

Domestic Abuse: A Referral Pathway for Children and Young People in Hampshire

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse (DA) is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are 'personally connected' to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. **Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also victims of domestic abuse.** Behaviour is 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; or psychological, emotional or other abuse. This includes incidents where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (**e.g. a child**).

The Facts

Prevalence: Around 1 in 5 children in the UK experience domestic abuse, often when still in the womb. Exposure to domestic abuse in the first 1001 days of life affects a child's IQ, emotional & physical development ([For Baby's Sake](#)).

Cycle of abuse: Children exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to develop unhealthy relationship behaviours & struggle to navigate healthy relationships effectively (NSPCC).

Impact on Mental Health: Children who experience domestic abuse are at a higher risk of developing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These effects can persist into adulthood (Royal College of Psychiatrists).

Need for Support: Early intervention is crucial. According to Women's Aid, providing children with access to counselling and safe environments can significantly reduce the long-term impact of domestic abuse. Data shows that children who receive support services are 50% more likely to recover from trauma.

Children and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, and are related to the perpetrator of the abuse or the victim of the abuse. Abuse directed towards a child is defined as child abuse.

Impacts of domestic abuse on children

Children who are victims of domestic abuse are at risk of both short and long-term physical and mental health problems. Every child will be affected differently to the trauma of domestic abuse.

Impact of domestic abuse on children - Hampshire SCP

Domestic abuse profoundly affects children and young people, even if they are not direct targets. Exposure to domestic abuse in the first 1001 days of life affects a child's IQ, emotional & physical development. Exposure to abuse throughout childhood can lead to **emotional, psychological, and behavioural issues**. Children may experience **anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and difficulties forming healthy relationships**. Witnessing abuse can **also impair cognitive development, concentration, and academic performance**. In some cases, children may replicate abusive behaviours or **internalize guilt and blame**. Adolescents exposed to domestic abuse are more likely to engage in **risky behaviours, substance abuse, or develop mental health conditions**. The long-term effects can extend into adulthood, influencing their ability to form stable relationships and maintain emotional well-being.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as exposure to domestic abuse, can have lasting effects on a child's health and well-being, increasing the risk of physical and mental health difficulties throughout their lifetime.

Domestic abuse in pregnancy or with babies

Domestic abuse during pregnancy poses significant safeguarding risks for both the mother and unborn child. Abuse may escalate during this time, leading to physical harm like miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight, while also impacting the mother's mental health. Emotional stress can affect the child's development, resulting in long-term cognitive and behavioural challenges. Many women may not seek help due to fear, dependence, or not recognising abuse. Professionals must remain alert, offer safe environments, and ensure ongoing support to protect both the mother and child from harm.

Safe **routine screening** for DA in maternity services is vital for early identification, offering support to vulnerable pregnant women. It protects both mother and child from harm, ensuring timely interventions and access to support and care. **Never ask a screening question in front of a pregnant woman's partner.**

You can find out more useful information here:

- [Hampshire Safeguarding Infants Toolkit](#)
- [For Baby's Sake: Breaking the cycle of domestic abuse and giving babies the best start](#)

Young people's intimate relationships

Abuse in young people's intimate relationships is when someone begins to feel scared or controlled by the person they're with. They may be confused because it feels like a loving relationship but often only when they behave in a certain way. This can happen at any age, regardless of gender.

Addressing young people's relationships is critical to ensuring the safety and well-being of those involved.

Professionals must offer a safe environment for disclosure and follow safeguarding procedures to protect them.

Support services can focus on identifying abusive behaviours early, providing support to both the victim and the person using abusive behaviour, and educating young people about healthy relationships, respect, and empathy, as part of the DFE's statutory guidance for Relationships and Sex Education.

Additionally, services can work with children to raise awareness about consent, boundaries, and respectful communication, which can help prevent abusive behaviours from escalating.

CYP currently living with domestic abuse at home

Children can be deeply affected by DA even if they don't witness it directly. They may sense fear, tension, or distress, and can experience emotional and psychological harm from the atmosphere of violence, abuse and instability in the home.

Remember, under the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#), children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse.

As professionals, you must stay vigilant and alert to the signs. Ensuring the child's immediate safety should be your top priority. If you have any concerns about domestic abuse, follow the referral pathway below. This can be for current or historical abuse.

Seeing injury and damage to the home can intensify a child's sense of fear and helplessness, further contributing to their emotional and psychological trauma.



Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA)

Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) refers to harmful behaviours by children or adolescents towards parents or caregivers. This can include physical violence, emotional abuse, threats, and controlling behaviours. CAPVA is often underreported due to stigma and the belief that parental authority should prevent such behaviour. It can be triggered by a range of factors, including trauma, mental health issues, substance misuse, or exposure to violence. Parents may feel isolated, guilty, or fearful, unsure how to address the problem without escalating it. CAPVA challenges traditional views of family dynamics and requires specialized interventions, often involving family therapy, social services, and support for both the child and the parent to address the root causes and restore family stability.

Safeguarding links and thresholds

Safeguarding links & thresholds for domestic abuse referrals involving children and young people are guided by the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton (HIPS) procedures. These procedures outline steps for professionals when a child is at risk due to domestic abuse.

The referral pathway involves completing an inter-agency referral form and contacting the relevant Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or Children's Resource Centre (CRC). Intervention thresholds depend on the risk level and the child's needs, with immediate action required if a child is at significant risk.

HIPS procedures emphasize early intervention and multi-agency collaboration to ensure children receive support and protection. This includes recognizing abuse signs, understanding domestic abuse impacts, and ensuring coordinated responses.

Key Contacts

- [Hampshire Police](#): 999 in an emergency and 101 for all other calls/enquiries
- [Hampshire Domestic Abuse Advice Line](#): 0330 0165 112
- [Stop Domestic Abuse](#): 0330 0533 630
- [Victim Care Hub](#): 0808 178 1641
- [Hampton Trust](#) Advice Line: 02380 009898
- [Aurora New Dawn](#): 02394 216 816
- [Paragon](#) (You Trust): 0800 916 9878
- [Hampshire Children's Services](#) (safeguarding): 0300 555 1384
- Children's Services Reception Team: 0300 300 0117
- [Hampshire Adult Social Care](#) (safeguarding): 0300 555 1386
- [Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership](#): HDAP@hants.gov.uk
- [Hampshire Family Information and Services Hub](#)

What services are there to support children and young people?

Support for victims, survivors & children – [Stop Domestic Abuse](#)

The main types of help offered for victims and children are: crisis accommodation or refuge, outreach support in the community, IDVA support for high risk clients, dedicated support for children and families, move on and resettlement services, and personal support networks and group work.

To find out more, contact the Hampshire Domestic Abuse Advice Line (run by Stop Domestic Abuse) on 03300 165 112.

Support for those using abusive behaviours (16+) – [Hampton Trust](#) & [Stop Domestic Abuse](#)

For people using abusive behaviours (16+), there are a variety of one to-one and group work interventions that work to help them address the root cause of their behaviour to make positive changes. These services are free and impartial and can assist by giving practical help and emotional support as well as providing information on a wide range of matters, including housing matters, benefits, safety planning and the needs of children affected by domestic abuse.

To find out more, contact the Hampton Trust on 02380 009898.

Support for those under 18 using abusive behaviour

This is crucial in addressing harmful behaviours early on and preventing further violence. Stop Domestic Abuse offers tailored interventions aimed at understanding the root causes of abusive behaviours, promoting accountability, and encouraging positive change. These programs involve, education on healthy relationships, and emotional guidance. The goal is to help young people unlearn abusive behaviours, develop empathy, and build healthier relationships, ultimately preventing the cycle of abuse from continuing into adulthood. Support is provided in a safe, non-judgmental environment that fosters growth and change.

Some of the other **main specialist domestic abuse providers** across Hampshire are:

[Aurora New Dawn](#)

[The You Trust \(Paragon\)](#)

[Victim Care Hub](#)

How to engage safely & conversation prompts to use with Children and Young People

Talking to a child or young person about domestic abuse is a delicate and important task. Here are some guidelines to help you approach this conversation:

Tailor questions to their age and development. Encourage them to share, ask open-ended questions to explore their feelings and experiences and ensure they know about safe places and trusted adults who can support them.

1. **Create a Safe Environment:** Ensure the conversation takes place in a safe, private, and comfortable setting where the child feels secure. Help them explore their sense of safety by asking about family dynamics, trusted adults, and their understanding of respect and kindness.
2. **Be Age-Appropriate:** Tailor your language and explanations to the child's age and developmental level. Use simple, clear language for younger children and more detailed explanations for older children and teenagers. Some prompts may include: **"What makes you feel safe at home?"**, **"Who can you talk to when you're scared?"**, **"If something could change at home, what would you want that to be?"**
3. **Listen Actively:** Give the child your full attention. Listen without interrupting and validate their feelings. Let them know it's okay to express their emotions.
4. **Be Honest and Clear:** Provide honest information about what is happening but avoid sharing graphic details. Explain that what they are experiencing is not their fault and that they are not alone.
5. **Reassure Them:** Emphasize that they are not to blame for the abuse and that it is the responsibility of the abuser. Reassure them that there are people who care about them and want to help.
6. **Encourage Expression:** Encourage the child to express their feelings through talking, drawing, or writing. E.g. : **"Can you draw or describe how things feel when people argue at home?"** Let them know it's okay to feel scared, angry, or confused.
7. **Provide Support:** Let the child know about the support available to them, such as DA services, trusted adults they can talk to, and safe places they can go.
8. **Follow Up:** Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with the child regularly to see how they are feeling and to offer ongoing support.
9. **Seek Specialist Help:** If the child is struggling to cope, consider seeking help from a specialist DA provider or who is skilled in working with children affected by domestic abuse.

Remember, your role is to provide a supportive and non-judgmental space for the child to share their experiences and feelings.

Safety planning with CYP

Safety planning is crucial to protect children from domestic abuse, helping them navigate dangerous situations safely. It involves identifying safe spaces, trusted adults, and simple steps for seeking help. Adapt plans to the child's age and needs, ensuring emotional and physical safety. Regularly review and update the plan. Safety planning not only provides immediate protection but also empowers children with a sense of control in otherwise chaotic situations. By involving them in the process, professionals can help children understand the importance of their safety and how to respond if abuse escalates. It is vital that the plan remains flexible, allowing for changes in the family dynamic or the child's environment.

[Safety Planning with Children and Youth - A toolkit for working with children and youth exposed to domestic violence](#)
(socialworkerstoolbox.com)

Jargon buster

CAPVA: Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse
CRT: Children's Reception Team
CYP: Children and Young People
DA: Domestic Abuse
DSL: Designated Safeguarding Lead
FISH: Family Information Support Service
HDAP: Hampshire Domestic Abuse Partnership
HIOW: Hampshire & Isle of Wight
HIPS: Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton
MARAC: Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASH: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs

Domestic abuse disclosures or concerns for a baby, child or young person.

