

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 violence teaches children to use violence
- Violence can affect children in serious and long-lasting ways
- Where there is domestic violence there is often child abuse
- Children will often blame themselves for domestic violence
- Alcohol misuse is very common when violence occurs in families
- Pregnant women are more vulnerable to domestic violence

How does it affect children?

Domestic violence 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.

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 will learn how to behave from examples parents set for them. Domestic violence teaches children negative things about relationships and how to deal with people.

For instance:

- It can teach them that violence is an acceptable 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 violence, especially if violence erupts after an argument about the children.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people remain in or return to violent situations. A combination of fear, love, the risk of homelessness and financial issues can make it very difficult for partners with children to leave and some may not want to.

Short term effects:

Children are affected in many ways by violence, 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 These effects include: feeling frightened, becoming withdrawn, bedwetting, running away, aggressiveness, behavioural difficulties, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional turmoil.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 violence, discuss it with someone else. If you are violent and have children, you can seek help to stop what is happening. If you are a victim of Domestic violence you can contact the Police Domestic Violence Unit or Berkshire Women's Aid for support and information.

WARNING SIGNS

Any violence between adults will negatively affect children. Seek support and help as soon as possible. The longer it lasts the more damaging violence is.

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. Spend time together talking through worries they have.

WHAT TO SAY

Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence.

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

- Child Protection Sexual Crimes Unit (CPSCU)
01753 835 495
- Victim Support
01344 411411
- Berkshire Women's Aid
0118 950 4003
- National Domestic Violence Helpline
0808 2000 247
- Police
08458 505 505
- Police Domestic Violence Unit
01344 823481

*Check the Bracknell ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk*