

Domestic Abuse

Definition

The definition of domestic violence and abuse now includes young people aged 16 - 17 and aims to increase awareness that young people in this age group do experience 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;*
- *Emotional.*

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."

This definition includes so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Where there is [domestic](#) violence, the wellbeing of the children in the household must be promoted and all assessments must consider the need to safeguard the children, including unborn child/ren.

Risks

The emotional responses of children who witness domestic violence and abuse may include fear, guilt, shame, sleep disturbances, sadness, depression, and anger (at both the abuser for the violence and at other parent for being unable to protect).

Physical responses may include stress-induced aches and pains, bedwetting, and inability to concentrate. Some children are the direct victims of other types of abuse or injured while trying to intervene on behalf of their parent or sibling.

The behavioural responses of children who witness domestic violence and abuse may include acting out, withdrawal, or anxiousness to please. A change in achievement or behaviour at cadets can be an indicator of problems at home.

Domestic violence and abuse may have a long term psychological and emotional impact in a number of ways:

- Children may be greatly distressed by witnessing (seeing or hearing) the physical and emotional suffering of a parent, or witnessing the outcome of any assault;
- Children may be pressurised into concealing assaults, and experience the fear and anxiety of living in an environment where abuse occurs;
- The domestic violence and abuse may impact negatively on an adult victim's parenting capacity;
- Children may be drawn into the violence and themselves become victims of [Physical Abuse](#).

For children living in situations of domestic violence and abuse, the effects may result in behavioural issues, absence from school, difficulties concentrating, ill health, bullying, substance misuse, self-harm, running away, anti-social behaviour and physical injury, difficulties in forming friendships/relationships.

Young people who are also cadets or adults volunteering with the Police might be reluctant to disclose what is happening at home, for fear of it affecting their position with the cadets.

During pregnancy, domestic violence and abuse can pose a threat to an unborn child as assaults on pregnant women often involve punches or kicks directed at the abdomen, risking injury to both the mother and the foetus. In almost a third of cases, domestic violence and abuse begins or escalates during pregnancy and it is associated with increased rates of miscarriage, premature birth, foetal injury and foetal death. The mother may be prevented from seeking or receiving anti-natal care or post-natal care. In addition if the mother is being abused this can affect her attachment to her child, more so if the pregnancy is a result of rape by her partner.

Young people themselves can be subjected to domestic violence and abuse perpetrated in order to force them into marriage or to punish him/her for 'bringing dishonour on the family'. This abuse may be carried out by several members of a family increasing the young person's sense of isolation and powerlessness.

Indicators

Cadet leaders should be alert to the signs that a child or adult may be experiencing domestic violence and abuse, or that a partner may be perpetrating domestic violence and abuse. Leaders should always consider the need to offer children and adults the opportunity of being spoken to away from others and ask whether they are experiencing, or have previously experienced, domestic violence and abuse.

Leaders who are in contact with adults who are threatening or abusive to them need to be alert to the potential that these individuals may be abusive in their personal relationships and assess whether domestic violence and abuse is occurring within the family.

Considerations where domestic violence and abuse may be present include:

- Helping cadets and their families to get protection from violence, by providing appropriate signposting which may be to Force support. -
- Supporting cadets and adult leaders in making safe choices for themselves and their children;
- Taking into account that there may be continued or increased risk of domestic violence and abuse towards the abused parent and/or child after separation especially in connection with post-separation child contact arrangements;
- Reassuring the Cadet or Leader that by speaking up and seeking help they are not risking their position with the Force.
- Signposting the cadet or leader to help them understand the impact of the domestic violence and abuse on their children.

Protection and Action to be Taken

Should a cadet or cadet leader disclose to you or another person that they are experiencing domestic abuse, that they are concerned about someone else experiencing domestic abuse then the Force and National Safeguarding Policy and Referral Process should be followed. It is not for you or any other leader to investigate the evidence behind the concern or to try and ascertain the level of seriousness other than to decide whether an individual is at risk of significant harm. If the individual informs you that they have left the perpetrator taking the child/ren, professionals need to be alert to the on-going potential for risk.

The dynamics of domestic violence are based on the perpetrator maintaining power and control over their partner. Challenges to that power and control, for example, by separation may increase the likelihood of escalating violence. Statistically the period following separation is the most dangerous time for serious injury and death.

The Serious Crime Act 2015 creates a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships which has, prior to this legislation potentially been seen as less serious and not particularly linked to Domestic Abuse. However it is now clear that controlling or coercive behaviour does not relate to a single incident, it is a purposeful pattern of behaviour which takes place over time in order for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another. Such behaviours might include:

- Isolating a person from their friends and family;
- Depriving them of their basic needs;
- Monitoring their time;
- Monitoring a person via online communication tools or using spyware;
- Taking control over aspects of their everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, what to wear and when they can sleep;

- Depriving them of access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services;
- Repeatedly putting them down such as telling them they are worthless;
- Enforcing rules and activity which humiliate, degrade or dehumanise the victim;
- Forcing the victim to take part in criminal activity such as shoplifting, neglect or abuse of children to encourage self-blame and prevent disclosure to authorities;
- Financial abuse including control of finances, such as only allowing a person a punitive allowance;
- Threats to hurt or kill;
- Threats to a child;
- Threats to reveal or publish private information (e.g. threatening to 'out' someone);
- Assault;
- Criminal damage (such as destruction of household goods);
- Rape;
- Preventing a person from having access to transport or from working.

Issues

The full extent of the impact on children of exposure to domestic abuse is often not fully understood until a child feels safe; they will need several opportunities over a period of time to talk about their experiences.

Children can also experience domestic violence and abuse within their own relationships. Girls are more likely than boys to report experiencing abuse in their intimate relationships, and younger adolescents are just as likely as older adolescents to experience it. Most children do not tell an adult about this abuse.

Information from the public, family or community members must be taken sufficiently seriously by professionals in statutory and voluntary agencies. Recent research evidence indicates that failure to do so has been a contributory factor in a significant number of cases where a child has been seriously harmed or died.

Risk of violence towards professionals should be considered by all agencies who work in the area of domestic violence and abuse and assessments of risk should be undertaken when necessary. It is acknowledged that intimidatory or threatening behaviour towards professionals may inhibit the professional's ability to work effectively. The importance of effective supervision and management is highlighted and agencies should take account of the impact or potential impact on professionals in planning their involvement in situations of domestic violence and abuse.

Further Information

These are general contacts and are not exhaustive. There may be more local organisations available to you.

Women and children

[Refuge](#) - Supporting women and children who have experienced violence and abuse.

[Women's Aid](#) - A grassroots federation working together to provide life-saving services in England and build a future where domestic abuse is not tolerated.

[Women's Aid Scotland](#) - A lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse

[Welsh Women's Aid](#) - The national charity in Wales working to end domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women

[MWN Helpline](#) - A national specialist faith and culturally sensitive service which offers information, support, guidance and referrals to Muslim women and girls from diverse ethnic/faith backgrounds who are suffering from or at risk of abuse or facing problems on a range of issues

[AVA](#) - A leading UK charity committed to ending gender-based violence and abuse

Children and young people

[The Hideout](#) - Women's Aid have created this space to help children and young people to understand domestic abuse, and how to take positive action if it's happening to you

[Childline](#) - A service that's run by the [NSPCC](#). Childline is here to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through

Men

[Respect Men's Advice Line](#) - Non-judgmental support, practical advice, and information to increase the safety of men experiencing domestic abuse (and the safety of any children).

[Mankind Initiative](#) - Our confidential helpline is available for male victims of domestic abuse or domestic violence across the UK.

'Honour'-based violence and forced marriage

[Karma Nirvana](#) - a national charity supporting victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage. Runs a national helpline offering direct support and guidance to victims and professionals

LGBT community

[Galop](#) - Emotional and practical support for LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse

[Broken Rainbow](#) - A national domestic violence helpline for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) communities.



Concerned about your own behaviour

[Respect phoneline](#) - a confidential helpline, email and webchat service for domestic abuse perpetrators and those supporting them.