

# Domestic abuse

*"I crept downstairs because I heard arguing. Dad was standing over mum kicking her. I made sure that my sister did not see, but we still heard. When mum came upstairs, her nose was bleeding and we all cried, we stayed there until dad went out."*

- Domestic abuse can teach children to use violence or abuse
- Domestic abuse can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways
- Where there is domestic abuse there is often child abuse
- Children will often blame themselves for domestic abuse
- Alcohol misuse is very common when domestic abuse occurs, as a contributing factor and as a survival mechanism
- Pregnant women are more vulnerable to domestic abuse

## How does it affect children?

Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. In 90% of reported domestic violence incidents, children have either been present in the same or a nearby room. It is overwhelmingly women and children who are affected by domestic abuse and men who are the perpetrators.

Children who witness, intervene or hear incidents are affected in many ways. What can be guaranteed is that children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence in the family.

Children learn how to behave in part from examples parents set for them. Domestic abuse teaches children negative things about relationships, and how to deal with people. For instance:

- It can teach them that violence is a way to resolve conflict
- They learn how to keep secrets
- They learn to mistrust those close to them and that children are responsible and to blame for abuse, especially if it erupts after an argument about the children.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people remain in or return to abusive situations. A combination of fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial issues can make it very difficult for women with children to leave and some may want to stay put, and get their abuser to leave.

### Short term effects:

Children are affected in many ways by domestic abuse, even after a short time. These effects include: feeling frightened, becoming withdrawn, bedwetting, running away, aggressiveness, behavioural difficulties, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional turmoil.

### Long term effects:

The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them are. These can include:

- A lack of respect for the non-violent parent
- Loss of self-confidence, which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future
- Being over-protective of parent
- Loss of childhood
- Problems at school
- Running away.

If you are worried about domestic abuse, discuss it with someone else.

If you are violent or abusive, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

If you are affected by domestic abuse you are not alone - you can seek help from a range of specialist services in Bradford. You can also report incidents to the police - this will provide valuable evidence for any charges against your abuser in the future.

Apart from any criminal proceedings, you can apply for an injunction in the civil court to protect yourself. If you would like details of solicitors in your area who deal with family law, contact the local domestic abuse services.

## WARNING SIGNS

*Any violence or abuse between adults will negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts, the more damaging living with domestic abuse becomes.*

## ACTION

*Report your concerns about yourself or someone else to the police. If you are worried that your child might be affected, talk to them about what is happening.*

## WHAT TO SAY

*Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence or abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.*

## PREVENTION

*A violent partner can take responsibility for violence by seeking help to stop. Make sure that you offer a positive role model for children so that they learn other ways of behaving.*

## CONTACTS

- National Domestic Violence Helpline (Women's Aid) 0808 2000 247
- Wiltshire Social Services out of hours emergency duty service 0845 60 70 888
- Domestic Violence Intervention Partnership 01225 709493
- Victim Support Wiltshire 01380 729476
- Rape Support Helpline 0808 800 1144
- Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers: Salisbury District & Kennet 01722 435 390 North and West Wiltshire 01249 449766 Swindon 01793 507801

*Check the Wiltshire ACPC website for the latest phone numbers: [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk)*