



Domestic violence and abuse



Why is it important?

Exposure to intimate partner violence and abuse can have a negative impact on a broad range of children and young people's health and wellbeing outcomes.

It can affect children and young people's social, emotional and cognitive development:

- Infants may sleep poorly and cry excessively.
- Children can have increased anxiety and aggression problems as well as poor social and verbal skills.
- Adolescents may develop mental health issues such as depression and suicidal thoughts and/or adopt risky behaviours such as alcohol misuse or illicit drug use.

Some children and young people are more resilient than others. Children with parents who have co-existing mental health or substance misuse issues, or children who experience abuse or neglect directly are likely to be affected more.

Current situation

In Glasgow City, the rates of domestic violence and abuse reported to the police are among the highest in Scotland. However, the police figures represent only about one fifth to one third of actual incidents, so it is likely that a large number of occurrences affecting children and young people will go undetected.

(Scottish Government (2016), [Domestic Abuse recorded by the police in Scotland, 2015-16](#))

Are there inequalities to consider?

Children with mothers who are lone parents, are living on a low income, who have recently separated from a partner or have an illness or disability are at greater risk of experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

Challenges and solutions

Domestic violence and abuse is a complex issue that can co-exist with other health or social issues e.g. poverty, substance misuse, mental health problems. It is difficult to work out whether prevention interventions have any impact on further levels of violence.

A range of interventions have been shown to be beneficial for those who experience domestic violence and abuse:

- Multi-agency partnership approaches (e.g. health and social care, housing, education, criminal justice, alcohol and drug services etc.) with integrated care pathways and information sharing protocols can increase identification and referral of victims to support services and lower levels of further violence.
- Training for health and social care professionals can help them identify victims of domestic violence and abuse, respond sensitively to disclosure and make sure victims and their children are kept safe and directed to appropriate specialist support services.
- Universal screening or routine enquiry in pregnancy can help to identify women who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. Screening tools that ask about the frequency of abuse identify more women than do tools requiring a simple yes/no response. Self-administered screening tools are more likely to encourage disclosure than face-to-face questioning.
- Multi-session psychological therapy, based on CBT, during pregnancy for women who are at risk or who have experienced domestic abuse and violence can help prevent repeated episodes of abuse.
- Advocacy services which offer information and guidance to access support from community resources (e.g. refuges or emergency housing and services such as legal, housing, financial and safety planning advice) can help improve levels of parenting stress as well as children's wellbeing.
- Programmes aimed at mothers and children together are more beneficial than those aimed at children only.

- Perpetrator programmes, such as CBT, substance misuse treatment and couples interventions, report positive results, particularly when part of a co-ordinated community response. However, further robust evaluation is needed.

Examples of positive action

1. The [Coordinated Community Response Model \(CCRM\)](#) to domestic violence is a coordinated inter-agency approach that focuses on:

- an increase in the safety of domestic violence survivors
- an increase in the safety of children who live with domestic violence
- holding abusers accountable for their actions
- effective prevention strategies
- a system where the onus of holding abusers accountable lies with service providers, and the wider community, rather than the survivor

2. The [Caledonian System](#) is an integrated approach to deal with men's domestic abuse and to improve the lives of women, children and men. It does this by working with men, convicted of domestic-abuse-related offences, on a programme to reduce their risk of re-offending, while offering integrated services to women and children.

Links to other issues

[Children's wellbeing](#)

Links to other resources

NICE (2014): [Domestic violence and abuse: how services can respond effectively](#) (LGB20)

NICE (2014): [Domestic violence and abuse: multiagency working](#) (PH50)

NICE [website]: [Domestic Violence and Abuse pathway](#)