



Domestic Violence and Abuse and its impact on children

What is Domestic Violence and Abuse?

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those **aged 16 or over** who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.

(Home Office, 2013)

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

(Home Office, 2015)

“The context of coercion and control may present significant barriers to women disclosing either their own or their children’s suffering, particularly in situations where the offending partner is present.”

[\(Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: Triennial Analysis of SCRs 2011-2014\)](#)

Domestic abuse....

- ... affects one in four women in their lifetime
- ... kills two women each week and 30 men per year
- ... accounts for 25% of all violent crime recorded; however it is the crime least likely to be reported to the police
- ... has more repeat victims than any other crime; on average a victim is assaulted 35 times before their first call to the police

Impact on Children

- 20% of children in the UK have been exposed to domestic abuse and almost 1 in 20 (4.5%) children and young people in the UK have experienced severe forms of domestic violence
- Seeing and hearing domestic abuse is emotionally abusive and children exposed to domestic abuse are three to four times more likely to experience, physical violence and neglect
- Children and young people are likely to experience a range of emotional and behavioural responses including fear, anxiety, worry, anger and aggression. The risk of psychological harm is high for those who also experience other forms of abuse and neglect (RiP link)
- Childhood experience of domestic violence is associated with depression in adult life and the likelihood of being an adult perpetrator or victim of domestic violence increases for those who experience domestic violence as children
- Children are suffering multiple physical and mental health consequences as a result of exposure to domestic abuse

“The impact of all domestic abuse is harmful to children. There is a need to move away from incident-based models of intervention with domestic abuse to a deeper understanding of the ongoing nature of coercive control and its impact on women and children, and also on men.”

[\(Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: Triennial Analysis of SCRs 2011-2014\)](#)

Understanding the risk to children

- There is a significant **overlap between direct harm to children and domestic abuse** (62%)
- Research shows a significant link between domestic abuse and other child abuse; wherever one is present, questions should always be asked about the other as a means of creating safer, more sensitive assessments and intervention strategies
- If an adult is known to be violent, even if domestic abuse has not been identified, then the risk to children should be considered
- Parental mental health problems and substance misuse are additional risk factors
- Trigger events increase risks such as separation or relationship breakdown and pregnancy; risk often increases when the perpetrator leaves the home; parental separation does not guarantee an end to violence or the psychological abuse of women and children
- A mother’s ability to parent is likely to be adversely affected by domestic violence; it impacts on their self-esteem and confidence, they can be prevented from undertaking parenting tasks and perpetrators may forge hostile alliances with children or other family members
- **If a 16-18 year old is in a coercive, controlling or domestically abusive relationship they are a victim of child abuse and child protection procedures must be followed**



Professionals – what do I need to do if I am concerned?

- listen to the victim or child who is reporting the abuse - they may never repeat the information again; listen, gather information and then seek advice
- Speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead in your own organisation for further advice and discuss what you can do to support
- Refer to the [Multi-agency Thresholds Guidance](#) to establish the level of support/intervention required
- Make a call to the appropriate source of further support; Early Help single point of contact or Children’s Social Care in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- If there are **immediate concerns about victim or children’s safety call 999** and ask for police attendance

Where to get help – useful links for professionals

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): Tel 0300 456 0108

Early Help (single point of contact): Tel 01225 718230

[Speak out Wiltshire](#) provides advice and guidance and details of services available in Wiltshire

Splitz Support Service (for victims, perpetrators and children) [Splitz Wiltshire](#) or tel 01225 777724

[NSPCC domestic abuse](#)

Children can contact [Childline](#) on 0800 1111 or the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or go to www.thehideout.org.uk for advice and guidance

[On Your Mind](#) signposts children and young people in Wiltshire to sources of support for good mental health and emotional well being, including free online support and counselling from kooth.com

