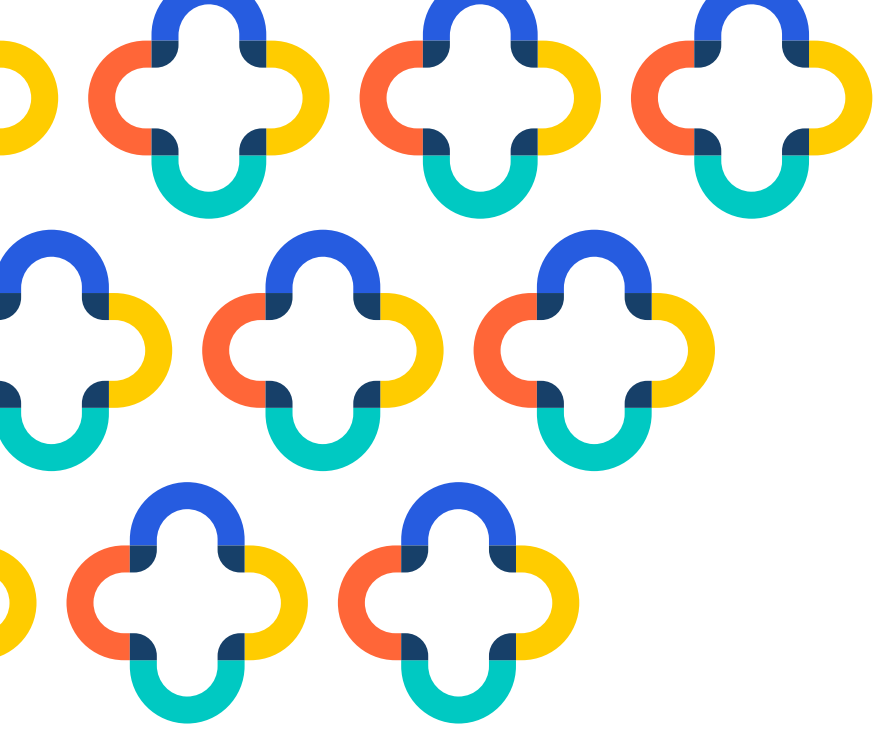


Guide

Responding effectively to domestic and family violence in migrant communities

2024





This guide provides strategies for addressing domestic and family violence (DFV) within migrant and refugee communities, emphasising a trauma-informed, culturally-sensitive approach. It covers building trust through safe spaces, knowledge exchange programs, and engaging community leaders. This guide also includes a list of useful resources for settlement practitioners, interpreters and community members.



The SETSCoP is a community of practice (CoP) bringing together service providers who support refugees and vulnerable migrants under the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program. SETSCoP is facilitated by the Social Policy Group in partnership with settlement service providers to enable sharing and learning, and improve outcomes for people supported through the SETS program and the wider community.



The Social Policy Group (SPG) is a national, non-government, not-for-profit body with specialist expertise in social policy and program design with a focus on population diversity, social and community cohesion, gender equality, community participation and inclusion, systems' responsiveness, and community outreach and engagement.

Overview

Introduction

Addressing DFV within migrant and refugee communities requires a trauma-informed, culturally-sensitive approach that respects diverse backgrounds. This approach acknowledges unique needs and perspectives within these communities and emphasises proactive engagement within community settings.

Strategies for building trust

- **Creating safe spaces:** Welcoming events, playgroups, and community activities foster trust and provide opportunities to discuss respectful relationships. Examples include welcome bus tours, playgroup information sessions, and community events like the Chaihana Teahouse in Victoria.
- **Connecting through knowledge exchange:** Workshops and programs focused on practical skills exchange, such as driving lessons or beauty courses, provide spaces for discussing DFV awareness, prevention, and accessing services.
- **Engaging community leaders:** Involving respected community and faith leaders is crucial. Initiatives like Healthy Respectful Advisory Groups facilitate dialogue and support capacity building among leaders.

Collaboration and referral pathways

- **Collaborating across services:** Collaboration between mainstream and specialist services is key. Co-location initiatives and mutual mentoring sessions improve accessibility and streamline support. For instance, co-locating services with multicultural organisations and introducing response teams based at police stations in Western Australia.
- **Building internal capacity:** Internal capacity building ensures staff are equipped to respond effectively to DFV within migrant communities regardless of their roles. Policies, frameworks, and after-hours support are essential. Advocacy for increased funding and resources is crucial for sustaining these initiatives.

Conclusion

Tailoring support services to meet the specific needs of individuals within diverse migrant communities requires proactive engagement, collaboration, and cultural sensitivity. By creating safe spaces, engaging community leaders, and building internal capacity, effective interventions can be implemented at every stage of DFV prevention.

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Introduction

Domestic and family violence (DFV) affects people from all cultures and faith groups. Research indicates that [one-third of migrant and refugee women experience DFV](#), with temporary visa holders being particularly vulnerable to abuse, including controlling behaviours and threats related to migration.

People from migrant and refugee communities who are experiencing DFV also face barriers to receiving support. Settlement professionals must understand these challenges to provide person-centred, trauma-informed care that ensures the safety and wellbeing of community members.

This guide is designed for professionals working in settlement services under the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program across Australia. It offers practical strategies and examples to enhance the response to DTV within culturally-diverse contexts. It highlights the importance of culturally-sensitive

approaches, providing insights on building trust and understanding diverse cultural norms. It also showcases the importance of collaboration and the establishment of robust referral pathways. It also outlines resources and reports available to access additional support.

Insights for this guide were drawn from participants in the [SETSCoP Gender, Families & Domestic & Family Violence \(DFV\) Subgroup](#) meetings held in 2023 and early 2024, as well as its Men's Groups and Prevention Programs Working Group. These forums connect specialists nationwide to share initiatives, challenges, and learnings to improve outcomes for those supported through the SETS program and the wider community.

SETSCoP is facilitated by the Social Policy Group in partnership with settlement service providers to enable sharing and learning and improve outcomes for people supported through the SETS program and the wider community.

Strategies for building trust and understanding

Addressing DFV within migrant and refugee communities requires a trauma-informed, culturally-sensitive approach that acknowledges and respects diverse backgrounds. This approach acknowledges the unique needs and perspectives within these communities and the need for proactive engagement within community settings, to build trust and accessibility to support services on communities' terms rather than the service provider.

Members of the SETSCoP Subgroup shared various approaches to gaining and building trust with community members to facilitate knowledge sharing and enable critical conversations about DFV and respectful relationships.

Creating safe spaces for connection

Creating welcoming and belonging activities, are some powerful ways to establish trust early with newly-arrived migrants. Welcoming events in collaboration with other service providers such as welcome bus tours help them get to know the local area as well as learn more about how to access local support services should they need it, such as the police and legal services.

Establishing connections with community members in familiar and comfortable environments, such as educational settings and places of worship, is an effective strategy for building trust. Playgroups are popular ways to establish trust and safe spaces, with one member sharing that they hold information sessions on women's safety and their rights during playgroup time.

In Western Australia, an organisation is providing respectful relationships

training to young refugees and migrants, operating in collaboration with education settings, including three high schools, two primary schools and a holiday program.

The Chai Khanna Teahouse in Victoria has been very successful in bringing together men from Dari- and Persian-speaking backgrounds to connect on a broad range of topics, from health and mental health to computer skills, and creating a space for respectful relationships to be discussed. They have even started a Carrom Board championship.

In regional Queensland, a men's group is building trust and fostering a greater sense of community for the local Yazidi community. This has created opportunities for group members to participate in social activities, including fishing and volleyball, and museum visits, as well as knowledge-sharing opportunities, such as having a young person from the Kurdish community talk about their pathway into tertiary education.

Connecting through knowledge exchange

Providing opportunities for community members to connect by exchanging knowledge and training can be valuable for building trust and community.

In Victoria, a group is focussing on fatherhood and the differences in parenting experiences in Iran compared to Australia. Similarly, a Sister's Circle has been set up in Victoria for women in the Afghan community to connect and discuss a range of topics and issues to address, including mental health, such as DFV.

Workshops based on training in practical skills such as tax, superannuation, financial literacy and digital literacy are great ways to engage community members with information about DFV awareness, prevention and more. These spaces facilitated the disclosure of issues such as financial abuse and coercive control.

Driving programs for women can deliver practical driving skills while also creating a space to discuss a range of topics, including DFV, health and how to access services, such as legal advice and how to get a divorce.

One community has developed a popular TAFE beauty course delivered for women. During classes, attendees heard from speakers from legal aid, police, Service NSW, and housing. This enabled community members to connect with the government/police, where they may have previously felt intimidated.

More broadly, some practitioners are holding information sessions about DFV and related issues during Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) classes at TAFE.

Engaging community leaders

Community leaders and faith leaders play a crucial role in fostering trust in communities. Engaging local leaders, including cultural and faith leaders, is important as they are highly respected and seen as experts by community members. Community leaders can mediate these situations. However, their roles and responsibilities may be unclear, and their workload can be very demanding.

In addition, there is often limited ethno-specific information on DFV for different community groups, which can lead to gaps in knowledge in how these leaders respond.

To combat this, a member organisation has set up a Healthy Respectful Advisory Group with community leaders to understand their perspectives on what was happening in their community and find out what support was needed to build their capacity. The first session had great engagement and focused on interaction and myth-busting with child protection officers. Future sessions have been planned to involve education department staff.

Another member organised a workshop between religious leaders and a DFV specialist to explore culturally relevant strategies for combating DFV. Advocacy for increased funding and resources for these initiatives, including recognising and paying community leaders is critical.

Collaboration and referral pathways

Collaboration across mainstream and specialist services is essential for successfully supporting individuals experiencing DFV or those at risk of offending. In addition, referral pathways that are local and appropriate to the cultural context are critical for an effective response to DFV.

Collaborating across services

Collaboration with other services emerged as a consistent theme amongst members for effectively responding to DFV. An example of a successful initiative was a collaboration with Sisterworks — a social enterprise working closely with migrant women supporting economic empowerment — together with childcare nurses and Chinese parent groups. One member took part in safety planning with the wider multicultural network by linking with translators. Another member has set up a men's reference group to advise on current and future initiatives in relation to prevention.

In Victoria, a member worked within a healthcare setting and held regular mutual mentoring sessions with trauma counselling advisors, InTouch and more. For each session, a story was shared, and attendees would look at ways to utilise their resources in a more people-centred way. Another member highlighted that all schools (in VIC) have a Culture Coordinator to support young people from CALD backgrounds and advised that people should connect with them as well as the wellbeing team in schools.

Co-location initiatives — where different services are offered in the same location — were recognised as an effective means to improve accessibility and streamline support. One member has been co-locating and collaborating with multicultural organisations and

mainstream organisations related to family violence and sexual abuse. A case manager co-locates in their office for half a day a week. Working together, they are learning how to assess clients' risk levels, using the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework ([MARAM](#)) tool.

In Victoria, a service now has Orange Door co-located with them, including child protection. In Western Australia, response teams have been introduced at all metro WA Police stations, providing immediate support to those affected by DFV. These teams not only assist victim-survivors but also engage with perpetrators.

Building internal capacity

Members highlighted the need for internal capacity building to effectively respond to DFV within migrant communities for staff in other roles. Members had developed practice frameworks about how to respond in CALD-specific DV situations, and for broader SETS casework, where a DFV situation had been disclosed. A member highlighted that new policies were being put in place to identify and address DFV in broader casework and everyone in their organisation was being trained to understand them, regardless of their role.

After-work hours support was necessary to effectively reach community members, highlighting the proactive approach of "going to communities rather than expecting them to come to us". One member highlighted that having in-house legal support meant being able to better support clients. Advocacy for increased funding and resources for these initiatives, including recognition and payment for staff working after-hours, was deemed critical in order to be consistently responsive whenever the community needed them.

Resources

For settlement teams

<u>Men, Health and Culture</u>	<p>Useful information about health, mental health, relationships, fatherhood, services and information for teams working with migrant and refugee men.</p>
<u>Settlement support for those experiencing Domestic and Family Violence training</u>	<p>Free online training by the Social Policy Group for general settlement team members to better understand the complexities that arise at the intersection of domestic and family violence and migration.</p>
<u>Guidance by 1800RESPECT for professionals who work with people from CALD, migrant and refugee communities</u>	<p>As part of their inclusive practice series, 1800RESPECT has developed guidance that tackles the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Supporting people from CALD, migrant and refugee experiences of violence</u> • <u>Responding to experiences of violence disclosed by community members from CALD, migrant and refugee backgrounds</u> • <u>Talking about the system with people from CALD, migrant and refugee backgrounds.</u>
<u>Change the story framework</u>	<p>Change the story is our evidence-based framework to guide a coordinated and effective national approach to preventing violence against women.</p>
<u>Promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia: The ASPIRE Project</u>	<p>A suite of resources that highlight the outcomes of a research project about immigrant and refugee women's experiences of violence.</p>
<u>Prevention of violence against women and safer pathways to services: Ten research insights from the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Projects with Action</u>	<p>A report highlighting key insights into "what works" for prevention and safer pathways activities engaging CALD communities in Australia based on ANROWS's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Projects with Action Research (CALD PAR) initiative. The CALD PAR initiative was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services from December 2017 to June 2020. It involved 26 projects across Australia aimed at preventing violence against women and creating safer pathways to crisis and support services that respond to family violence in CALD communities.</p>

<u>Migrant and refugee women in Australia: The safety and security study</u>	<p>This is a landmark 2021 national report that draws on survey responses from almost 1,400 migrant and refugee women across Australia, offering a unique snapshot of a sample of women from across Australia to build a more nuanced understanding of the diversity of migrant and refugee women's experiences. The survey was conducted by Harmony Alliance, a migrant and refugee women's advocacy organisation, and the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre.</p>
<u>Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework</u>	<p>The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, created by the Victorian government, ensures services are effectively identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk.</p>
<u>Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Framework</u>	<p>Released in May 2023 by SSI, the framework emphasises the safety and support of victim-survivors, especially those from multicultural backgrounds facing unique barriers.</p>
<u>A guide for engaging and working with interpreters in cases of domestic and family violence, and sexual assault</u>	<p>The guide provides an outline of how to engage and work with interpreters in cases of domestic and family violence, and sexual assault. The guide, by the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides information on who an interpreter is and how they deliver services, • how to engage and work with interpreters in cases involving domestic and family violence and sexual assault, • cultural interventions by interpreters working in domestic violence and/or sexual assault settings, and • what to do when a qualified interpreter is unavailable and the situation is an emergency.
<u>Consultation report: Exploring life, culture, and relationships with boys and men community</u>	<p>Launched in July 2023, this report presents the findings of a comprehensive consultation to understand men's and boys' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes concerning gender roles and violence against women. South East Community Links (SECL) engaged 70 men and boys from the Dandenong and Casey regions across various age groups and cultural backgrounds to inform the report.</p>
<u>Report: To Understand the Perspectives of Migrant and Refugee Women who have Experienced Family Violence</u>	<p>The WA Department of Communities Churchill Fellowship Report by Dr Carol Kaplanian, 2020 Churchill Fellow to understand the perspectives of migrant and refugee women who have experienced family violence.</p>

<u>Empowering migrant and refugee women</u>	<p>This research report from 2017, by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, provides practical strategies that could empower migrant and refugee women in the areas of women’s safety, economic and social participation, and leadership opportunities and foster their role in promoting community cohesion beyond five-year post-settlement. It identifies gaps and opportunities for supporting women who have experienced DFV in culturally-sensitive ways.</p>
<u>How the ‘Culture’ in ‘Culturally and Linguistically Diverse’ Inhibits Intersectionality in Australia: A Study of Domestic Violence Policy and Services</u>	<p>A fascinating research report from 2022 that draws on critical policy analysis and interviews with frontline workers from domestic violence, refugee resettlement, and migrant-specific services to examine intersectionality in policies and services. It notes that for intersectionality to gain traction, current notions of culture and diversity need to be rethought, and racism and white privilege need to be addressed.</p>

For interpreters

<u>Interpreting in domestic violence situations</u>	<p>A fact sheet by the Australian Government Department of Social Services for interpreters who may take on work in domestic violence situations. It includes information on the AUSIT Code of Ethics, training and professional development opportunities, and where to go for confidential and professional support.</p>
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For community members

<u>Men, Health and Culture</u>	<p>Useful information about health, mental health, relationships, fatherhood, services and information for teams working with migrant and refugee men.</p>
<u>Our Watch’s ‘Change the Story’</u>	<p>These animations are the culturally adapted Our Watch Change the story videos for Dari, Hazaragi, Hindi, Punjabi and Tamil-speaking communities. They are useful in gender equality and violence prevention training with multicultural populations. With thanks to South East Community Links together with their Afghan and Indian co-design team members for developing these.</p>
<u>What is 1800RESPECT</u>	<p>Guidance on what 1800RESPECT is in languages.</p>
<u>Queensland Women’s Refuge guide</u>	<p>In 2022, the Combined Women’s Refuge Group of South East Queensland (CWRG SEQ) developed a guide that outlines information about Queensland refuge for women considering fleeing domestic and family violence, translated into 15 languages. These languages include Arabic, Dari, English, Farsi, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Portuguese, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, and Vietnamese.</p>

Find out more

Visit the SETSCoP website or contact the Secretariat secretariat@setscop.org.au

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