



Frequently asked questions/ Potential barriers to “Ask and Act”

The benefits of implementation of a process of “Ask and Act” are outlined within *Implementation of “Ask and Act” – guidance for relevant authority leaders, co-ordinators and managers* and *Delivering “Ask and Act” – the role of the frontline practitioner*.

Whilst recognition of the indicators of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence should form part of good clinical and social care practice already, it is acknowledged the introduction of a formal process to support this could be met with challenges. This document outlines the barriers to effective implementation of targeted enquiry and proposals through which to mitigate for them.

Barriers to implementation can relate to professional attitude, organisational structure and the clients feelings and fears.

Professional attitudinal potential barriers to implementing Ask and Act

Concern	Response	Mitigation
<p>Targeted enquiry may offend the client or cause emotional distress and discomfort.</p>	<p>In general minimal adverse effects of screening have been identified¹</p> <p>Practice in this area suggests those who are asked about their experience of violence or abuse are generally supportive of the process.² This is particularly true of those who have experienced violence and abuse.</p> <p>Research also suggests women were much more likely than professional to support screening practices.</p> <p>Practice based feedback includes several examples of clients who experienced domestic abuse for decades but who didn't seek help due to lack of knowledge or fear but who would have if they had been asked.</p>	<p>Training on "Ask and Act" will best be co-delivered by a professional with strong audience knowledge (working in the same or similar field) and by a professional with strong knowledge of the experience and impact of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.</p> <p>The aim of such a delivery style will be to offer expert and practice based feedback to the training audience to increase their confidence to practice targeted enquiry.</p>
<p>Targeted enquiry might further endanger the client.</p>	<p>It is first important to recognise, if it is done privately and safely, asking about the experience of violence or abuse will not make it happen. Moreover all clients have a choice as to whether or not to disclose. The choice ultimately lies with them.</p> <p>However, a process of targeted enquiry may generate risks where it is not practiced properly or where it is not followed up appropriately with action.</p>	<p>As above – the co-delivery by audience and subject experts will assist in increasing professional confidence.</p> <p>Be aware of service generated risks and ensure staff have the skills and tools through which to mitigate them.</p> <p>All data sharing must comply with Data Protection legislation. Ensure the organisation is signed up to a relevant Information Sharing Protocol which outlines a professional's duty of confidentiality and when and why this may be breached.</p> <p>Ensure the organisation is working to clear referral protocols through which to offer options/take action to safeguard adults and children.</p>

¹ Feder, G. et al (2009) How far does screening women for domestic (partner) violence in different healthcare settings meet criteria for a screening programme? Systematic review of 9 UK National Screening Committee Criteria

² The research is mainly focussed on the experience of women

Organisational structure potential barriers to implementing Ask and Act

Concern	Response	Mitigation
Lack of capacity within client facing time to ask the client questions or respond adequately.	Targeted enquiry should be supported through the implementation of policy and organisational changes which facilitate the process.	Relevant authorities should work with staff teams and external partners to agree the process of "Ask and Act" which is most appropriate to their service function.
Lack of training/ education/experience leads to: Staff feeling under-skilled and unconfident A lack of knowledge of available resources	Evidence shows comprehensive programs – those which support a process of targeted enquiry at different levels; through practitioner training, institutional support and infrastructure and investment reach higher levels of intimate partner violence identification than non-comprehensive ones.	Welsh Government funded training on the process of "Ask and Act" will be offered through the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Leaders in relevant authorities will also be offered support through this framework to demonstrate leadership on this issue and to develop infrastructures to support the practice.
Lack of access to effective interventions for VAWDASV.	No agency can tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence effectively alone. All work should be rooted within a multi agency response. It is not the role of relevant authorities to become experts on the issues of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, or to become specialist workers. These roles will exist locally and effective practice will involve robust and sustainable partnerships between the relevant authorities and the specialist sector.	Ensure the organisation is working to clear referral protocols through which to offer options/take action to safeguard adults and children. These referral protocols may involve co-location, although for many this will be unrealistic. Consideration should also be given to drop in clinics, direct, efficient referrals to local services and utilisation of the Live Fear Free Helpline.

Organisational structure potential barriers to implementing Ask and Act

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Difficulty in providing a safe space.	<p>Targeted enquiry should be supported through the implementation of policy and organisational changes which facilitate the process.</p> <p>A safe space is a setting in which complete privacy can be assured. This will never be the case in a public waiting room or in a space which is only shielded by a curtain.</p>	<p>Organisation leaders should consider the accommodation resources available which offer private and safe spaces for client consultation. This may involve the use of interview rooms or creative use of other space.</p> <p>For some professional groups this may involve ensuring conversations which take place in client's homes or in public places cannot be overheard.</p>

Clients feelings and fears as potential barriers to implementing Ask and Act

Concern	Response	Mitigation
Fear of reprisals, of response, of not being believed or response of organisation/professional.	<p>It is imperative each client is aware of the confidentiality policy of the organisation with which they are engaging and is therefore able to make informed decisions about what information they choose to share with the professional they are working with and have reasonable expectations of how this information will be treated.</p>	<p>Ensure organisational policies on data protection, information sharing and confidentiality are up to date, legal and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Ensure all staff understand the duty of confidentiality and data protection legislation and can explain it clearly to their clients.</p>
Concern disclosing may make situation worse.	<p>The safety of the client and their children must be held central to any process of "Ask and Act".</p> <p>No action should ever be taken which will knowingly put the client at risk and professionals should raise any concerns with their supervisor or manager if this is the case.</p> <p>Clients will often have been managing their own safety for some time prior to disclosing the abuse. Professionals should hold in mind the client will know the person abusing them better than anyone and their own judgment of their situation should be taken very seriously.</p> <p>A client is more likely to under estimate their risk than over state it.</p>	<p>Ensure opportunity is provided to identify risk shortly following disclosure (either through internal or external pathways).</p> <p>Ensure all staff understand the duty of confidentiality and the requirements of data protection legislation and can explain it clearly to their clients.</p>

Clients feelings and fears as potential barriers to implementing Ask and Act

Concern	Response	Mitigation
Lack of awareness of services.	Relevant professions should not be part of a process of "Ask and Act" unless they have been sufficiently trained in the availability of local services. To "act" will invariably require an explanation of or referral to local and national specialist services.	Training on "Ask and Act" includes information on the availability of specialist services, thresholds and referral processes.