



Domestic abuse:

What can we all do to support older people at risk?

We know as a city and a partnership of organisations that a significant number of older people experience domestic abuse, but that unfortunately older people can find it extremely difficult to find support. We know from the research that older people often live with domestic abuse much longer before getting help, or may be less able to protect themselves.

In December 2018, we came together as a partnership of statutory, independent and third sector agencies to learn from each other, and to consider how we can enable older people to receive the support they may need to recognise and stop domestic abuse.

We have captured some of the key areas of consideration raised at the event, and we would ask all organisations to reflect on these, and consider if there is more we can all do to enable older people to be safe from domestic abuse.

Consider:

1. Can you do more to promote awareness of domestic abuse of older people?

- Do you provide information about domestic abuse, safeguarding adults and sources of support?
- Can you display leaflets? Can you display posters? Are these in an accessible format for people who use your service?
- Can you talk to people who use your service about domestic abuse?

2. Do you let people know you can help them?

- How do people know they can talk to you?
- How do you ensure their voices are heard?
- How do people know you will support them to find help?
- How you support people from groups who may find it harder to find help?

3. Do you ask people if they are experiencing domestic abuse?

- Do you do this with everyone?
- Do your staff/volunteers understand that people often want to be asked?
- Can you do this as part of a routine assessment or meeting?
- How can you make people feel comfortable to talk to you?
- Do your staff/volunteers understand that people may not disclose their concerns the first time they are asked?

4. Can you give people opportunities to talk to you alone?

- Is there a private space to talk?
- Do people know they can talk to you in private?
- Have you considered how you can talk to someone on their own, if they are accompanied?
- Do you use independent interpreters?

5. Do your staff/volunteers understand how difficult it can be for older people to talk about their experiences and seek help?

- Older people may have additional barriers to seeking support, are you staff/volunteers aware of this?

For example, the research says:

- They may be being harmed by the person caring for them
- They may be providing care to the person abusing them
- They may have additional health problems
- There may be concerns around their financial circumstances
- Generational attitudes may make it harder for older people to identify abuse
- They may have preconceived views about marriage and the ability to cope
- They may feel that they will not be believed or that it is a private matter
- They may be embarrassed or perceive a stigma about domestic abuse

(Safe Later Lives: Older people and domestic abuse)
IRISS: Older women and domestic abuse)

6. Do your staff/volunteers know how best to help?

- Have your staff/volunteers had domestic abuse training that refers to older people?
- Have they had safeguarding adults training?
- Are they aware of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and their responsibilities?
- Do they know how to respond to a disclosure?
- Do they feel comfortable having these conversations?
- Do they know where to get help and advice?
- Have you got a lead person to support your staff/volunteers?

7. How does your organisation review its approach?

- How do you know that what you have in place is working for people who use your service?
- Have you asked people what they would find helpful?

8. And remember.....

“The person sitting in front of you has taken the hardest step of all: they’ve told someone about the abuse they’re experiencing. Now they need your help to become safe...”

(Solace Women’s Aid Silver Project)

