



Workplace Domestic Abuse Response Handbook for Dental Professionals

The British Association of Dental Nurses

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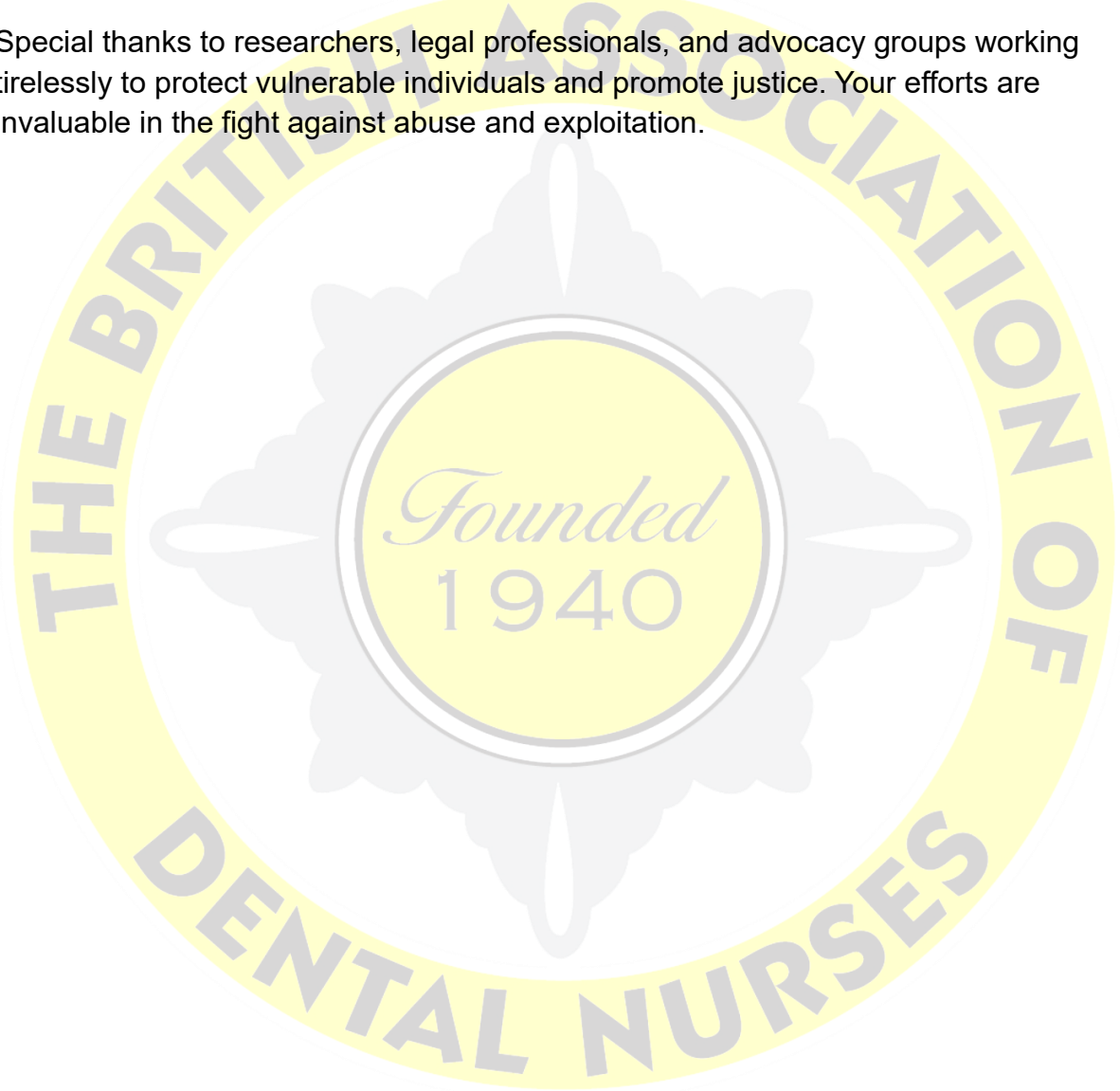
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This document compiles key governmental and legal resources on domestic abuse, forced marriage, modern slavery, and related crimes. The information has been sourced from official UK government publications and victim support organisations. This resource will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure continued accuracy and relevance. The next review is in March 2026.

Acknowledgements

We extend our deepest gratitude to the UK Government, the Ministry of Justice, the Employer's Initiative for Domestic Abuse (EIDA) and Victim Support for their dedication to providing vital information and resources on domestic abuse, modern slavery, and related crimes. Their ongoing work plays a crucial role in raising awareness, supporting victims, and shaping policies to combat these serious issues.

Special thanks to researchers, legal professionals, and advocacy groups working tirelessly to protect vulnerable individuals and promote justice. Your efforts are invaluable in the fight against abuse and exploitation.



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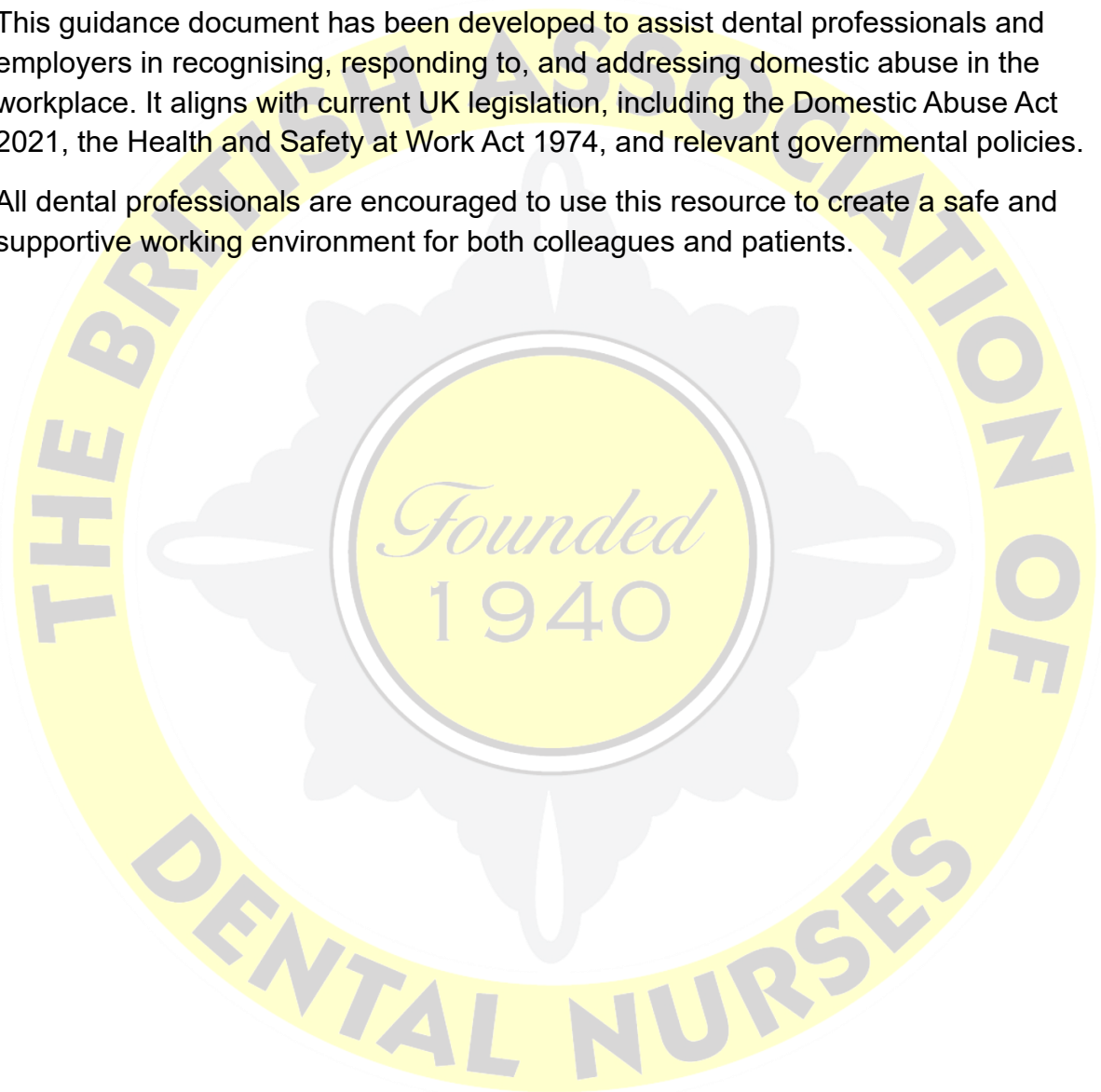
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Foreword

Domestic abuse is a serious and multi-faceted issue that affects individuals across all sectors, including the dental profession. As healthcare providers who collaborate closely with patients and colleagues, dental professionals are in a unique position to identify signs of abuse and offer support.

This guidance document has been developed to assist dental professionals and employers in recognising, responding to, and addressing domestic abuse in the workplace. It aligns with current UK legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and relevant governmental policies.

All dental professionals are encouraged to use this resource to create a safe and supportive working environment for both colleagues and patients.

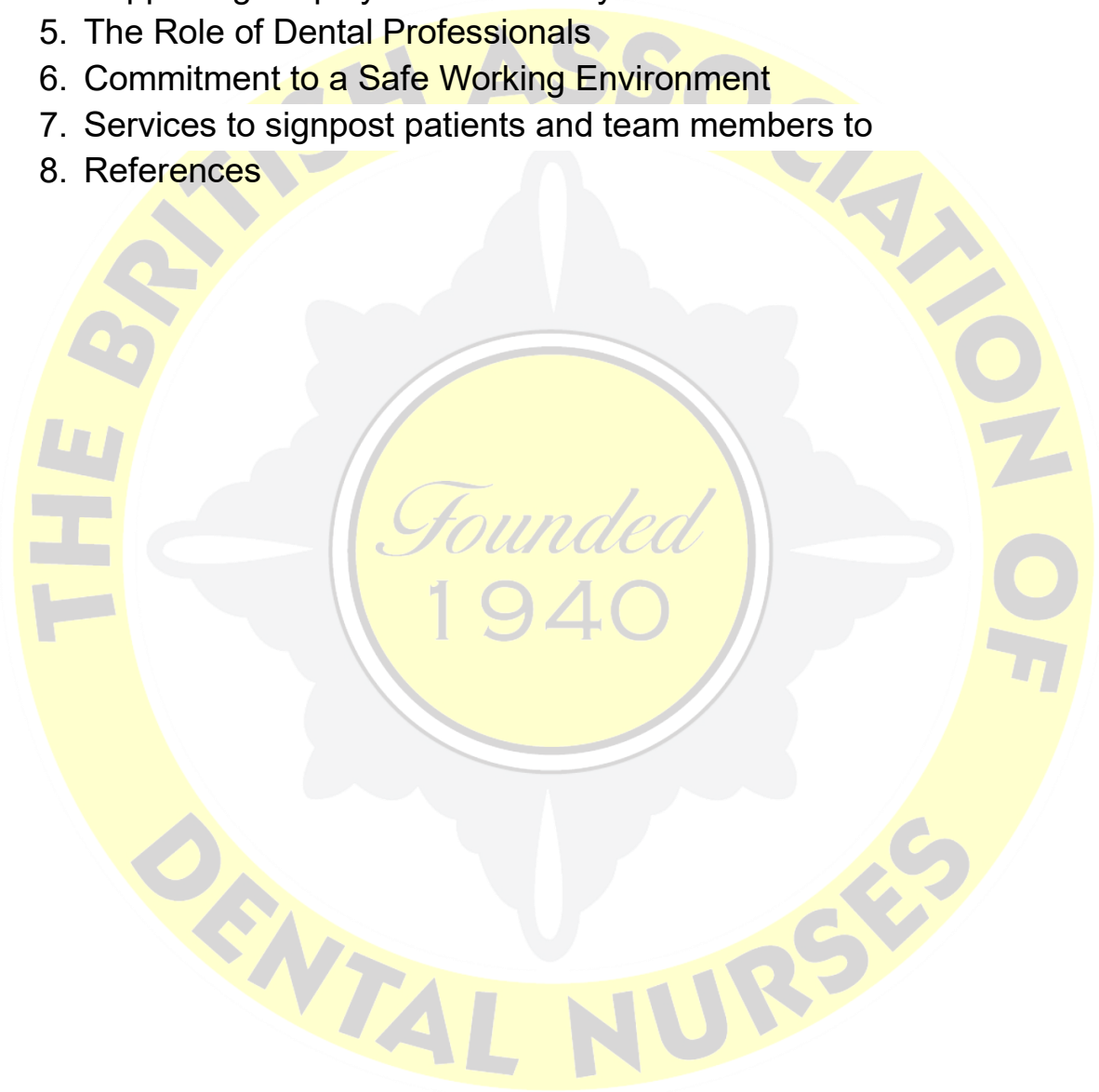


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Table of Contents

1. Understanding Domestic Abuse
2. Forms of Domestic Abuse
3. Identifying Signs of Domestic Abuse
4. Supporting Employees Affected by Domestic Abuse
5. The Role of Dental Professionals
6. Commitment to a Safe Working Environment
7. Services to signpost patients and team members to
8. References



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1. Understanding Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse refers to any pattern of controlling, coercive, violent, or abusive behaviour between individuals who share a personal connection. It can manifest in various forms, including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional and psychological abuse
- Financial control and exploitation
- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Harassment and stalking
- Digital abuse, including deepfake manipulation

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 legally defines domestic abuse and recognises children as victims when they witness or experience abuse in their homes.

The UK government describes domestic abuse asⁱ:

“Any pattern of behaviour involving control, coercion, threats, violence, or abuse between individuals aged 16 or older who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”

This definition also includes so-called ‘honour-based’ violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and forced marriage.

2. Forms of Domestic Abuse

2.1 Physical Abuse

- Inflicting physical harm, such as hitting, kicking, choking, or burning.
- Using weapons or objects to cause injury.
- Restricting movement, withholding medical care, or forcing substance use.

2.2 Sexual Abuse

- Non-consensual sexual contact, assault, or coercion.
- Manipulating reproductive choices or using sex as a means of control.
- Using humiliation or threats linked to sexual activity.

2.3 Emotional and Psychological Abuse

- Verbal humiliation, belittling, or persistent criticism.
- Manipulation through gaslighting or coercion.
- Social isolation from family, friends, or colleagues.

2.4 Coercive and Controlling Behaviour

- Restricting movement, finances, or employment opportunities.
- Surveillance of communications and daily activities.
- Using intimidation, threats, or emotional blackmail to exert power.

2.5 Financial Abuse

- Preventing access to financial resources.
- Controlling earnings or coercing individuals into debt.
- Restricting the victim's financial independence.

2.6 Harassment and Stalking

- Persistent, unwanted communication via calls, messages, or emails.
- Unwanted visits to the victim's home or workplace.
- Monitoring movements through technology.

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2.7 Digital Abuse and Online Exploitationⁱⁱ

- Manipulating digital content to control or extort victims.
- Creating or sharing explicit content without consent.
- Impersonating victims online for fraudulent purposes.

2.8 Forced Marriageⁱⁱⁱ

- Marrying without free and informed consent.
- Applying pressure, threats, or violence to force marriage.
- A criminal offence under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007.

2.9 Modern Slavery^{iv}

- Forced labour or domestic servitude.
- Trafficking individuals for exploitation.
- Governed by the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

2.10 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)^v

- Non-medical procedures involving the alteration or removal of female genitalia.
- Recognised as child abuse and a criminal offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

3. Identifying Signs of Domestic Abuse^{vi}

3.1 Behavioural Indicators

- Withdrawal from colleagues, friends, and family.
- Anxiety, depression, or noticeable personality changes.
- Unexplained absences or decreased productivity at work.

3.2 Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruises, burns, or injuries.
- Wearing concealing clothing despite warm weather.
- Frequent medical visits for non-specific complaints.

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3.3 Workplace-Specific Indicators

- Difficulty accessing personal finances or bank accounts.
- Persistent phone calls, messages, or unexpected visits from a partner.
- Avoidance of work-related social interactions.

3.4 Digital Abuse Indicators

- Monitoring of online activity or social media interactions.
- Coercion into sharing location data or personal information.
- Threats related to the release of personal images or videos.

4. Supporting Employees Affected by Domestic Abuse

4.1 Responding to Disclosures

- Provide a private and safe environment to discuss concerns.
- Listen without judgement and acknowledge their experiences.
- Avoid pressuring individuals into immediate decisions.

4.1.1 Appropriate Responses

- ✓ Listen with empathy and without interruption.
- ✓ Reassure individuals that support is available.
- ✓ Respect their autonomy in decision-making.
- ✓ Provide practical assistance and signpost to specialist services.

4.1.2 What to Avoid:

- ✗ Avoid blaming the victim - Avoid statements such as “*What did you do to provoke them?*”
- ✗ Do not pressure them into leaving their abuser – respect their right to make their own choice.
- ✗ Never confront the abuser directly – this could put the victim in more danger.

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4.2 Immediate and Long-Term Support

- Encourage medical attention for physical injuries.
- Offer guidance on reporting abuse if the individual wishes to do so.
- Signpost to specialist domestic abuse services.

4.3 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- Follow data protection laws, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.^{vii}
- Obtain consent before sharing personal details where possible.
- Share information only when necessary to protect individuals at risk.

4.4 Specialist Services and Support

- **Refuges** – Safe housing for those escaping abuse.
- **Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)** – Support for high-risk victims.
- **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)** – Coordinated response for severe cases.
- **Perpetrator Support** – Intervention services aimed at changing abusive behaviour.

5. The Role of Dental Professionals

5.1 Safeguarding Responsibilities

Dental professionals must adhere to safeguarding guidelines set by regulatory bodies such as the General Dental Council (GDC) and Care Quality Commission (CQC).

5.1.1 Mandatory Safeguarding Training for Dental Professionals^{viii}

Safeguarding of Children and Young People

- Level 1 – Non-clinical staff (e.g., receptionists, practice managers, staff without direct patient contact).
- Level 2 – Most dentists and dental care professionals.
- Level 3 – Required in larger organisations based on risk assessment.

Adult Safeguarding

- Level 1 – Non-clinical staff.
- Level 2 – Most dentists and dental care professionals.

Beyond patient care, it is also the responsibility of dental employers to provide a safe and supportive work environment for their staff.

5.2 Workplace Commitments

- Employers must uphold the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 by ensuring a safe workplace.
- Develop and communicate clear workplace policies regarding domestic abuse.
- Implement security measures where necessary to protect employees.

6. Commitment to a Safe Working Environment

Dental professionals and employers have a vital role in addressing domestic abuse within the workplace. By recognising the signs, responding with compassion, and referring individuals to the appropriate support services, they can help create a safer and more supportive environment for all employees.

Speaking about domestic abuse can be emotionally and mentally challenging. However, it is a responsibility we must embrace to support those in need, guiding them towards safety and a future free from abuse. Through collective awareness, understanding, and action, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of those affected.

This handbook equips professionals with the necessary tools and legal framework to foster a workplace culture built on transparency, openness, and trust. When individuals feel safe discussing sensitive issues, the stigma surrounding domestic abuse can be dismantled—empowering survivors to seek help without fear or shame.

7. Services to signpost patients and team members to^{ix}

Service	Contact Details
National 24-hour Domestic Violence Helpline for Women (Refuge)	0808 2000 247
Women's Aid	helpline@womensaid.org.uk
Solace Women's Aid	0800 802 5565, advice@solacewomensaid.org
Flows: Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors	0203 745 7707, flows@rcjadvice.org.uk
National Domestic Violence Helpline for Men (Respect)	0808 8010 327
The Mankind Initiative	0182 3334 244
Honour Helpline (Karma Nirvana) – Forced Marriage & Honour-Based Violence	0800 5999 247
Forced Marriage Unit	0207 0081 151
Broken Rainbow – LGBTQ+ Domestic Abuse Support	0845 2604 460
Galop – LGBTQ+ Domestic Abuse Support	0800 999 5428, help@galop.org.uk
Southall Black Sisters	0208 571 9595
Rape Crisis	0808 500 2222
Hourglass – Supporting the Elderly	Call 0808 808 8141, Text 07860052906
Ask for ANI (Action Needed Immediately)	Available in local pharmacies and jobcentres
Ask for Angela	Available in pubs, bars, and clubs
UK Says No More Campaign – Safe Spaces for Domestic Abuse Victims	Safe Spaces

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