

7-minute briefing:

Children and domestic abuse

1. Background

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 says that domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. It is not limited to people who live together. Domestic abuse is a crime, including coercive control. Children are also victims if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse.

2. Children

Children should not be seen as a 'witness' to the domestic abuse but should be seen as a victim in their own right. Children who grow up in a household where there is domestic abuse will be affected throughout their development and can seriously affect them which can affect them into adulthood, especially where coercive control is present.

3. Information

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening and those carrying out the abuse can act very different when other people are around. Children and young people might also feel frightened and confused, keeping the abuse to themselves. There may be signs such as: anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts, bed-wetting, nightmares, regular sickness, drug or alcohol use, missing from home, eating disorders, not wanting to leave the non-abusive parent.

7. Information

It is vital that when you have a disclosure of domestic abuse that you take action.

If you have serious concerns about the safety of the victim and their children, you must complete a Safe Lives DASH risk assessment and if appropriate a referral to MARAC and children's social care (MASH).

6. SUPPORT

Bexley Solace are able to offer support to any victim regardless of gender, age or sexuality.

Solace offer a Children's Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor to provide emotional and practical support to the child or young person.

For support on risk assessment and safety planning contact Solace on 020 3198 4659.

Bexley.solacewomensaid.org

One Stop Shop every Wednesday
 12.30 -3pm at Central Library
 Bexleyheath.

5. Think Family

If a child or young person has disclosed domestic abuse, make sure you use a think family approach. Domestic abuse will be impacting the whole family and consideration should be given to all family members. The victim should be offered a 'safe environment' and routine safe enquiry should be used.

If police have been called to a household where there has been domestic abuse 'Operation Encompass' could have been used, speak to the police for information.

4. Disclosures

If a child talks to you about domestic abuse it is important to:

- listen carefully to what they're saying
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- say you'll take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- report what the child has told you as soon as possible.
- alert your safeguarding lead for advice and follow your organisations safeguarding policy
- complete a children's social care referral via the MASH
- contact the police
- contact domestic abuse organisation Solace

For further information about domestic abuse services in Bexley please visit

www.bexleydomesticabuseservices.org or visit www.gov.uk or www.safelives.org.uk