

# Practice guide 2: Example risk assessment

Say something like, “I would like to find out a bit more about you and [person using violence] so that together we can work out the risks and then explore what we could do to try to keep you (and your children) as safe as possible. Are you OK if we do that now?”

## If yes:

The ACT has developed a process to use as a bit of a guide for this conversation just to make sure we think of the right things and then make decisions about the next steps that work for you. Are you OK if we work through that together?

## Initial broad questions examples

- Can you tell me what’s been happening to you lately?
- Can you tell me a bit about what is worrying you?
- You said yes to a couple of the earlier questions about violence or abuse at home. Can you tell me a bit more about what’s going on with that?

## More specific questions examples

- Could you tell me a little more about the last time he hurt or frightened you?
- Are there things he does that are about trying to control you?
- What is the scariest thing he has done to you or others?
- How long has this been going on?

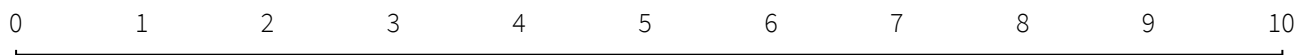
## Risk factors

We know from other women and from research that there are some things that can happen that indicate a high risk of further and/or escalating violence. Some of these questions may be a bit challenging but we really need to try to get a good picture, so we know what to do next. Would it be OK if we go through these?

1. Have you recently separated or are in the process of separating?
2. Are you pregnant or have a new baby?
3. Is the violence getting worse and/or happening more often?
4. Has he ever applied pressure to your neck or throat?
5. Does he try to control what you do?
6. Has he ever threatened to kill you or your children or someone else in your family?
7. Has he assaulted you in the past?
8. Has he ever forced or tried to make you do things sexually that you didn’t want to do?
9. Does he stalk or track you?
10. Does he have access to weapons and has he ever threatened you with a weapon?
11. Has the perpetrator ever breached a protection order or another sort of order (such as parole conditions or child contact)?
12. Has the perpetrator ever harmed or threatened to harm pets?
13. Does he have any issues with drug and alcohol use?
14. Has the perpetrator ever been diagnosed with a mental illness and has he ever threatened suicide?

### 15. Victim's assessment

- How scared do you feel given what just happened/the latest incident?
- Do you think the violence and/or control will happen again or continue?
- Is the control and/or violence getting worse?
- If you had to rate the risk of something happening again from 1 to 10 where might you rate that risk?



## Protective factors

Say something like: *It would be really helpful to get a sense of what things in your life we could consider positive or protective factors and work out how to best use them to increase your safety. Is it OK if we talk about that now?*

- Would you say you have a good social network?
- Do you currently have stable income and is your workplace able to be supportive?
- Are you thinking you might want to leave or move away from the relationship?
- Do you have safe cultural connections?
- Do you have family members that you have strong and safe relationships with? Do they know what is happening?
- Do you have access to your own finances?
- Do you have your own transport?
- Are you currently in contact with any support or advocacy services?
- Do you have a current safety plan?
- Do you have a protection order? Is he complying with that order?
- Do you have a good relationship with your GP or any medical personnel?
- Are there good supports in place for your children?<sup>147</sup>

### Protective factors:

A large light blue rounded rectangular box intended for notes on protective factors.

## Remember

**All risk must be acted on.** Death reviews have shown that even apparently low risk matters can escalate quickly, particularly at the point of separation (or where the perpetrator realises that the victim is ceasing the relationship). For this reason, regular updates and reassessment are necessary.

147 See also MARAM practice guides. *Responsibility 3: Intermediate risk assessment*<sup>147</sup>, pp 203–205.