DASH (2009) Frequently Asked Questions[1] (FAQs)

Risk identification and assessment is not a predictive process and there is no existing accurate procedure to calculate or foresee which cases will result in homicide or further assault and harm.

The DASH (2009) Risk Model was created by Laura Richards, BSc, MSc, FRSA on behalf of ACPO and in partnership with CAADA

It has also been endorsed by:

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[1] This guidance reflects work undertaken by Laura Richards, on behalf of ACPO, in partnership with CAADA

Introduction

The introduction of the new Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH 2009) Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model means that for the first time all police services and a large number of partner agencies across the UK will be using a common checklist for identifying and assessing risk, which will save lives.

The DASH (2009) Model has been developed by Laura Richards on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and in partnership with Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA). It has been endorsed by CAFCASS, RESPECT, GLDVP and the National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV). ACPO Council accredited the DASH (2009) Model to be implemented across all police services in the UK in March 2009.

In England and Wales, the police service will use the ACPO DASH and partner agencies the CAADA DASH.

Many professionals have raised a number of practical questions about its use. This practical factsheet seeks to address some of the most common questions asked:

1. What is the Risk Identification and Assessment checklist for?

The purpose of the checklist is to give a consistent and practical tool to practitioners working with victims of domestic abuse to help them identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meeting - in order to manage the risk.

2. Where has the model come from?

The DASH (2009) Model has been built on the existing good practice of the evidence based SPECSS+ Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model and the South Wales Model. The SPECSS+ was previously ACPO compliant and had been evaluated numerous times. Victim and practitioner focus groups have also been run to ensure the language and format worked as best it could.

The risk factors included are evidence based, drawn from extensive research by leading academics in the field of domestic homicides, 'near misses' and lower level incidents. The research base for each factor can be found in the practice guidance.

3. What's new with the DASH (2009)?

Drawing and building upon existing research Laura Richards has continued to research and develop the SPECSS+ Model to create the next generation of the model on behalf of Association of Chief Police Officers and in partnership with CAADA governed by a Risk Assessment Expert Panel to create one common tool kit. This is the DASH (2009).

These new elements include:
- a common understanding of risk
- questions relating to the victim's perception of risk
- stalking and harassment
- 'honour'-based violence
- detailed practice guidance and support material.

4. Who should use it?

The model is a multi-agency tool. However, it is used in different ways by the police and other agencies.

For example, in terms of the <u>police service</u> it should be used by first response staff who are conducting the initial risk identification. It is then used by specialist staff conducting the risk assessment in full. It can also be used by call handlers, station reception officers, custody officers and intelligence staff.

In terms of <u>partner agencies</u> the primary user will be front line practitioners working with victims of domestic abuse. This will include both domestic abuse specialists, such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), and generic practitioners such as those working in a primary care health service or housing.

Over time an increasing range of agencies will feel confident to use the checklist with their clients/service users. The checklist has been developed with this in mind.

5. When should the DASH be used?
The checklist should be used whenever a professional receives an initial disclosure of domestic abuse. It is designed to be used for those suffering current rather than historic domestic abuse and, ideally, should be used as a rapid response to an incident of abuse.

Risk in domestic abuse situations is dynamic and can change very quickly. As and when things change the risk assessment must be re-visited and reviewed.

6. Why should it be used?
Using an evidence-based risk identification and assessment model always improves decisions being made. It also increases the likelihood of the victim being responded to appropriately and therefore of correctly addressing the risks they face.

The DASH Risk Model also gives practitioners common criteria and a common language for risk for the first time. If victims and/or perpetrators move, which they do, they can be easily referred to another MARAC who, having undertaken DASH training, will subsequently have a similar understanding of risk.

7. Do I have to ask every question?
Yes. It is important that you get a comprehensive view of the risks. Without this, there is a danger that you may overlook something significant in a case which causes your response to be inadequate.

8. Is this now the same as the police version?
Yes. The two models of the risk identification checklist and the risk assessment and management tool used by the police are now completely aligned and are based on the same analysis and approach.

There are, however, some practical differences in the responsibility held by police officers. The police have to ask the ACPO DASH questions at all incidents and grade them standard, medium or high risk. The first response officer will conduct the initial risk identification and then the specialist staff based in the domestic abuse unit will then conduct the risk assessment in full. The risk tool for police is more extensive covering a full risk assessment and risk management packages, as well as three explicit additional questions relating to children, 11 on stalking and harassment and a further 10 if HBV is disclosed.

9. How does the Police ACPO DASH work and what are the key differences between this and the CAADA DASH?
The police will use the ACPO DASH Model. The first response staff complete the risk identification using the DASH questions. They will categorise the risk and then the specialist officer will quality assure it and conduct the full risk assessment leading to development of a bespoke risk management plan. They will refer the case on to MARAC if it is high risk.

The risk classification relies *solely* on professional judgement which is why the training is so important. There are a number of key documents that also support the Police DASH training.

The 'specialist' police staff who conduct the risk assessment in full also have to ask 11 additional questions on stalking and harassment if it is present in Q8 and an additional 10 questions on HBV is it is present in Q20.

If you have further questions about the police model or training, please contact your local force champion or Laura Richards on the contact details provided.

10. Can you explain the MARAC referral thresholds included in the guidance?
Partner agencies will use the CAADA DASH. There is a detailed explanation of the referral thresholds in the CAADA risk identification document. For partner agencies (excluding the police who solely use professional judgement), they are based on three principles.

Professional judgement: completing the checklist will inform your professional judgement. There may be some things that are going on that are not visible in the checklist as the checklist cannot cover every single behaviour. There may also be situations where a victim either refuses to answer questions or answers only a few but the professional may still conclude that they are at high risk of harm.

Visible high risk: conversely, there will be instances where a victim is prepared to answer the full range of questions and CAADA recommend that a threshold of 14 ticks or above is a defensible position to take when referring a case to MARAC.

Number of incidents: there may be instances of escalation of violence where there are numerous 'smaller' incidents and this too can be a catalyst to taking a case to MARAC, sharing information and getting a better picture of the true situation.

In practice, the more experienced domestic abuse practitioners will tend to rely on professional judgement, whilst less experienced practitioners will use the actuarial threshold as a safety net. Ideally we want to get to a position where professionals are trained on the model and therefore are more reliant on their professional judgement. Training is crucial to build the knowledge to understand what the risk factors are and how they co-relate. The context and detail of the behaviour is crucial as well as what the answers to the questions mean.

11. When referring cases to the MARAC, what about cases that do not meet the threshold of 14 ticks?
Inevitably, there will be cases that fall below the actuarial threshold but you may have genuine concerns about a victim. In these cases you have full discretion to use your professional judgement to refer them into the meeting. The actuarial threshold should be used more as a safety net than anything else.

12. How does the ACPO DASH Risk Model work in relation to children?
This checklist is designed to identify risk to an adult victim of domestic abuse. However, we know that children who are living with and witnessing domestic abuse are also at risk of suffering significant harm and this has recently been formalised by Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

While this is not designed as a risk assessment tool for children *per se*, it is very likely to identify children who are at high risk of harm and who should be in receipt of additional support. In the Police DASH model there are nine questions in total (Q3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12,

17, 21 and 26) and in the CAADA model there are five questions (Q3, 7, 9, 14, 23) that relate specifically to children.

The checklist clearly asks that every practitioner who fills this out in relation to an adult victim - and who is aware that there are children in that household - must make a referral to ensure that those children are safeguarded. We are clear that without a risk identification tool for adults the safety of many children will be missed and that referrals need to be made where children are living in households where domestic abuse is taking place.

13. How does the ACPO DASH Risk Model work in relation to honour based violence (HBV)?
There are a number of questions that relate to HBV in the model – Questions 4, 5, 15, 17, 20, 21 and 10 additional questions that should also be asked if HBV is disclosed.

You will see that all of the questions now include the possibility that there is more than one perpetrator, giving the victim the option of disclosing additional people who they are frightened of, or who they feel threatened by, including an intimate partner. Further, there are direct questions about HBV in the checklist which will help practitioners to identify these cases.

It is important to stress that it is highly likely that you will need to use your professional judgement in identifying whether an 'honour'-based violence case should be referred to MARAC.

The security issues around information sharing are particularly relevant in cases of HBV and the victim must ALWAYS be asked who it is safe to share information with.

14. How does the ACPO DASH Risk Model work in relation to stalking and harassment?
On the Police ACPO DASH (27 item checklist) questions 8 and 15 relate to stalking and harassment. If this is present you must ask the additional 11 questions. Question 8 is the gateway to these questions being asked.

This is called the Stalking-DASH (S-DASH). It was designed by Drs Lorraine Sheridan and Karl Roberts in conjunction with Laura Richards. It can be used in cases of intimate partner and wider family violence and thus is not appropriate for use in cases where stalking occurs and as well as when there has been no previous relationship.

Stalking cases should be taken very seriously. You will tend to get a large number of psychological abuse/behaviours (coercive control and jealous surveillance) happening before any physical violence takes place. Be warned that the physical violence may only take place at the actual homicide event itself. So take all cases seriously and call in an expert if necessary.

15. How does the ACPO DASH Risk Model work in relation to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) victims?
There is little research on domestic abuse in relation to the LGBT community.
However, we consulted with experts in this field and have included additional guidance about how to ask the questions and some of the additional barriers that may exist for reporting victims from these communities.

16. How does the ACPO DASH Risk Model work in relation to family violence?
The checklist can now be used in cases of intergenerational violence, such as an adult son

abusing his mother, and should be completed and assessed in the same way as for an intimate partner case.

17. Who should be using the practice guidance?

Police ACPO DASH Guidance is written for First Response and Specialist Staff. Much of this is relevant to other partner agencies.

Generic DASH Guidance for all agencies is also available.

The CAADA DASH practice guidance was drafted for use by Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs).

18. How was the DASH Risk Model piloted?

The DASH Model (2009) was built on the previous good practice of the previous the SPECSS+. which had been piloted and evaluated on many occasions from 2003. The DASH was informed through the evidence base and is tried and tested. The evidence base includes:

- a comprehensive literature review
- data analysis of murders (n=56), near misses (n=450) and lower level incidents (n=106,000)
- consultation with national and international academic experts and practitioners
- officer/practitioner and victim focus groups and debriefs
- extensive piloting in several areas on more than four occasions
- evaluation
- continuous review.

A series of extensive usability studies were more recently run in 2008 with three IDVA services, with three police forces and with a number of the partner agencies who attend the Blackpool MARAC. A series of debriefs were held and the learning was fed back into the model.

The conclusions were also cross referenced with work undertaken by CAFCASS, RESPECT and RELATE who had carried out a comprehensive evaluation of the previous checklist and who had identified a number of areas for development which have now been addressed.

19. What should I do if I have concerns about a victim's safety after I complete the checklist but it does not meet the threshold in my area for a multi-agency response?

You should signpost the victim to your local specialist domestic abuse service.

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