

## Appendix 5

### Effects of domestic abuse on children and young people

The impact of domestic abuse on the quality of a child's or young person's life is very significant. Children and young people who live with domestic abuse are at increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life.

The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people can be wide-ranging and may include effects in any or all of the following areas:

**Physical:** Children and young people can be hurt either by trying to intervene and stopping the violence or by being injured themselves by the abuser. They may develop self-harming behaviour, or eating disorders. Their health could be affected, as they may not be being cared for appropriately. They may have suicidal thoughts or try to escape or blank out the abuse by using drugs, alcohol or by running away.

**Sexual:** There is a high risk that children and young people will be abused themselves where there is domestic abuse. In homes where living in fear is the norm, and situations are not discussed, an atmosphere of secrecy develops and this creates a climate in which sexual abuse could occur. In addition to this, children and young people may sometimes be forced to watch the sexual abuse of their mother/carer. This can have long-lasting effects on the sexual and emotional development of the child/young person.

**Economic:** The parent or carer of the child or young person may have limited control over the family finances. Therefore, there might be little or no money available for extra-curricular activities, clothing or even food, impacting on their health and development.

**Emotional:** Children and young people will often be very confused about their feelings – for example, loving both parents/carers but not wanting the abuse to continue. They may be given negative messages about their own worth, which may lead to them developing low self-esteem. Many children and young people feel guilty, believing that the abuse is their fault. They are often pessimistic about their basic needs being met and can develop suicidal thoughts. Some children and young people may internalise feelings and appear passive and withdrawn or externalise their feelings in a disruptive manner.

**Isolation:** Children and young people may become withdrawn and isolated; they may not be allowed out to play; and if there is abuse in the home they are less likely to invite their friends round. Schooling may be disrupted in many ways, and this may contribute to their growing isolation. They may frequently be absent from school as they may be too scared to leave their mother alone. They may have to move away from existing friends and family – e.g. into a refuge or other safe or temporary accommodation.

**Threats:** Children and young people are likely to have heard threats to harm their mother/father. They may have been directly threatened with harm or heard threats to harm their pet. They also live under the constant and unpredictable threat of violence, resulting in feelings of intimidation, fear and vulnerability, which can lead to high anxiety, tension, confusion and stress.

This clearly highlights that living with domestic abuse has a significant impact on a child's ability to achieve the five outcomes as outlined in the Every Child Matters agenda:

- be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution;
- achieve economic well-being.

### **What you might see in school**

- Unexplained absences or lateness – either from staying at home to protect their parent or hide their injuries, or because they are prevented from attending school;
- Children and young people attending school when ill rather than staying at home;
- Children and young people not completing their homework, or making constant excuses, because of what is happening at home;
- Children and young people who are constantly tired, on edge and unable to concentrate through disturbed sleep or worrying about what is happening at home;
- Children and young people displaying difficulties in their cognitive and school performance;
- Children and young people whose behaviour and personality changes dramatically;
- Children and young people who become quiet and withdrawn and have difficulty in developing positive peer relations;
- Children and young people displaying disruptive behaviour or acting out violent thoughts with little empathy for victims;
- Children and young people who are no trouble at all.
- This list is not exhaustive – this is intended to give you an idea of some of the types of behaviour that could be presented.

## **What schools can do**

**Schools can create an environment which both promotes their belief and commitment that domestic abuse is not acceptable, and that they are willing to discuss and challenge it.**

For many victims, the school might be the one place that they visit without their abusive partner.

We display posters with information about domestic abuse and contact details for useful agencies: for example, NSPCC 0808 800 5000 and ChildLine 0800 11 11; Parentline 0808 800 2222; Worcestershire's Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (WFADSA) website and West Mercia Women's Aid 24 hr. helpline: 0800 980 3331. West Mercia Constabulary - Police Domestic Abuse Units 101.

Research shows that the repeated use of physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse is one of the ways in which male power is used to control women. The underlying attitudes which legitimate and perpetuate violence against women should be challenged by schools as part of the whole school ethos.

### **Schools can support individual children and young people by:**

- Introducing a whole-school philosophy that domestic abuse is unacceptable;
- Responding to disclosures and potential child protection concerns; recognising that domestic abuse and forced marriage may be a child protection concern; policies and procedures must include domestic abuse;
- Giving emotional support – the child or young person might need referral to a more specialist service or need additional support to complete coursework, exams etc.;
- Facilitating a peer support network – children and young people can become isolated but often welcome talking to friends about their problems;
- Offering practical support – if children or young people are new to the school they may not yet have a uniform, they may also need financial help with extra-curricular activities, or they may be unfamiliar with the syllabus, the area, where to hang out, etc.;
- Providing somewhere safe and quiet to do their homework or just to sit and think;
- Improving the self-esteem and confidence of children and young people by:
  - offering them opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities;

- offering tasks which are achievable and giving praise and encouragement;
- monitoring their behaviour and setting clear limits;
- criticising the action, not the person;
- helping them to feel a sense of control in their school lives;
- involving them in decision making;
- helping them to be more assertive;
- respecting them as individuals;
- encouraging involvement in extra-curricular activities.

From The Expect Respect Education Toolkit – Women’s Aid

### **Operation Encompass**

Operation Encompass is a police and education early information sharing partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. Where appropriate, information is shared by the police with the school.

#### **On receiving a Domestic Abuse notification, the DSL should:**

- complete the Operation Encompass referral record
- notify HouseM and where appropriate Head of Year
- If there's no change to the child’s behaviour - just monitor and log the DA
- If the child displays poor behaviour choices /seems upset/withdrawn, offer the relevant support needed

Malvern College will act promptly on advice given by the Police, and with regard to Operation Encompass protocols.

#### **Bear in mind**

- Victim of incident may be anxious that the information will be shared inappropriately.
- Notification may not give details as to which parent is the perpetrator/victim – any disclosure to the ‘wrong’ parent could heighten risk.
- Need to be aware who is ‘connected’ to the child – e.g. member of staff may be child’s relative / friend of the family.
- Inappropriate sharing of information could heighten the risk for the victim and/or the child.

**If in doubt, consult with the Family Front Door (01905 822666)**