure that vulnerable children are adequately protected.
- 18.9. Relationships do not automatically end when someone is sentenced to prison, there are significant barriers a victim may face when wanting to end a relationship, including child contact arrangements. Whilst the risks to victims and children need to be considered, it is also important to consider the impact of loss on the perpetrator where contact with a child has been reduced or ceased, with a goal to support them develop coping skills with such a trauma.
- 18.10. In England, the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children (December 2023) is available at: [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children) and the safeguarding adults chapter of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance#safeguarding-1>
- 18.11. In Wales, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provides the legal framework for social services provision to protect and promote the welfare of children, and can be found at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents>
- 18.12. **In the community** - HMPPS may hold valuable information on the parents of vulnerable children and is often the only agency that knows the men in a child's life. Therefore, in every case where domestic abuse is a factor the Probation Practitioner must make an assessment as to whether there are children who are at risk of harm from seeing, hearing or witnessing domestic abuse. Where they consider that there is such a risk they must:
- identify the relevant children and Children's Services department and make a safeguarding referral setting out their concerns, explaining what they think the risk is if no action is taken (see 'Effective HMPPS referrals will include' in the [HMPPS Child Safeguarding Policy Framework](#));
  - record the referral and the outcome on nDelius, or other Case Management System;
  - agree escalation routes with their line manager if they are concerned that the response leaves children at risk; and,

- activate appropriate risk registers on nDelius, or other Case Management System.

18.13. **Safeguarding Processes** - A safeguarding referral may result in the formulation of a child protection (CP) or child in need (CIN) plan. Practitioners must:

- attend, or exceptionally where this is not possible, ensure a contribution is provided to Child Protection conferences;
- be clear about their role and any actions assigned to them within a CP or CIN plan; and,
- ensure any relevant actions are reflected in the individuals risk management and sentence plan.

18.14. PDU Heads and other managers should use the [HMPPS Management Oversight Framework](#) and [Reflective Practice Supervision Standards \(RPSS\)](#) to support existing management oversight of child safeguarding cases or cases where a child is subject to a child protection plan.

18.15. **In custody** - where a prisoner has been identified as presenting a continuing risk of harm to children, POMs must follow the processes outlined in OMIC Child Safeguarding Guidance: available on EQuIP which includes:

- tell the relevant local authority Children's Services of the prisoner's reception, subsequent transfers and release address;
- notify the relevant probation service office; and,
- follow PPRC processes in line with the [Prison Public Protection Policy Framework](#) to prevent or restrict the prisoner's contact with children, and consider monitoring the prisoner's communications (letters and phone calls) to safeguard children.

## 19. **Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs)**

19.1. A Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR) is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves.

19.2. **Statutory basis** - under section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, local areas are required to undertake a DARDR to help all those involved in the review process to identify lessons that can be learned, with a view to preventing future homicides and violence. The statutory guidance for DARDR is available here: [Domestic abuse related death reviews: statutory guidance - GOV.UK](#)

19.3. **HMPPS Contribution** - the guidance makes clear that the DARDR panel should have senior manager representation from each of the statutory agencies. The HMPPS representative at the DARDR panel should be Head of Service for probation or governor level for prisons, to enable decisions to be made on behalf of the agency they represent. The Probation Service has committed to providing a Head of PDU level representative to all DARDR panels even where they have not had direct involvement in the case. If the perpetrator has been in custody the Probation Service representative should advise the report author to contact the governor of the last prison that the individual was in to provide

an Individual Management Review (IMR), to answer specific prison-related questions or to consider potential prison-related recommendations. The HMPPS senior manager at the panel takes responsibility for:

- the agency's contribution to full panel decisions;
- the allocation of an IMR to an appropriate author and the submission of the IMR to the DARDR panel;
- sharing a copy of the IMR with their agency's actions arising from the review and the dissemination of lessons learned;
- contacting Public Protection Partnerships Section ([ppps@justice.gov.uk](mailto:ppps@justice.gov.uk)) to alert them to any proposed national recommendations for HMPPS to ensure that they are constructed in a way most likely to achieve the desired outcome; and
- their agency's actions arising from the review and the dissemination of lessons learned.

19.4. Further guidance is available on Equip, in the [DARDR Process Map](#) and the [DARDR Partnership Framework](#). Further guidance for senior managers on the conduct of DARDR is available on the Home Office DARDR website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/domestic-homicide-review>.

19.5. **Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews** - In 2024, Wales introduced the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) to replace DARDRs. The SUSR seeks to develop a single, proportionate mechanism in which to conduct a review following the most serious of incidents in Wales, avoiding the need to undertake a series of multiple reviews (e.g., Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, Child Practice Reviews, Adult Practice Reviews, Mental Health Homicide Reviews and Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews) in relation to the same single incident. Further information is available in the Single Unified Safeguarding Review: statutory guidance

19.6. The HMPPS Wales Serious Case Review Board takes responsibility for oversight of SUSR learning at a local and national level, and ensuring that national policy colleagues ([ppps@justice.gov.uk](mailto:ppps@justice.gov.uk)) are informed of any national recommendations provided to the SUSR.

**Annex A****Visual Representation of HMPPS Domestic Abuse Referral Pathway**

Domestic Abuse  
Pathway Update 2026