

Children and the effect of Parental Abuse.

Children can often be the forgotten witnesses and victims of domestic abuse and violence and are considered to be passive in the home situation. Parents can have an over optimistic view that their child does not know about the abuse, thinking the children have not been exposed to it. Sadly, this can also be an issue for professionals talking to parents. Prolonged or regular exposure to domestic violence and abuse can have a serious impact on a child's development and emotional well-being, despite the best efforts of the victim parent to protect the child.

Children and young people who live in families where domestic abuse occurs are likely to have an awareness of it, despite the fact that they may not be physically present in the room when the incident occurs.

Children may be greatly distressed by witnessing and hearing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent, even if the children are young or unborn. There may be serious developmental effects on children who witness domestic abuse, which can result in behavioural issues, low self-esteem, depression, absenteeism, ill health, bullying, antisocial or criminal behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm and psychosocial impacts.

Practitioners who work with adolescents are increasingly finding evidence of domestic abuse in intimate relationships between young people themselves.

The risks to unborn babies should always be considered if domestic abuse is suspected. It is a shocking statistic that 30% of domestic abuse starts during pregnancy. Therefore pregnant women are particularly susceptible to being victims of domestic abuse and practitioners working with pregnant women should be alert to this possibility.

Children and young people can 'witness domestic violence/abuse in a variety of ways.

- they may be in the same room and may even get caught in the middle of an incident in an effort to make the violence stop
- they may be in the room next door and hear the abuse or see their parent's physical injuries following an incident of violence
- they may be forced to stay in one room or may not be allowed to play
- they may in their bedroom and/or woken to hear shouting or crying or hearing a parent in great distress and too scared to react.
- they may be forced to witness sexual abuse, or they may be forced to take part in verbally abusing the victim

If you are worried about a child you can call the Family Front Door on 01905 822666. If there are safeguarding concerns and you feel the threshold is met for Children's Social Care Services, you can submit a cause for concern notification which can be found at: http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20383/are_you_a_professional_worried_about_a_child.

From Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse

http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20379/domestic_abuse_and_sexual_violence/192/worcestershire_forum_against_domestic_abuse_and_sexual_violence/1

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