

Using the DASH to understand economic abuse risks

This tool supports practitioners to identify and interpret economic abuse within DASH. While DASH includes a small number of direct prompts on financial issues, economic abuse is often present across a wider range of responses.

Practitioners should apply an economic abuse and coercive control lens when interpreting answers. This includes recognising patterns of restriction, exploitation and sabotage, and understanding how economic abuse may contribute to entrapment, escalate post-separation, interact with other high-risk behaviours, involve misuse of systems, or create acute financial or housing crisis.

The table on the next pages highlights how economic abuse may be present within specific DASH questions, what to explore further, and when this may indicate elevated risk.

Question	What to explore (economic abuse lens)	When this may indicate elevated risk
Q2. Are you very frightened? Q3. What are you afraid of?	Is the fear linked to eviction, homelessness, loss of income, benefit stoppage, coerced debt, or financial collapse caused by the perpetrator?	Fear linked to imminent financial crisis or housing loss may signal entrapment and acute vulnerability, particularly where the victim-survivor feels unable to leave or is under pressure to return due to financial or housing insecurity. Consider escalation if economic harm limits the survivor's ability to leave or remain separated.
Q5. Are you feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts?	Are hopelessness or suicidal thoughts linked to debt, homelessness risk, coerced borrowing, benefit disruption or inability to escape economic control?	Economic entrapment combined with suicidal ideation or profound hopelessness linked to debt, housing insecurity or inability to escape financial control is a significant risk amplifier. Treat this as compounding risk rather than a separate mental health issue.
Q6. Have you separated or tried to separate from (abuser) in the past year?	Has separation triggered financial retaliation, such as withdrawal of support, refusal to pay child maintenance, account freezing, debt enforcement, housing destabilisation or employment sabotage?	Economic escalation following separation, particularly where financial or legal systems are being used to exert control, force contact or punish independence – is a significant risk marker. Where financial control intensifies after separation, reassess overall risk and consider escalation through professional judgement.
Q7. Is there conflict about child contact?	Is child contact being used to threaten financial harm, withhold child maintenance, force legal costs, or destabilise housing and income?	Use of financial pressure linked to child contact including child maintenance manipulation or creating legal costs, may signal ongoing coercive control and post-separation escalation.

Q13. Has the abuse been happening more often? Q14. Is the abuse getting worse?	Has financial control escalated post-separation? For example; draining or freezing accounts, initiating debt enforcement, sabotaging employment, increasing financial monitoring.	Escalation in economic tactics, particularly after separation (e.g. account freezing, debt enforcement, employment sabotage), may indicate loss of control and increased danger.
Q15. Does (abuser) try to control everything you do?	Does control include restricting work or study, preventing access to transport, documentation, communication, or independent income?	Economic restriction that blocks safe separation, removes access to income, or increases dependency should influence overall risk grading.
Q23. Are there any financial issues? For example, are you dependent on (abuser) for money/have they recently lost their job/other financial issues?	Are there coerced debts, eviction risk, rent or mortgage arrears caused by the perpetrator, account freezing, credit damage, or benefit disruption?	Severe financial harm with immediate safety consequences such as eviction risk, debt enforcement, benefit stoppage or account freezing should be treated as a safeguarding issue, not a welfare issue.
Free text section	Patterns of system misuse, legal harassment, debt enforcement, housing sabotage, employment interference, or financial surveillance.	Where economic abuse creates entrapment, involves misuse of systems, materially limits safety options or interacts with threats, stalking or violence, consider escalation through professional judgement.