



How and why should Homelessness
and Housing Organisations
Identify and Respond to Domestic
and Family Violence?

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▶ think forward

Royal Commission into Family Violence

Universal service systems that are available to all community members are ideally placed to have a much greater role in identifying and effectively responding to family violence at the earliest possible stage ... Improvements need to be made in order for universal organisations to be able to take a greater role in identifying and responding to family violence

(State of Victoria 2016)

Homelessness Organisations

- Melbourne research collaboration between Wesley Mission Victoria and Swinburne University
- Funded by The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
 - Women are not getting the full information about what services are out there to assist them if they do not self-identify and if organisations do not screen
 - DFV services are not able to cope with demand and refer to homelessness services – hence these services need to have the expertise to identify and respond appropriately
 - Potential risks are not being identified or responded to

What is DFV Screening?

- DFV screening is the process of seeking to discover whether someone is, or has been, living in a situation of DFV.
- Can be seen as the first step to a risk assessment process, but the two are not the same
- Systematic approach that involves asking clients a series of questions in order to identify if there is sufficient risk of violence to benefit from further investigation and/or direct preventative action tools
(Laing 2004; Peckham & Dezateux 1998)

Recommended screening questions

1. Do you have any reason to be concerned about your own safety or the safety of your children?
2. Do you have any other concerns about your children's wellbeing at the moment?
3. Do you have any reason to be concerned about the safety of anyone else?

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2010)

Benefits of DFV screening

Helps women to;

- Recognise their situation
- Receive relevant information
- Access support and counselling to help them and their children
- Recognise patterns of abuse in future relationships
- Understand that the abusive relationship is not their fault
- Reduce incidence rates of family violence
- Reduce intergenerational transmission of family violence abuse.

Research results

- All homelessness staff have attended training to identify and respond to DFV
- Uniting Wesley is developing a practice framework to be shared with other homelessness providers
- All staff are trained in the Crisis Risk Assessment Framework
- Uniting Wesley in partnership with Safe Futures Foundation has philanthropically funded a specialist family violence worker to work between the homelessness and family violence service to help build staff capability
- All staff are to be trained to undertake routine screening
- Posters displayed in waiting room to assist clients to self identify

Housing organisations

Many tenants will be currently in, or have previously been in, a violent relationship

Some will have come through the Specialist Homelessness System, others will not have been overt about why they lost a previous home and entered a period of housing instability



Development and dissemination of **accreditation process** for housing providers in order to improve national response to domestic abuse



DAHA Accreditation - 8 priority areas

- Policy and Procedures
- Case Management
- Risk Management
- Equality and Diversity
- Perpetrator Management
- Partnership Working
- Staff Training
- Publicity and Awareness

Why does DAHA say housing orgs should get Involved?

- Save lives and improve an organisation's response to individuals experiencing domestic abuse
- Bring Housing to the Table: Housing is uniquely placed to identify, recognise & respond to domestic abuse
- Ensure staff & residents are aware and equipped to deal with DA
- Cost benefits to the organisation and society

Cost & Impact on UK Housing Sector

- **£1.6 billion** in crisis accommodation
- Residents experiencing DFV **7 TIMES** more likely to be in rent **arrears £1k +**
- **Void** properties where DFV occurred **6 times** more expensive to prepare to re-let
- High levels of **turnover** in empty properties
- Feelings of **safety** lower on roads where there is DFV
- High levels of **property damage** in homes where there is DFV

Benefits of Housing Organisation involvement in DFV

- Early identification → Early intervention
- Reduce length of time in abusive relationships
- Safer neighbourhoods
- Stable communities
- Support for Staff
- Financial benefits for housing providers
- Prevent homelessness
- Reduce costs to public purse

Why get Involved?

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- Ensure staff & residents are aware and equipped to deal with DA
- Cost benefits to the organisation and society

More information:

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