7 minute briefing

Safeguarding ENFIELD

Educating ourselves about domestic abuse.

9.1% of women and 6.5% of men are estimated to have experienced abuse in April 24 – March 25. This is a huge issue in our society and it is vital that everyone working with adults with additional needs (or those who are vulnerable in any way) are educated about it – safe contact is only a tiny element of this.

Please check out resources on Coercive Control and local support arrangements

Women's Aid have developed a Friend's and Family Handbook to support.

What is safe contact – and why should it matter to me?

Safe contact is a phrase most often used in safeguarding circles – but it also applies when you are working with an adult for any other reason and could pass on information about concerns and what other teams or agencies are doing.

Usually safeguarding processes attempt to be transparent and clear – however, in some cases, it is important to consider how and when contact is made and information shared.

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that abuse, particularly domestic abuse and coercive control, can escalate when the abuser becomes aware that outsiders are aware & taking action – particularly agencies. They may make it harder for the adult to speak with professionals, deny the adult care or physically hurt them.

Domestic abuse is any situation where an adult is abused, in any way, by someone who lives with them, is a member of their family or who is a current or former partner. Safe contact would need to be considered in all such cases.

But not every case is flagged as domestic abuse – often it might be flagged as something else such as physical, financial or emotional abuse. We are working to improve on this – but it is vital to be aware that safe contact needs to be considered whenever the alleged abuser has a high level of contact with the adult and access to their home.

You might be aware of safeguarding work – but not aware of who is alleged to have caused harm – in that case, be cautious and check with colleagues before disclosing anything.



Considering ways to make safe contact:

Could you meet at a day centre, pharmacist, Doctor's surgery, DWP appointment etc?

Are there times when we know the adult will be alone or with someone safe?

Can we use the mobile rather than landline (don't assume mobiles are safe though)?

Could we visit in twos as below?

Are there partner agencies that visit or have appointments who wouldn't cause alarm?

'But surely only MASH, the Police or similar need to worry about that?!'

Adults who are older or have disabilities are likely to have contact with multiple professionals – it is really easy to say 'oh, I didn't call you – it must have been the safeguarding team as I can see they've been involved' or something like that.

Everyone needs to think about safe contact.

Overheard or read information – the dangers of indirectly sharing.

People, either in the same household or visiting each other regularly, often open each other's post or may have access to phones and voicemails. This can be part of the control aspect of abusive relationships – therefore it is important to consider what information you put in writing. For example, you could put that you work for a wider department and want to see what help they need – rather than the specific safeguarding team when messaging to leave contact details.

An adult might be nervous to be overheard if their abuser is in the house – and they may actually overhear – so consider meeting elsewhere, going for a walk or visiting in twos so another professional can ensure the alleged abuser is distracted/ elsewhere in the house.

Multi-disciplinary reading, planning & discussion.

It is important that teams/ agencies share information about communication plans with adults – so that all know what can be shared and where there might be risks.

Communication between teams is very important here. This includes referral to the MARAC meeting where appropriate but there will need to consider other agencies who don't attend or internal colleagues with access to records (who can see there is safeguarding involvement).

www.enfield.gov.uk/SafeguardingEnfield

ENFIELD Council