

Sheffield City Council

Children and Families Service

Revised Guidance for Working with Cases where
Domestic Abuse is a Significant Factor

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About this Document

Title	Guidance for Undertaking Assessments of Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse
Purpose	To assist in safety planning for survivors and children
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1. Introduction

The Domestic Abuse Act, 2021 defines Domestic Abuse as;

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Economic
- Emotional

Controlling behaviour is: 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.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Its important to note that Children are recognised as victims within their own right with the Domestic Abuse Act.

Working together to Safeguard Children, 2018 states

‘Domestic abuse continues to be a prevalent risk factor identified through children social care assessments for children in need. Domestic abuse has a significant impact on children and young people. Children may experience domestic abuse directly, as victims in their own right, or indirectly due to the impact the abuse has on others such as the non-abusive parent.’

Sheffield Children and Families utilise a number of models to assist in the assessment and planning for those children and families with which we work. In relation to domestic abuse, Sheffield is embedding the Safe and Together Model. This model aims to create, nurture, and sustain a global network of domestic abuse informed practitioners, communities, and systems.

In 2019, Safe and Together shared information which indicated that -

- 1 in 5 children in the UK have been exposed to Domestic Abuse

- 1 in 5 Domestic Abuse survivors are pregnant when they escape their partners
- Between January and March 2019, some 6000 adult and child survivors became homeless due to Domestic Abuse
- Domestic Abuse has a measurable and substantial association with caregiver and family functioning, which in turn has a substantial association with child health and behaviour.
- Over 50% of Serious Case Reviews (SCR) involving serious injury or death of a child involved Domestic Abuse
- In a review of UK cases involving intimate partner homicide, 82% of cases highlighted issues around accurate assessment of risk.
- Between 40-75% of children in caseloads who are exposed to Domestic Abuse are also victims of physical violence
- The vast majority of perpetrators of Domestic Abuse still see their children.

2. Supplementary Guidance For undertaking a Single Assessment where Domestic Abuse is a Significant Factor

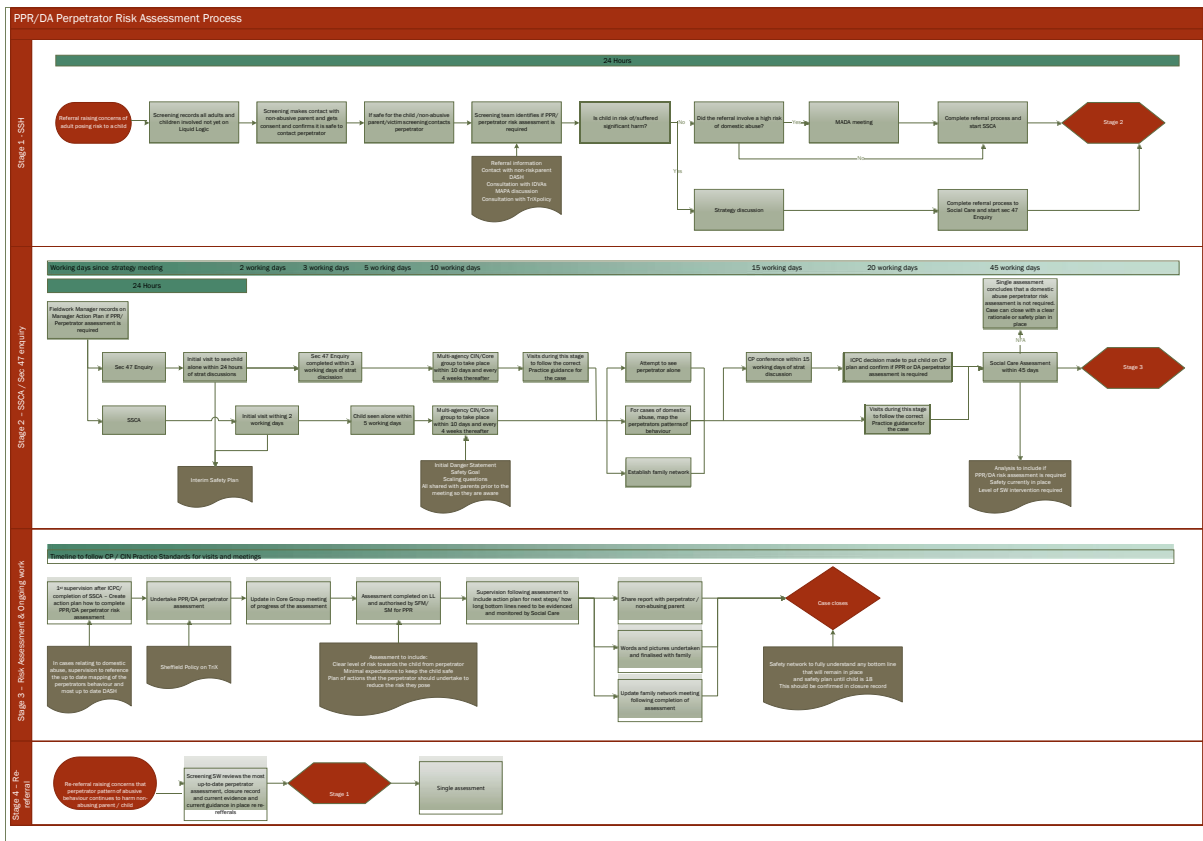
2.1 Aims of the Single Assessment

The aims of the Single Assessment where domestic abuse is a feature, should include:

- A full understanding of the relationship between the survivor and the perpetrator and the domestic abuse within that relationship
- To understand the impact of the domestic abuse upon the children and the family functioning

The Single Assessment needs to ensure that the domestic abuse and children's safety is of high priority

The Process of undertaking a Risk Assessment:



2.2 Partnering with the Survivor

A successful partnership with the non-offending parent is one of the best ways to keep the children safe. Therefore, in the Single Assessment it is important that the Social Worker builds a working relationship with the survivor of domestic abuse. This is referred to as *Partnering* in the Safe and Together model. The purpose of this is to build a full understanding of the relationship between the perpetrator and survivor and what the survivor has been doing to keep the children safe from the domestic abuse.

If the Social Worker is struggling to see the survivor on their own, consider other ways of seeing them on their own such as at their child's school or at a medical appointment.

When the initial visit takes place with the survivor on their own, establish the survivor safety plan. This should include what they regularly do when they are worried about the perpetrator's behaviour, what they will do if the behaviour escalates and/or there is a significant risk to them and the children. This should also include practical steps such as a safety bag, separate money, and passport and who can support them.

The survivor Safety Plan should be recorded on the adult survivors Liquid Logic case record as a case note. The survivor must be informed that this will happen and give their consent to this being recorded.

2.3 Mapping

The Social Worker will meet with the survivor of domestic abuse alone to *Map* the abuse they have experienced. The Mapping Tool offers guidance for this process, designed to encourage reflective thinking in cases of domestic abuse.



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tool.docx

To '*Map*' the domestic abuse, the Social Worker will need to develop a full understanding of the relationship and the abuse including what was it like at its worst, the longevity of the abuse and how the family functioning has changed in response. Social Workers need to be aware that such conversations can be re-traumatising for the survivor, therefore support and empathy needs to be present at this time.

Below is guidance with regards to what information the Social Worker will need to gather for the Single Assessment.

What does the perpetrator do that makes life difficult for you, the children and changes the way you do things in the family?

- Consider asking the survivor about a typical day in their relationship. This will include considering good days and bad days, what makes it good or bad and identify individual behaviours rather than summarising the relationship as a whole
- To support the survivor to describe the full range of behaviours of the perpetrator during a presenting incident. This will include the behaviours before, during and after
- To identify patterns of the perpetrator's behaviour within the current relationship
- Discuss with the survivor if they are aware of any of the perpetrator's behaviours in prior relationships; or relationships with friends/family members
- Discuss with the survivor any Indirect and direct actions towards the children which includes both abuse and neglect
- Consider what is the most significant example(s) of the perpetrator's behaviour according to the survivor and the children how did they describe it and what is the context of this behaviour?

The impact of the abuse on the family functioning

- Provide examples of the connection between perpetrator's behaviour patterns and harm to the children and family functioning. For example, has the perpetrator's behaviour made the family homeless, has the perpetrator directly harmed the children
- Include any impact on physical safety: physical abuse of children: the children witnessing violence or threats of violence towards partner that create child trauma concerns
- Consider any issues of neglect of the children that creates safety issues, missed appointments, interference with partner's parenting/ parenting ability, impact of overall coercive control on immediate and overall functioning and the stability of the household
- Connect the children's emotional, behavioural, and other issues to the perpetrator's behaviour. Within this consider the issues in child and family functioning that the perpetrator's pattern of behaviour may have caused, AND the issues in child and family functioning that perpetrator's pattern of behaviour may have exacerbated

How has the survivor adapted their behaviour to keep the children safe?

- Consider the survivor's decision-making: We cannot understand the survivor's decision-making, particularly their protective efforts and safety planning without understanding the perpetrator's pattern of behaviour.
- Helpful statements may include "I'm assuming you've been taking steps to make things better/keep yourself and your children safe in the face of your partner's behaviour. I want to learn more about these efforts." examples may include having a support network; maintaining family or social relationships; advocates or law enforcement for support;
- Actions taken by the survivor to protect herself from abuse; acting as a positive role model for the children; moving the perpetrator away from the children when they are angry
- Support the survivor to identify what they are doing to keep the child(ren) safe and their 'survivor safety plan', which will need to be recorded on the survivor's record.
- Confirm with the survivor what information is safe to be shared with the domestic abuse perpetrator and how to engage them in the process
- In direct work with the child(ren) assess the impact of the domestic abuse and modified family functioning on them

- The Social Worker should meet any potential supervisor of contact and gain their understanding of the domestic abuse, their role in order to supervise the contact and any risks to the children and how they will ensure their safety.

The Social Worker should update the Domestic Abuse Stalking and Honour based violence (DASH) Risk Assessment following the Mapping and refer to MARAC if the outcome is High

2.4 Meeting the Perpetrator

During the Single Assessment process the Social Worker should meet the perpetrator of domestic abuse without the survivor or the children present and involve them in the process as much as it is safe to do so.

Initially the Social Worker should discuss with the survivor what is safe to share with the perpetrator, and how involved they can be within the process. The Social Worker should update the survivor after every professional meeting (whether this is as part of a CIN/CP Plan) with the perpetrator and update the survivor safety plan if required.

All attempts to engage the perpetrator should be recorded and considered in the Single Assessment. This includes face to face contact, via telephone, letter or via a third party

Meet with the perpetrator and gain consent to complete a PNC check and gain consent to speak with multiagency professionals who may be working with the perpetrator.

Attempt to engage the perpetrator in the assessment process, and in at least one interview on their own.

In the Single Assessment the Social Worker must consider:

- Does the perpetrator understand why Children's Social Care are currently involved?
- Does the perpetrator acknowledge any impact of their behaviour upon the child(ren)?
- Does the perpetrator show any willingness to change? What is the evidence of this?
- Is the perpetrator willing to engage in any support?

2.5 Analysis

In the analysis of the Single Assessment the Social Worker should consider the impact of the domestic abuse on the family functioning and the children. There should be a clear rationale as to why the case may close or why a full Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment is required.

This should be recorded in the 'reasons for these suggested outcomes' section of the assessment within the outcomes tab.

A full Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment is not required for every case of domestic abuse, provided that the Social Worker and their Senior Fieldwork Manager are confident that the domestic abuse will not continue in one form or another, and there is a robust safety plan in place. The information that is required within the Single Assessment for the case to close is as follows:

- If the perpetrator shows a genuine understanding of the impact of their actions and agrees to referrals to the correct services. These need to be recorded in the child's plan
- Within the child's plan there must be clear expectations to the perpetrator of what they need to do or not do to prevent further abuse
- A survivor safety plan recorded on the survivor record
- A network meeting (if possible) where the network is fully informed about the safety plan and their roles to keep the children safe from further incidents of domestic abuse
- A clear plan about the role that the perpetrator of the domestic abuse will play in the family functioning safely and how this could progress
- A plan of support for the survivor of domestic abuse, both in terms of domestic abuse and parenting capacity

Following the completion of the Single Assessment the Social Worker should compare the information they have obtained in the assessment against the most recent DASH and update the DASH if required. **This should be submitted to IDAS and MARAC if high risk or medium risk with the survivor's consent**

Guidance as to when the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment is Required can be found in section 3.2

3. Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment

3.1 Aims of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment

The aim of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment is to ensure that -

- There is a full clear assessment of the perpetrator of domestic abuse, how likely it is the abuse behaviour will continue and the impact of the abusive behaviour upon the children
- We hold the perpetrator of domestic abuse to account for their behaviour, with a clear plan of what they must stop doing or start doing to prevent further harm to the children

3.2 When the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment is required

A Single Assessment should always be completed prior to the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator assessment.

The Mapping of the domestic abuse will be an ongoing process in order to gain a holistic understanding of the relationship.

Please see Mapping Tool



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The Single Assessment will gather information to establish whether a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment is required or whether the case can close. In all Single Assessments there needs to be clear analysis and judgement from the Social Worker, with endorsement from the Senior Fieldwork Manager. Where domestic abuse is a feature, the analysis should consider if a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment is required, and if not, say why not.

Please see section 2.5

Reasons the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment may be Required:

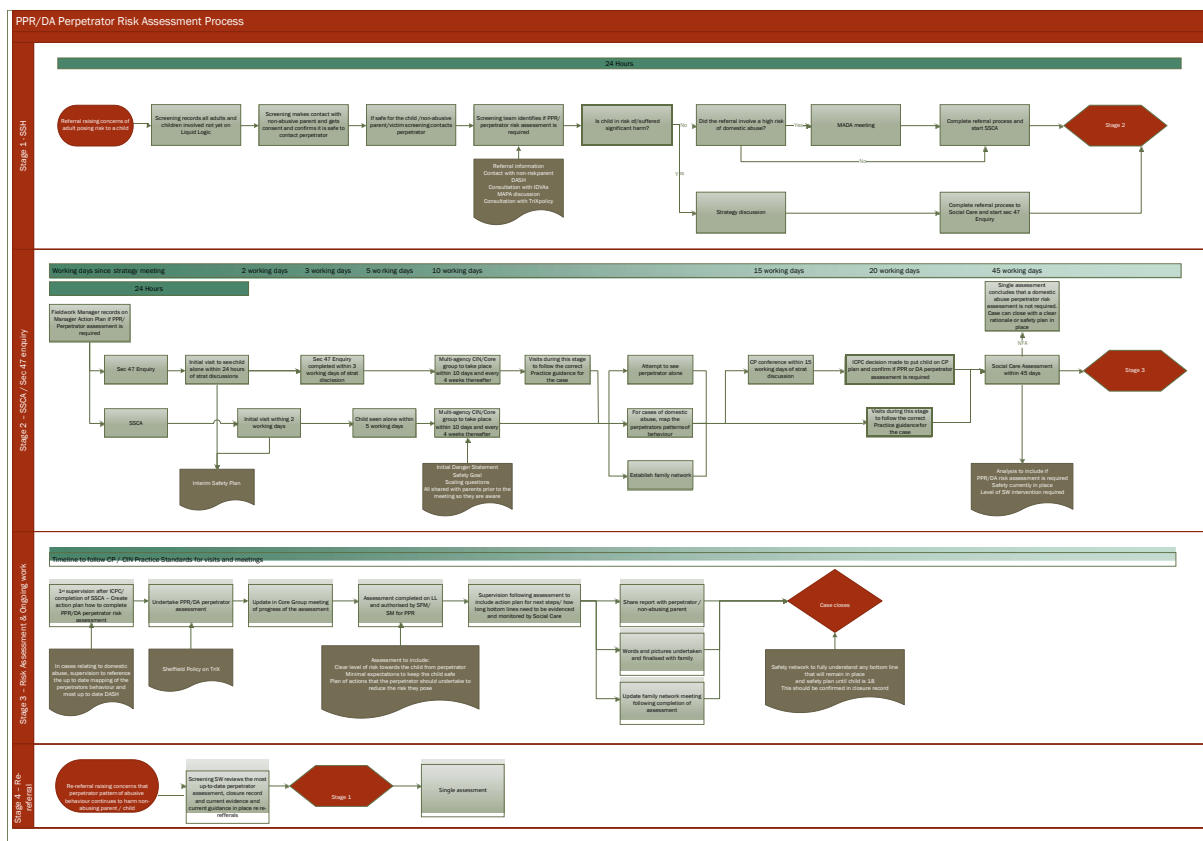
This is not an exhaustive list and only one of these factors may be required. The survivor of domestic abuse saying that they will not allow contact would NOT prevent a perpetrator assessment being required if one or more of these factors are present

- The perpetrator of the domestic abuse is a parent of the children and will likely continue to be involved with the children's lives or will later wish to re-enter

their lives AND doesn't recognise the impact of their actions on the children, refused to engage with the assessment, OR shows limited commitment to change

- The victim is in a refuge but it is possible that the children could have contact with the perpetrator in the future
- The Single Assessment recommends no unsupervised contact for the children with the perpetrator
- During the mapping in the Single Assessment the survivor discloses significant coercive control, further violence or threats of violence
- A previous safety plan around domestic abuse has been developed but was not effective
- There have been 3 or more referrals of domestic abuse between the same victim and perpetrator

Risk Assessment Process Flow Chart



3.3 How to Undertake the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment

Planning the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment

Senior Fieldwork Managers should consider whether the worker conducting the assessment should be independent - i.e. not directly involved in working with the family in question. Any decision in relation to this should be clearly recorded on the electronic file with a narrative.

The child/ren will be allocated to the Social Worker by the Senior Fieldwork Manager. A Manager Action Plan will be written indicating what form of assessment should be undertaken. The relevant Practice Guidance, depending on the status of the child needs to be followed.

The Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment should be conducted openly with the individual concerned, the children, and all the other members of the household. As the assessment will normally require a series of discussions over a period of weeks, an assessment plan which is available on Liquid Logic, should be drawn up and shared with the perpetrator.

For a child defined as a Child in Need, a Child in Need meeting should take place within 10 working days of allocation. Subsequent Child in Need meetings should be arranged every 40 working days. The child should be seen every 20 working days.

For a child who is the subject of a Child Protection Plan, the child should be seen every 10 working days and a Core Group meeting held every 20 working days.

For a child in care, they should be seen every six weeks, and the plan should be updated every 12 weeks following either the Looked after Review or the LAC Core Group meeting

After each session the Social Worker should check in with the domestic abuse survivor and review the survivor safety plan if required.

After the assessment is completed by the Social Worker, and endorsed by the Senior Fieldwork Manager, it needs to be shared with the victim first and then the network. Sharing of the assessment with the perpetrator will need to be discussed with the victim to ensure they remain safe

Contents of the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment:

The Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment should be recorded as a standalone form within Liquid Logic on the child's electronic record.

The information gathered for the assessment should be obtained by a series of planned interviews with the perpetrator and others as deemed appropriate, by

associated observation of the household interaction, and by information from other agencies.

Practitioners undertaking perpetrator assessments need to include the following factors within the assessment:

- In the first session with the perpetrator the Social Worker should get consent for multi-agency checks with any professionals involved with the perpetrator (including PNC check if not already done)
- Consulting other professionals who know the family
- Obtaining clear information about offences, cautions, allegations, and findings of fact
- Awareness of the process of the assessment – the development of relationships with the interviewer, attitude to authority
- Observations of family interactions
- Information about the child
- If the perpetrator has other children gain consent to speak to the parents of that child and access their information
- Any changes in attitude/response depending on who is present at interviews
- The perpetrators attitude to their abusive behaviour
- The perpetrators family history and functioning, relationship history and factors that influence their behaviour
- Cultural factors
- The parenting ability of the perpetrator
- Refer to the Single Assessment and identify what was the patterns of abusive behaviour identified? What is the impact on family functioning and the child? What identified types of domestic abuse are present? What professionals have already been spoken to and other professionals or families spoken to in the assessment
- The actions of the survivor

Analysis & Next Steps:

The analysis will focus upon all the information gathered, assess the degree of risk and the safety of the survivor and the children and how and if this is manageable. The analysis must include a clear definition of the risk the perpetrator of domestic abuse poses to the children.

It must be clear what next steps are required to decrease the risk and the expectations on the perpetrator of what they need to do or not do to prevent further abuse.

Senior Fieldwork Managers and Service Managers must bear in mind the perpetrator assessment takes several weeks. The maximum timescale for this work is **3 months**. Senior fieldwork managers will assess whether there is evidence to

suggest that immediate action is required in order to safeguard children. This will be in addition to, or instead of, the commissioning of such an assessment.

3.4 Recording and Finalising the perpetrator assessment

On completion of the information gathering, interviews and observations, the written assessment is then compiled within the correct Perpetrator assessment format for submission to the Senior Fieldwork Manager, who will decide whether the children are sufficiently safeguarded for the plan to be endorsed.

When the report is completed, the perpetrator is entitled to receive a copy of the sections that refer to them. **This does not include section 6 as this is about the survivor of domestic abuse and could potentially put them at risk if shared.**

If the assessment has deemed that the perpetrator of domestic abuse is at high risk of repeating their abusive behaviour, the SFM who authorised the assessment will need to reflect this on the **perpetrators** Liquid Logic account. They are required to create a HAZARD flag on the perpetrators account. They should upload the completed assessment onto the perpetrators documents section and refer to this in the flag. In line with current data policy the perpetrator should be informed via letter that they are recorded as a Hazard on Liquid Logic and that they can ask for a review if they feel they have made progress in addressing the issues identified. This action is not required where the perpetrator is considered to be at medium or low risk of repeating the abuse.

3.5 If the perpetrator refuses to engage in the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Assessment

If the perpetrator of domestic abuse refuses to engage within the Assessment AND the Practitioner feels that it is safe to close the case, prior to closure the Practitioner should:

- Complete the assessment form with as much information that they have obtained from other sources being clear as to where it has emerged and what attempts were made to engage the perpetrator
- Have a clear analysis of the likelihood of the perpetrator continuing/resuming their behaviour reflecting the nonengagement
- There must be clear expectations to the perpetrator of what they need to do or not do to prevent further abuse
- This must be shared with the survivor prior to closure

If the perpetrator of domestic abuse refuses to engage within the Assessment AND the Practitioner feels that it is NOT safe to close the case, this should be discussed in supervision with consideration given to what further actions are required to safeguard the child/ren.

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