

What services can I get in touch with for advice?

You can find advice on how to support or refer a survivor of domestic violence or GBV by calling the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline on 0808 2000 247



What is **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a criminal act and a fundamental breach of trust and human rights. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, known as the Istanbul convention, is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women. Violence against women includes, but is not limited to:

- Violence or abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, financial, emotional)
- Patterns or incidences of controlling, threatening, coercive behaviour
- Sexual and domestic exploitation
- Genital mutilation
- Honour-based violence
- Forced marriage.

The Istanbul Convention highlights how migrant women, with or without documents, and female asylum-seekers are particularly vulnerable to GBV. It expressly forbids discrimination based on migration status and requires states to make it possible for women whose status is dependent on a violent partner or spouse to obtain an independent residence status.



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Things to look out for that may indicate GBV against women

- Unexplained injuries or injuries concealed, minimised, and inconsistent with explained cause
- Frequent appointments for vague symptoms
- Frequently missed appointments
- Partner or family members unwilling to allow the woman to be alone with professionals
- The woman is submissive and/or reluctant to speak in front of partner; she appears frightened, and/or dominated by her partner or family members
- The woman presents with anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, self-harm, eating disorders, psychosomatic disorders, attempted suicide, unwanted pregnancy, substance use/misuse
- Change in appearance (e.g. clothes that do not suit the climate, being worn to cover injuries).

If I suspect abuse, what can I ask?

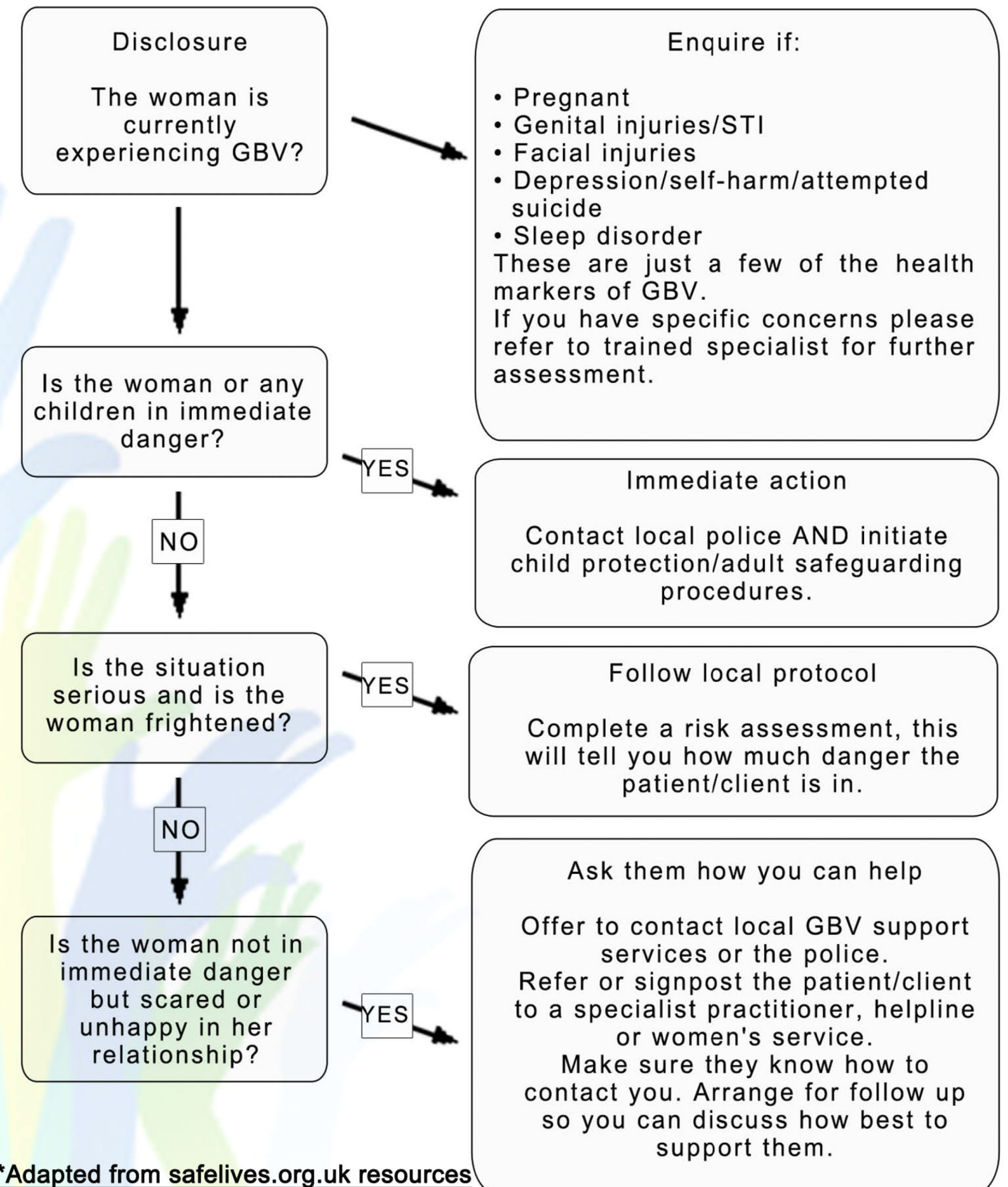
If you are concerned for the safety of the woman, client or service user it is essential to find out more. Speak to the person alone. If an interpreter is required, ensure they are independent of the family. It is very difficult for individuals to make disclosures of abuse, so when asking direct questions about their experiences it is important to do so in a manner that is sensitive, respectful and empathetic. Reassure her about privacy and confidentiality, but also explain the need to share information if immediate protection, in particular in relation to any children, is required. Also, listen carefully. She may talk around the subject before disclosing to you. Be aware that requests for help can often be hidden behind other things.

How do I respond if she discloses abuse?

In some respects, this depends on the context you work in. There are some general principles offered here. Be prepared for the answers; be supportive, discrete and non-judgemental. Respect and validate what the woman tells you. Acknowledge that abuse is a difficult subject to talk about, acknowledge the courage she has demonstrated in disclosing to you and thank her for being honest. Tell her that you believe her and stress the unacceptability of violence. It is important to treat the woman with respect even if they are putting themselves in danger by denying the abuse is happening. Even in cases where abuse is disclosed, do not compel the person to accept support.

What can I do to promote her safety?

Based on what the patient/client discloses, you need to make a judgement about what to do next and be aware that risk in situations involving GBV is dynamic and can change very quickly. The flow chart can be helpful in deciding the best course of action. Seek to empower - do not try to make decisions on the woman's behalf.



*Adapted from safelives.org.uk resources