

domestic abuse

Domestic abuse cuts across all parts of society, regardless of perceived social status, type of relationships (e.g. same sex or heterosexual), gender identity, cultural or religious background. Where there is domestic abuse in the family the children suffer.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is not just about physical violence.

Domestic abuse is:

“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, 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.”

HM Government

Domestic abuse can include psychological or emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and financial abuse. Controlling and / or coercive behaviour is also abusive.

Victims of domestic abuse often are not victim of just one type of abuse, for example those who are physically abused often report emotional abuse happening as well.

Who is affected?

Domestic abuse is unfortunately very common, with 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men reporting that they have experienced domestic abuse. However these statistics are based on reported figures and we know that there are a high number of incidents that go unreported meaning that the true figures are likely to be a lot higher.

In our setting we need to be aware that domestic abuse is not something that just affects the children and young people that we look after - there is a significant chance that some of our

colleagues are in domestically abusive relationships and may need support.

Things to look out for

As with other forms of abuse there is the potential for children's behaviour to change, for example they could become withdrawn and isolated, but equally they could become angry and aggressive, becoming an abuser themselves.

Children or young people may:

- be wary of adults;
- have difficulty concentrating;
- have difficulty developing relationships;
- have poor attendance;
- have low self-esteem;
- self-harm;
- misuse substances or alcohol.

What to do

If you have concerns about a child then you must follow your school's child protection procedures and report your concerns - if there is immediate risk of harm then call the Police via 999.

If you are concerned about an adult, a colleague or a friend, then talk to them. You don't need to have all the answers, and you must remain neutral (i.e. do not offer opinions and let the person keep control of what they want to tell you). The main thing to do is listen as often for victims saying anything is a very big step.

Why don't they leave / say anything?

When someone decides that they don't want to be in a relationship because of the abuse it can be difficult to get out. This might be due to:

- having no money;
- fear of what happens next;
- feeling as though they would not cope on their own;
- stigma of how society may view them;
- they are too scared as to what the abuser may do if they leave.

As staff we need to promote a culture where abuse is not acceptable.