



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Engaging with Perpetrators of Abuse

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The charity Respect has resources accessible to Safe & Together™ trained professionals relating to engaging professionally with perpetrators of abuse:

[Engaging With: Perpetrators \(Respect\)](#)

Where parents have demonstrated abusive behaviours, we must take a clear approach in our conversations with them and ultimately in our assessments of their behaviour.

Whilst our function is not to ‘prove’ that a crime has been committed as this is the role of the court, we do need to consider the likelihood that abusive behaviours have occurred and their impact on the safety and wellbeing of the children.

[Engaging fathers who commit family violence: Issues and challenges for family courts \(Wiley Online Library\)](#)

Practice Points

- We must also be mindful that in using the Safe & Together™ approach in our reports and discussions with parents, particularly those who are perpetrating abuse, this could prompt an escalation in violence towards the victim-survivor(s) as a form of retaliation.
- Our role is to assess and report on the potential harm that domestic abuse perpetration has on the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. In conducting these assessments, we must be clear on what behaviours are having a harmful impact on them. Parents can respond to our reports in a multitude of ways; some parents may be displeased or angry by them and this anger may be directed at the victim-survivor(s).
- It is the correct approach to hold perpetrators of abuse accountable to their behaviours in our reports; however, we should consider whether victim-survivors are at further risk, whether further safeguarding and/or other relevant services are required to support with safety planning.
- Victim-survivors should guide safety planning considerations in collaboration with supporting agencies; they will have a better understanding of their own environment, potential triggers, and resources available to them. This insight ensures that the safety plan is realistic and applicable.

Safe & Together™ provides us with the following guidance on approaching interviews with perpetrator parents:

Prepare

- What information do you already have regarding the perpetrator? This may include any previous safeguarding concerns, criminal records, or records from previous engagements with the family court.
- Are there any other sources/organisations involved with the family that could provide you with information?
- How will you manage confidentiality for all people during this interview? This will include managing information that could compromise the safety of the victim-survivor(s) such as where they live or what agencies they are engaging with.
- What safety precautions are in place for you as a professional? Consider where the interview will take place, whether there are any colleagues around etc.
- Find reasonable spaces for safety and that increase the opportunity for productive conversations to take place.

Engage

- Be clear on the purpose of the meeting from the outset.
- Explain your role in child protection and wellbeing.
- Demonstrate high parenting and behavioural expectations.
- Gather information from their perspective.
- Focus on their behaviours and choices.
- Being clear that abuse is not acceptable and is detrimental to child and family functioning.

- Ask them about the impact their behaviour and choices have on the children.
- Redirect conversations that are victim blaming back to their personal choices and behaviours.
- Focus on identifying areas for accountability, change and parenting choices that are focused on child wellbeing and safety.
- Assess their attitudes toward their own behaviour.
- Connect behaviours to the impact on the child(ren) and family functioning.

Case Plan

- Assess the evidence and identify if any accountability has been addressed by the perpetrator.
- Are they willing to make changes and follow recommendations?
- Identify whether any other services or organisations can offer support to change.
- Set clear behavioural expectations that are in line with the child(ren's) welfare and that of the non-offending parent/extended family and community.
- If the perpetrator is already involved with partner agencies (whether statutory, medical, or charitable) consider the information available via these sources, or whether appropriate intervention in the form of signposting is required.
- Whilst we can have empathy for challenges (childhood trauma, mental health, or substance misuse or otherwise) and recognise that individuals should receive support to address these, they are not justifiable excuses for abusive behaviour, and we must assess the risk and impact of the behaviours towards child and adult safety and wellbeing. This should then inform our recommendations regarding family time.

Potential Motivating Forces for Change

- Highlighting how they can/have harmed children (this includes explaining the harm abuse towards the other parent, regardless of whether any abuse was directed at the child(ren), causes to the wellbeing of the child).
- Highlighting how damaging the relationship between children and the other parent causes harm.
- Engaging them on their experiences, hopes and fears in parenting.

Practice Questions

- What kind of parent do you want to be?
- What kind of relationship do you want with your children?
- What do you want your children to think of / value about your parenting?
- What do you think your children will say about you in 5 years' time?
- When you behave ____ way, how does that help you achieve this goal?
- Have you considered how ____ behaviour impacts your children/ex-partner?

Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes (DAPPs)

Research suggests that DAPPs can be effective in improving outcomes for victim-survivors and in changing the behaviours of abusive people. It is important to note that for DAPP's to be effective, the following must apply:

- The programme must be Respect Standard accredited; poorly run services can raise risk and increase victim-survivor vulnerability.
- Participation should be the choice of the individual and be intrinsically motivated; extrinsic motivation such as to provide 'evidence' of change for court procedures is not likely to result in lasting change.

[Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programmes Factsheet \(Respect\)](#)

Victim and Prisoner's Act 2024 (Jade's Law)

- Under this act amendments have been made to existing law which allows for the parental responsibility of a parent who murders another parent to be suspended upon sentencing.
- This is then reviewed by a judge to ensure it is in the best interest of the child(ren).
- This will serve to protect children and young people as well as the victim's wider family.

“Parental responsibility can already be restricted by the court through a range of orders if it is in the best interests of the child. In the most serious cases, this can effectively amount to restricting all exercise of parental responsibility. These types of orders include Prohibited Steps Orders and Specific Issues Orders, and they can be made whether the parent has been convicted of a crime or not.”

(Ministry of Justice, 2024¹)

1 [Child rapists to automatically have parental responsibility stripped – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law)

This is a police force managed scheme that provides individuals with the:

Right to Ask

- Meaning individuals, their friends or family, social workers or police can seek information on current or ex partners’ history of abusive behaviours or violence.
- If you are a third party (not the direct individual at risk), you may not receive the information directly, but the police may opt to share this information with the person at risk or to someone who is able to protect their safety.

Right to Know

- If police checks show that there has been a history of abuse or violence, they may be proactive in sharing that information if they believe the individual is at future risk.
- Disclosures under this scheme must be considered lawful, proportionate and necessary to reduce risk or safeguard an individual.
- It is not only limited to physical abuse but all forms of abuse that could fall under the definition of domestic abuse.