



Routine Enquiry into Domestic Abuse in the Perinatal Period

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Policy on a Page: Key Messages

Aim:

This guideline has been developed to support clinical decision-making in the context domestic abuse in the perinatal period.

Summary of key changes (for revised documents only)

- Scope extended from antenatal to perinatal care,
- Guidance updated to align with current Ask and Act, safeguarding and domestic abuse legislation,
- Documentation and risk assessment processes updated to reflect Badgernet and DASH requirements,
- Training, audit, referral pathways, and multi-agency working requirements strengthened and updated.

Key Requirements:

- Undertake routine enquiry using Ask and Act,
- Ask in private, when the woman is alone,
- Document in Badgernet and complete DASH if concerns/disclosure arise,
- Follow safeguarding procedures, including referral and reporting where required,
- Share information safely and offer appropriate support/ referrals.

Target Audience:

All staff working within Maternity services within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

Training:

Staff are expected to access appropriate training where provided. Training needs will be identified through appraisal.

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1. Introduction/Overview

Routine enquiry into domestic abuse is a Welsh Government requirement under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 and is supported through the Ask and Act framework.

All women must be asked about domestic abuse at key points throughout the antenatal and postnatal period, when seen alone, as part of standard safeguarding practice.

Routine enquiry must not be a single event but undertaken at appropriate and opportunistic contacts.

Domestic abuse:

- Affects approximately 1 in 4 women during their lifetime,
- May begin or escalate during pregnancy,
- Is associated with significant risk to both the woman and unborn/infant child.

This guideline provides a framework to:

- Identify domestic abuse early,
- Respond safely and appropriately,
- Ensure effective multi-agency safeguarding interventions.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all clinicians working within Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) maternity services.

3. Statement/Background

If you have difficulty understanding any part of this guideline- including due to learning, sensory, or communication needs- please speak with your Line Manager or contact the authors of this guideline for support or clarification.

Staff must take a proactive approach to identifying and meeting the accessibility and communication needs of people with disabilities and/or language barriers, including offering information in alternative formats, arranging interpretation or communication support as required, and not relying solely on individuals to request adjustments.

The term “woman/ women” will be used throughout this document however, it is recognised that this refers to all pregnant, birthing and postnatal people regardless of gender identification.

4. Aim

The aims of this guideline are to:

- Promote safety and wellbeing of women, babies and families,
- Ensure compliance with **Routine Enquiry**,
- Support early identification of domestic abuse,
- Ensure timely **risk assessment (DASH)** and intervention,
- Support effective **multi-agency information sharing**.
- Ensure compliance with:
 - Wales Safeguarding Procedures www.safeguarding.wales,
 - Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

5. Main Body

Principles of Routine Enquiry (Ask and Act)

All staff must follow the Ask and Act approach:

- **Ask** – Routine enquiry at all appropriate contacts when the woman is alone,
- **Act** – Respond to disclosure or concern through risk assessment, safeguarding action and support.

Routine enquiry:

- Must occur in a private setting,
- Must use a professional interpreter where required (never family members),
- Should be repeated throughout pregnancy and postnatally.

Asking the Question

Staff should introduce routine enquiry as standard practice:

"Domestic abuse is common and may start or get worse during pregnancy, so we ask all women about this."

Mandatory Questions on Badgernet:

- *"Do you feel safe at home?"*
- *"Have you ever been fearful for your safety or the safety of your child(ren)?"*
- *"Are you frightened of your partner or someone close to you?"*
- *"Does anyone stop you from doing what you want, control you, or force you to do anything you don't want to do?"*

If No Disclosure

- Document appropriately within **BadgerNet**,

- Revisit at subsequent contacts.

If There is Disclosure

Staff must:

- Remain calm, supportive and non-judgemental,
- Validate the woman's experience,
- Reassure her that abuse is not her fault,
- Explain the limits of confidentiality.

Risk Assessment and Safeguarding Actions

Where domestic abuse is suspected or disclosed:

- Complete a DASH Risk Assessment (in Badgernet),
- Consider immediate safety needs,
- Consult with the Safeguarding Midwife/Team.

Where risk is identified:

- Refer to MARAC for high-risk cases,
- Follow Wales Safeguarding Procedures,
- Complete a Duty to Report if:
 - A child is at risk,
 - There are safeguarding concerns.

Information Sharing

Information sharing must follow:

- Wales Safeguarding Procedures,
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR.

Key principles:

- Seek consent where appropriate,
- Consent is **not required** where:
 - There is risk of harm,
 - There are child safeguarding concerns.
- Information must be shared proportionately and safely.

Documentation

- Record routine enquiry within BadgerNet
- Do not record detailed disclosure information in areas accessible to partners

Multi-Agency Working

Staff must work collaboratively with:

- Health Visiting services,
- Social Services,
- Police,
- Specialist domestic abuse services.

Women should be offered referral to:

- Live Fear Free Helpline,
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA),
- Local support services.

In an emergency, always dial 999.

Safety Considerations

- Do not ask routine enquiry if it places staff or the woman at immediate risk,
- Ensure safe communication methods,

- Avoid leaving written material that may compromise safety.

Further Information

Support services include:

- **Live Fear Free Helpline (Wales)**

Tel: 0808 80 10 800

Email: info@livefearfreehelpline.wales

Website: www.livefearfree.gov.wales

- Local safeguarding and domestic abuse services,
- Health Board Safeguarding Intranet [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.](#)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the maternity team to ensure that this guideline is adhered to when providing care to pregnant/ postnatal women.

7. Consultation

All new or significantly revised policies will be subject to consultation within the division via the Clinical Effectiveness Forum (CEF) and with relevant professional groups and/ or individuals present.

Individuals with expertise in obstetrics, midwifery and safeguarding have been consulted with in the development of this policy.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment has been carried out and approved as this guideline prioritises care based on standardised assessment and clinical need.

9. Training Requirements

All staff must complete training in line with national requirements on a 3-yearly basis:

- VAWDASV training appropriate to role,
- Ask and Act (minimum Group 2 for patient-facing staff),
- Safeguarding Children and Adults (Level 3 for Registrants).

10. Audit and Review

Audit processes will monitor:

- Compliance with routine enquiry,
- Documentation within electronic records,
- Completion of DASH risk assessments,
- Appropriate referrals and outcomes.

Findings will be reported to governance structures and action plans implemented as required. The above audits are completed on a monthly basis by the Lead Midwife for Safeguarding.

11. References

Welsh Government (2015)
Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

UK Government (2021)
Domestic Abuse Act 2021. London: HMSO.

Welsh Government (2014)
Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

UK Government (2018)
Data Protection Act 2018. London: HMSO.

UK Government (1998)
Human Rights Act 1998. London: HMSO.

Welsh Government (2022)
National Strategy on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2022–2026. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Welsh Government (2016)
Ask and Act: A toolkit to support frontline practitioners. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Welsh Government (2017)
National Training Framework on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: Statutory Guidance. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019, continuously updated)
Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Available at: www.safeguarding.wales

Public Health Wales / All Wales Midwives & Health Visitors Domestic Abuse Networking Group (2021)
All Wales Routine Enquiry into Domestic Abuse – Minimum Standards for Health Settings. Cardiff: Public Health Wales.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2021, updated)

Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working (NG116). London: NICE.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2016)
Domestic violence and abuse: quality standard (QS116). London: NICE.

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (2021, current resources)

Domestic Abuse in Pregnancy Guidance. London: RCOG.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018)
The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates. London: NMC.

SafeLives (2020)
DASH Risk Identification Checklist and Guidance. Bristol: SafeLives.

Knight, M. et al. (2024)
Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care: Lessons learned from maternal deaths (MBRRACE-UK). Oxford: National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit.

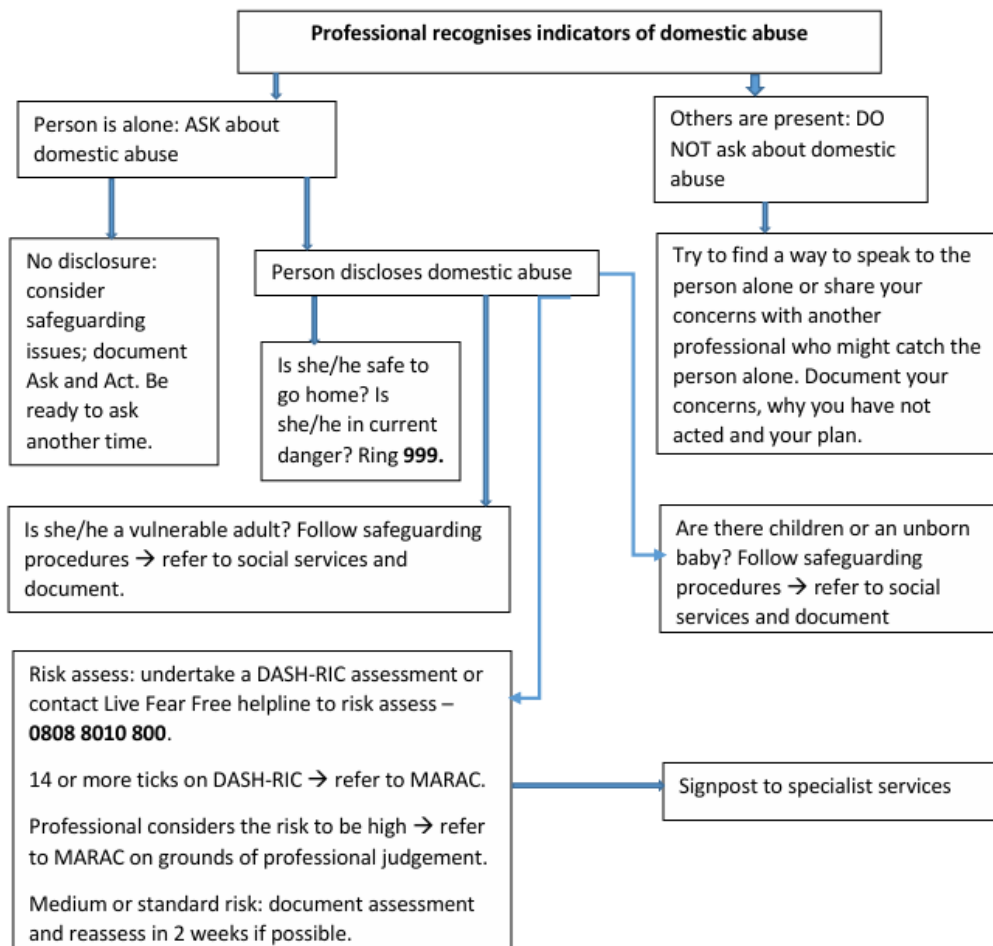
Welsh Government
Live Fear Free Helpline. Available at: www.livefearfree.gov.wales

Cafcass Cymru (2025)
Domestic Abuse Practice Guidance Suite. Cardiff: Cafcass Cymru.

12. Appendices

Domestic Abuse Flowchart

Domestic Abuse Flowchart



Audit Tool

Report to

ABUHB Safeguarding Operational Group and Childrens & Young People Group

Aim

To provide assurance Midwives are compliant with the current guidance around

asking pregnant people, the Routine Enquiry (RE) for domestic abuse at every

appropriate contact

Proposal

1. To review 20-25 sets of Badgernet records monthly.
2. Review of records to be completed by the Lead Midwife for Safeguarding
3. Findings from the audit will be submitted to AMAT
4. The safeguarding team will merge the findings from maternity, health visiting & neonatal unit, when they are complete, which will compile the data for the report.

Timescale

Monthly to feed into the Strategic Safeguarding Quarterly Meeting.

All Wales Minimum Standards Routine Enquiry into Domestic Abuse, Pregnancy and Early Years (2021)

Standard 1

All health professionals must recognise the duty to respect the woman's confidentiality but must be aware of its limitations in the wider public interest.

Standard 2

All women will be routinely asked about domestic abuse at every opportunity during Pregnancy and Early Years, within Maternity, Neonatal Care and Health Visiting Services. If women are unable to be asked this then there should be a clearly documented rationale.

Standard 3

Women who disclose will be given appropriate support and information. Women will be offered referral to appropriate specialist services.

Standard 4

All discussions around the Routine Enquiry question and/or disclosure of domestic abuse will be recorded clearly and contemporaneously.

Standard 5

Undertake a risk assessment for the woman, unborn baby, and/or any other children in the household. Staff must consider the safety of the woman, themselves and others within the location/ environment including health settings and use appropriate risk assessment tools.

Standard 6

Where actual or the likelihood of harm is identified, a child at risk report (Under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019) must be made. The welfare

of any child is paramount including the unborn child. Also consider the implications for the pregnant teenager

Standard 7

To ensure women, staff and practitioners are equipped with accurate and appropriate advice to stay safe.

Standard 8

Provide woman with accurate information i.e., resources, help and agencies available. Ensure multi-agency working.

Standard 9

To provide support to staff who are dealing with domestic abuse issues.

Standard 10

Staff will be confident and competent to deal with issues involving domestic abuse. Staff should be aware of basic legislation to help and reassure the woman.