



QEGSMAT
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Safeguarding Bulletin

Domestic Abuse

Protecting children from domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can also happen between adults who are related to one another.

Domestic abuse can include:

- **coercive control** such as being told where to go and what to wear or being

isolated from friends and family

- **physical abuse** such as being punched, kicked, cut, or being hit with an object
- **emotional abuse** such as being constantly undermined, sworn at, intimidated, ridiculed, harassed, or threatened with harm or death
- **sexual abuse and rape** including within a relationship or being made to have sex with other people
- **stalking and harassment** such as being repeatedly followed or

spied on, being regularly given unwanted gifts or receiving unwanted communication

- **economic and financial abuse** such as having access to money controlled or withheld or being prevented from earning money
- **technology-facilitated abuse** such as having messages and emails monitored or deleted, constantly being sent messages or calls, or being tracked via device location

Psychological effects

Psychological effects of experiencing domestic abuse can include:

- aggression and challenging behaviour
- depression
- anxiety - including worrying about a parent's or carer's safety
- changes in mood
- difficulty interacting with others
- withdrawal
- fearfulness, including fear of conflict
- suicidal thoughts or feelings

Domestic abuse can cause confusing relationships with parents and carers. Children might experience conflicting feelings, including:

- not having a strong bond with their parents or carers
- hoping an abused parent will leave for safety reasons
- worrying about what might happen if their parents or carers separate
- being afraid of their parents or carers.

Some teenagers worry that being raised in abusive environment will affect their own future relationships.

Witnessing and experiencing domestic abuse

Domestic abuse always has an impact on children. Being exposed to domestic abuse in childhood is child abuse. Children and young people may experience domestic abuse both directly and indirectly. Children and young people may experience:

- not getting the care and support they need from their parents or carers as a result of the abuse
- hearing the abuse from another room
- seeing someone they care about being injured and/or distressed
- finding damage to their home environment like broken furniture
- being hurt from being caught up in or trying to stop the abuse
- being denied access to parts of their home, such as rooms being locked
- being forced out of or losing their home

Young people aged 16 or over can also experience domestic abuse in their own relationships.

Traumatic childhood experiences such as domestic abuse can affect a child's brain development. This may impact:

- executive functioning skills
- brain architecture
- and lead to overactive stress responses



Changes to children's behaviour

You might notice changes in a child's patterns of behaviour, for example if they aren't doing as well in school as they used to. Or they might display behaviour that the adults around them perceive to be challenging.

Signs of anxiety in children and young people

Children who experience domestic abuse might feel constantly stressed or on alert. They might be afraid of what's happening at home. This might all feel 'normal' to them if they have lived with domestic abuse for a long time. You might notice children showing signs of anxiety or fear.

Links to animal abuse

Harm to a pet or a threat to harm a pet has found to commonly form part of patterns of domestic abuse. In such cases, a bond with a pet can be used to inflict psychological abuse and coercive control or force a person to act against their will (Muri et al, 2022).

Professionals should routinely discuss concerns regarding pets with adults or children. These discussions can provide insights about potential dynamics of domestic abuse within a family (Hackett and Uprichard, 2007).

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns. Follow your organisational child protection procedures.

NSPCC Helpline on **0808 800 5000** or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk.