

## Promoting the safety and recovery of children and young people exposed to domestic abuse

**Professionals should offer all children, young people and adults, accompanied or not, the opportunity of being seen alone** (including in all assessments), wherever practicable **and asked whether they are experiencing or have previously experienced domestic violence and abuse:** (Working Together to Safeguard Children 11.83)

As soon as a professional becomes aware of domestic violence and abuse within a family or a young person's relationship they should **help the young person** or parent **and each child**, according to their age and understanding, **develop a safety plan:** (Working Together to Safeguard Children 11.84)

Safety planning increases **power** and reduces fear

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- If the parent is abused, there is an increased risk that children are also subject to abuse
- Safeguarding a non-abusing adult is good safeguarding children practice
- Witnessing another's abuse is also defined as harm
- Parenting could be affected
- There could be other factors affecting a child's welfare and development (e.g. financial abuse, substance misuse, mental ill health)
- Children often intervene
- Remember the child's emotional needs as well as physical safety (guilt, fear, attachment issues)

### THINK 'RISK'

- When was the most recent incident of violence or abuse?
- Were the children present?
- How do they respond to incidents? Do they ever try to intervene?
- How do the children describe what happens?
- Is the abuse connected with any other factors that may undermine parenting capacity (such as alcohol or substance misuse or mental health issues)?
- Is the non-abusing parent able to meet the child's needs effectively?
- Are weapons involved in incidents of violence or abuse?
- Is the child forced to participate in the abuse?
- Have a pregnant woman and her unborn child been threatened or abused?
- Does the child have contact with an abusive parent? What are the arrangements?

## **THINK SAFETY**

Children's safety plans should emphasise that the best thing a child can do for themselves and the parent experiencing abuse is not to try to intervene but to keep safe and, where appropriate, to get away and seek help: (Working Together to Safeguard Children 11.84)

### **Remember:**

- Never promise confidentiality
- Build on the child's strengths and coping strategies
- Let them know they're not the only one to experience this

### **Children and Young People need to know:**

- They are not responsible for adult violence – it is not their fault
- They should not try to intervene but get out and if possible try to get help
- Where to go to be safe (a safe place, an identified neighbour or relative)
- If appropriate and safe do they know how to call for help e.g. the police? (Make sure they know their address)
- Can they discuss keeping safe with their abused parent/carer?
- Who else can they talk to about the difficulties they live with?
- They can help siblings but they are not responsible for their long term safety. This is an adult responsibility

### **The three central imperatives of any intervention for children living with domestic violence and abuse are:**

- to protect the child/ren, including unborn child/ren;
- to empower the parent to protect themselves and their child/ren;
- identify the abusive partner, hold him/her accountable for their violence/abuse and provide them with opportunities to change

## **RESOURCES**

### **Websites for Children and Young People**

- [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk) (Women's Aid)
- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) (NSPCC)
- [www.dotcomcf.org](http://www.dotcomcf.org) (Primary)
- [www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com) (Secondary)
- [www.mywell-being.org.uk](http://www.mywell-being.org.uk) (Ages 5–19) Online team provides support for children and young people experiencing a range of issues including relationships, moving to secondary school, self-harm, low mood and depression)
- [www.disrespectnobody.co.uk](http://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk) (Government campaign aimed at preventing abuse in teenage relationships)
- [www.actonitnow.co.uk](http://www.actonitnow.co.uk) (Resources-explaining-domestic-abuse-to-teenagers)

### **Toolkit resources for professionals**

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 – search!
- Helping Hands – Support children (Women's Aid)
- Talking to my Mum – Tool to support parents and children to talk about Domestic Abuse – from Amazon

### **Programmes:**

Contact the Integrated Access Referral Team (i-ART) for availability – 0300 123 7047

**National Domestic Abuse 24 hour helpline – 0808 2000 247**