

Priority One Domestic Abuse

What is the impact of early interventions/services on Domestic Abuse? (recognising behaviours and professional curiosity about home life)

1 Introduction

This 7-point briefing has been developed following the DSCP completing work under Priority One, Domestic Abuse, of the 2023-2026 DSCP Priority Plan. This briefing aims to support you to understand what the early warning interventions/service around Domestic Abuse (recognising behaviours and professional curiosity about home life)

The briefing explores the work completed within the Improvement Delivery Group (IDG), looking at the journey of a family to understand those early stages and opportunities for support i.e. Early Help, Education, Health, Early Years provision (KLOE).

Methodology: Multi Agency Deep Dive

Scope:

- A child aged between 5 – 11 years old who has been referred to Children and Young People's Services and/or Early Help for Domestic Abuse
- The referral was made around six to eight weeks prior to September 2024 (allowing partners to focus on current practice.)
- The referral is worked at Children in Need (CSC) or Team Around the Family (Early Help) level of intervention
- Coercive and Controlling Behaviour to an identifiable risk next to a parent's details
- There is evidence of a multi-agency team on the child's record

When a child has been identified, all significant adults in the family are to be considered, including those not living or present in the family home.

2 Strengths

1. When Professional Curiosity was used it offered an opportunity for partners to pull together a plan around the child and family with targeted intervention.
2. Partners who used trauma informed practice could identify early intervention and the right support at the right time.
3. Partners used opportunities to engage victims of domestic with [IDVA](#) workers, there was then evidence of targeted response and intervention

3 Learning

1. **Importance of testing family plans;** family networks were considered, and family plans were coordinated around children. However, cases were then stepped down to universal services without testing the plan first.
2. **Responding to risk;** Partner agencies were seen to be incident responsive rather than risk responsive, we need to recognise that coercive and controlling behaviour can continue when perpetrators leave the family home.
3. **Victim blaming language** is still being used when talking about victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

4 Learning

4. **Children as victims of Domestic Abuse;** not seeing children as victims meant there were missed opportunities for targeted interventions as the children were not being identified as victims in their own right
5. **Triangulation of information;** key partner agencies were not invited to multi agency meetings to allow full triangulation of the information different partners held about the child.
6. **Whole family approach** should have been taken, consideration of family members outside the home was missed.

Useful links

- [Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership: Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference \(MARAC\) referral form](#)
- [Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership: domestic abuse practice checklist](#)
- [Domestic Abuse \(information and help for adults, young people and professionals\)](#)
- [Support for children affected by domestic abuse - Durham County Council](#)
- [Domestic Abuse DASH Risk Assessment](#)

Available DSCP Domestic Abuse Training: <https://durham-scp.org.uk/training-information/>

5 Key Findings

1. Practitioners are not consistently seeing incidents of domestic abuse **through the eyes of the child**. We need to see an increased awareness, training, confident and knowledge around the child as a victim of domestic abuse. [You can access DSCP Training here](#)
2. A focus on providing appropriate support, training and challenge to practitioners so domestic abuse is response to effectively with the identification across DSCP

Child's Voice, age 11 years old:

"I didn't know dad hurt mam. But when he tried to break in, we had to move house. I don't talk to anyone, not even mam because it makes her sad."

6 Key Findings

3. Increased knowledge is needed around receiving the **right help and protection at the right time** to allow timely information sharing and interventions to take place.
4. Practitioners need an increased awareness that abuse does not necessarily end when people stop living together and may in fact **escalate**.
5. Risk of harm to the children was not seen to be reduced through the identification and assessment of the risks that perpetrators and adult offenders pose. Practitioners attempted to offer **targeted interventions** for the adult victims, but not for the perpetrator.

Child's Voice, age 9 years: "I am scared when mam's boyfriend visits the house". To feel safe, "I need him to stay away"

**Priority
Work**