



Domestic Abuse – Information for families

Key Points

- Domestic abuse teaches children to use violence.
- 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 Domestic Abuse affect children?

Domestic abuse is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. In 90% of reported domestic abuse 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 abuse in the family. Children will learn how to behave from examples parents set for them. Domestic abuse teaches children negative things about relationships and how to interact with people.

For Instance:

- It can teach children that abuse 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 the abuse, especially if violence 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 partners with children to leave and some may want to stay put and get the abuser to leave.

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Feeling frightened, becoming withdrawn, bedwetting, running away from home, aggressiveness, behavioural difficulties, problems with school, poor concentration and emotional turmoil.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 upon them are. These can include:

- A lack of respect for the non-violent parent.
- Loss of self-confidence, which will affect a child's ability to form relationships in the future.
- Loss of childhood.
- Running away from home.

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 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 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.

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

If you are abusive and have children, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

Useful contact numbers:

Police: For the IOW the direct dial number is 01983 538707 **In an emergency, dial 999**
Alternatively dial 0845 045 4545 and ask for the Isle of Wight Domestic Abuse team

National 24 hour Domestic Violence Helpline, jointly run by Refuge and Women's Aid: 0808 2000 247

The Refuge: 0808 2000 247

Women's Aid National Helpline (Victim Support): 0845 3030 9000

Male Victim Helpline 0808 801 0327

The ManKind Initiative 01823 334244