

# **Domestic Violence Guidance for Schools and Colleges**

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## Definition:

The government is currently carrying out a consultation on widening the definition of domestic violence to include 'coercive control. The current definition used is:

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members'.

## Purpose:

Since September 2006, schools have been notified of Domestic Violence incidents involving children and young people on their roll, a move which has been welcomed by head teachers and designated personnel for child protection.

This guidance sets out the role played by all agencies concerned and offers advice on how schools can support both children and families suffering with Domestic Violence.

**When a school receives notification of a DV incident, it is not necessary for them to alert Social Care, as they will have been notified directly by the police. It is important, however, that schools are able to support children and young people involved and to communicate effectively with Social Care if there are further concerns. Schools should consider sharing the information with the Locality Manager if there is involvement with the Locality Team.** If schools require additional advice on this matter, they may contact the Education Child Protection Service. (See useful numbers in the appendices to this document).

N.B. Throughout this guidance, the term 'children' should be taken to indicate children or young people, appropriate to the setting or situation described. In accordance with relevant legislation, the term 'children' shall refer to those under 18 years of age. However, the guidance can also be applied to any young person in further education up to the age of 19 years.

Throughout this document, the term Domestic Violence is interchangeable with the term Domestic Abuse

Reference throughout is made to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Core Inter-agency Procedures which can be found on their website –

[www.cambslscb.org.uk](http://www.cambslscb.org.uk)

# **1. How Domestic Violence (DV) can impact upon children/young people**

Where there is Domestic Violence in a family, the children/young people will always be affected; the longer the violence continues, the greater the risk of significant and enduring harm, which they may carry with them into their adult life and relationships.

A child/young person living with DV may show their vulnerability in a number of ways. For example, children may feel fragile, confused and frightened. If they are living in a refuge, they will be missing friends and family, they may be bullied if they are showing their vulnerability; or they may be bullying others to conceal their feelings.

Table 1 in the Appendices shows a range of possible signs and indicators of DV in children and young people.

# **2. How DV impacts upon parents and carers**

Many parents/carers affected by DV manage to create and sustain healthy and valuable family relationships, despite the violence and fear that they may be experiencing.

However, DV may have an impact upon parenting ability, which will in turn affect the child. The non-abusing parent/carer may:

- find it difficult to set and maintain boundaries
- look to the child/ren in the family for emotional security
- feel unable to cope
- emotionally withdraw
- exercise inappropriate levels of responsibility
- have inappropriate perceptions of control
- feel frustrated about children's behaviour
- be unable to maintain a routine
- experience poverty and hardship

Mental health issues, alcohol and drug abuse often play a part in DV and can impair the judgment of one or both adults.

# **3. Support for children/young people affected by DV**

Children affected by DV may find it difficult to disclose what they have witnessed; this may affect their behaviour both in and outside school and in the wider community. Some children feel that it is not worth reporting their concerns, because they may have heard people they know and trust using phrases which minimise DV, such as 'just a domestic'. Other children may feel embarrassed to disclose, or they may feel afraid that they risk being taken away from their parents/carers if they do. Conflicts of loyalty may also be present. In addition, threats may have been made by the perpetrator, resulting in the child fearing the consequences for either themselves, or for a loved person, pet or possession.

To raise awareness of the seriousness of DV, and to help children and their families to access appropriate support, schools, working alongside other relevant support agencies, should aim to:

- include information and guidance about DV and teenage relationship violence in their programmes of study in PSHE

- display leaflets/posters, including contact numbers, around the school
- display leaflets/posters in areas where parents/carers are likely to see them
- actively promote the support services available to students within the school, e.g. the Designated Person for Child Protection; school counsellor; Inclusion workers etc.
- ensure that all staff receive appropriate training which raises their awareness of DV
- actively promote services available outside school, e.g. Childline, the Samaritans, Women's Aid.

It is important to promote this support in a positive way, in order to avoid stigmatising the issue of DV.

## 4. Dealing with a disclosure of DV

### Child's / Young Person's Disclosure

In response to any disclosure about domestic violence, school/relevant staff should follow recommendations of good practice in dealing with any disclosure. (See Chapter 1.2 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Core Inter-agency Procedures – Practice Guidance – Recognising and responding to concerns).

Remember that it is very likely that a child will disclose after a number of incidents have occurred, and when they feel that they want the violence to stop. They will invariably disclose to a member of staff they trust. Be aware that they may play down the frequency and severity of the incidents. Do not assume that it has only happened once or twice just because this is what is said.

Staff need to:

- take the time to listen carefully
- take the disclosure seriously, but remain calm
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing in making the disclosure
- avoid making any promises which they cannot keep
- ensure that the child is clear that the information they have supplied may have to be shared with the Designated Person for Child Protection (DP), in order to keep the child safe
- avoid using leading questions or making any judgmental comments about the alleged abuser/perpetrator
- avoid any physical examination of alleged injuries
- remember that they should maintain confidentiality and only share the information with the Designated Person within the school
- record the disclosure in detail, using the school's Logging a Concern form
- include in this Log the full name of the child, their date of birth, and the date and time of the disclosure
- record the child's own words where possible and avoid putting their own opinion or interpretations into the record.
- ensure that they have signed and printed their own name on the Log, and have made their role in the school very clear, e.g. Form Tutor, Teaching Assistant
- record any inconsistent or unusual events linked with the disclosure, e.g. if a parent has given an explanation of an injury which differs from that given by the child in their disclosure
- reassure the child about what is going to happen next, i.e. that they will have to share the information with the DP, BUT
- avoid making any promises about what may happen in the long-term as a result of the disclosure
- pass on the written Log immediately to the DP, so that they may take appropriate action.

When the DP receives the information, they should take advice, unless there are clear Child Protection issues, when a referral should be made. (See Chapter 1.2 of the LSCB Core Inter-agency Procedures: Deciding when to refer – Domestic Abuse)

## **Parent/Carer Disclosure**

School/relevant staff who receive a disclosure about DV from a parent/carers will need to follow a similar procedure for dealing with pupil disclosures. They need to:

- listen carefully to the information given
- avoid making any judgments or expression of opinion
- reassure the parent/carers that they have done the right thing in disclosing
- avoid making any promises to the parent/carers that the information will remain 'secret', emphasising where necessary that the welfare of their child/ren is paramount
- record the information immediately on the school's Logging a Concern form, using the same guidelines as when recording a disclosure from a pupil
- pass this Log on to the DP immediately
- make a written record when a parent/carers merely hints at the existence of DV, or when a member of staff has a suspicion that DV may be occurring
- ensure that confidentiality is maintained and that information is only shared with the DP

The DP will then seek advice from Education Child Protection Service on their Advice Line 01223 703800 or Social Care via the Contact Centre 0345 045 5203.

If the Police have already made visits to the family home to deal with incidents of DV the school will have received notification of this. The same notifications are routinely made to Health and Social Care.

## **Parent/carers disclosure where the child is the perpetrator of DV**

If a parent/carers makes the disclosure that a child is the perpetrator of the violence, then the member of staff should ensure that the parent is able to speak with the DP. The disclosure should be recorded in the normal way, and the DP should then follow procedures and take advice.

Depending on the age of the child, the Police may need to be involved if a crime has been committed.

Even in a situation where the child is the alleged perpetrator, it may be appropriate for the victim to stay in a Women's Refuge; however, in this situation, it would be entirely inappropriate for the victim to disclose their location to the abusing child.

N.B. In the event of a member of staff being identified as a perpetrator, the DP should contact the Education Child Protection Service Adviceline, on 01223 703800, for advice.

## **Third Party Disclosures**

In some cases, a child or another parent may disclose that they have witnessed, or are aware of, DV in another child's family. In this case, a Log of the information given should be kept, as previously outlined in 'Dealing with a disclosure of DV', and be given to the Designated Person.

The DP can then check with Social Care as to whether the family is known to them, and request advice. Staff can ask for a discussion with a Social Worker or can make an immediate referral via the Contact Centre. If a referral is made, and there are other siblings in the family affected who are in another school, then the DP in the other school should be contacted to share information. (See Practice Guidance - Recognising and responding to concerns, Chapter 1.2 of the LSCB Core Inter-agency Procedures)

On receipt of a referral regarding DV, from school or from any other agency or member of the public, Social Care will undertake an Initial Assessment. Not all families will be visited. In some cases, schools/Health Visitors will be asked to monitor or refer to other agencies.

**N.B.** School staff may suspect that a third-party disclosure is malicious. However, there is no way of being sure of this.

The welfare of the child is paramount, so school staff/relevant workers should report all disclosures regardless of their suspicions. DPs may alert Social Care that they have these reservations, and the possible reasons for them, e.g. if they are aware of a dispute between families.

## **Role of the Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)**

The definition of Harm from the Children Act 2002, and Working Together 2010, includes "impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another", therefore, if CYPS are aware of DV, there is a duty to assess whether a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of living in a household where DV is present.

## **Referral pathways and services**

Safeguarding and child protection work should always be underpinned by principles of working in partnership with families. In most cases, consent must be sought from parents/carers to share information as appropriate, although **there are certain circumstances in which this consent is not required e.g. where there is a specific risk of harm to a child and sharing the information with the parents would place the child at further risk or it would place the parent victim at a higher risk of harm.** In this case, a Statutory Intervention Form (SIF) should be completed.

Referrals to services regarding concerns about a child typically fall into three categories:

- Early Intervention and Prevention - Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- Child in Need - Section 17 referrals
- Child Protection - Section 47 referrals - Priority straight to Children's Social Care. (Domestic Violence - where a child has been injured, even if inadvertently)

Completing a CAF should:

- Enable the child/young person and family to become involved in assessing their strengths and needs with the practitioner and help to identify some of the solutions;
- Provide a structure for systematic gathering and recording of information;
- Record evidence of needs and concerns and baseline for measuring progress in addressing them;
- Provide a framework for discussion when a referral is being made, whether to preventative targeted services or to Children's Social Care;
- Support an initial or core assessment;
- Support an assessment for another specialist service

Completing a CAF also provides a standardised written referral proforma to support a telephone referral.

## **Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU)**

The MARU is responsible for supporting all victims of abuse and the vulnerable. There are 3 teams within the MARU:

1. Domestic Abuse
2. Vulnerable adults
3. Child Protection

The Domestic Abuse (DA) team processes high and medium risk cases of domestic abuse attended by Cambridgeshire Police. In addition, they also manage and process DA referrals from partner agencies.



Cases will be assessed by the multi-agency team. Information is then routinely shared between appropriate partner agencies and in very high risk cases, co-ordination of services can be implemented immediately in order to safeguard victims and children. Additionally, MARAC (see page 11) meetings will continue to take place on a monthly basis.

The Vulnerable Adult Team deals with adult protection referrals and is supported by a new investigation team.

Child protection referrals are subject to on-site multi-agency processes.

## **Role of the Police**

When the Police receive a referral of DV/DA, they take detailed information regarding the parties involved and complete a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment and Referral Form.

Cases which are assessed as High Risk will be prioritised on the agenda of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). This process allows all relevant agencies to take action on points agreed within the Conference without delay.

Should the need arise, the Police, together with other agencies, may assist the victim(s) to leave the home address, and seek a safe haven. Details of the safe haven are confidential.

The Police have specialist officers based in the MARU who assist in the investigation of cases of DV, and work with the DV Advocates to support victims. They will automatically send notification of all DV incidents where a child is present to Social Care.

The notifications are then sent to schools from the Contact Centre via the Headteacher (see Appendices: Letter of notification) whenever they attend an incident of DV in a home where there is/are a child/ren of school age.

Social Care will look at each notification on its merits, taking account of the nature of the current incident, the number of past incidents and the age of the child(ren) amongst other factors. If it is suspected that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of an incident of violence within their parents'/carers' relationship then the Police and Social Care will decide whether a joint investigation needs to be completed and if not, who will take the lead in investigating the case. Any other relevant agencies, e.g. Health, Education, will be contacted during the course of the investigations.

If a crime has been committed, the Police will arrest the perpetrator(s) and charge them with any offences. **Even if the victim refuses to make a complaint, the perpetrator could still be charged with an offence.**

The Police work both nationally and locally, in conjunction with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, in order to deliver an effective service to victims of DV.

## **Role of the Independent DV Advocacy Service (IDVAS)**

In Cambridgeshire a team of Advocates for victims of DV work closely with the Police. They offer victims support, including the chance to follow the Freedom Programme, a series of sessions which aim to fortify victims against recurrence of DV, and which can help them to break the cycle of violence. This programme is only appropriate in cases where the perpetrator has left the family home.

The DV Advocates play a pivotal role in feeding back relevant information to other agencies, whilst maintaining the confidence and trust of victims and their children.

## Role of the Health Services

Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust has entered into an agreement with Cambridgeshire Constabulary, that in the interest of safeguarding children, any incident of DV/DA perpetrated in households in which children live will be notified to the Specialist Nurse for Child Protection appropriate to the child's home address.

The safety of the child/ren will be paramount, and criteria for notification will include:

1. When the victim is known to be pregnant;
2. When there are children aged under 5 years old in the household;
3. Any incident of DV in which a child of any age is injured.

### Processing and taking action on the information:

- The Area Safeguarding Children's Specialist Nurse will receive and review the notification.
- Information will be evaluated and prioritised as appropriate;
- The child's GP and Health Visitor will be identified;
- The notification will be sent to the Health Visitor within 5 working days;
- The Health Visitor will share the information with the GP as appropriate;
- The incident will be recorded on the child's significant event sheet;
- If the mother is pregnant, the appropriate Senior Midwife will be notified who will disseminate the information to both the relevant hospital and Community Midwife;
- If it is thought appropriate, the information will be shared with other Health professionals who are known to be working with the child or family;
- All Health professionals who receive notification should review relevant information/knowledge of the family in the current context and before taking action, ascertain whether or not Social Care have intervened or plan to take action themselves;
- Health professionals should communicate between themselves, consider carefully whether there is a need for health intervention and avoid duplication of action both within the Health Service and between agencies;
- Schools may also liaise with their School Nurse in situations where there are concerns about children in a family where DV is occurring, in order to ensure that all agencies are working together.

## Role of the Education Child Protection Service (ECPS)

The ECPS can support Headteachers and DPs who are faced with concerns over DV. The Adviceline, 01223 703800, operates between 8.30 and 4.30 every weekday during school term time.

In addition, the ECPS represents schools on the **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**. A member of ECPS staff may contact a Headteacher/DP concerning a pupil(s) at the school, highlighted by the Police as being in a high-risk situation. Any information/concerns shared will be passed to the MARAC, in a confidential setting. After the meeting, any action recommended to safeguard the child/ren will be passed back to the Headteacher/DP.

Headteachers/DPs should only share information within school on a 'need to know' basis, as they would any other information concerning the safeguarding of a child.

## **MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**

The MARAC is a formal conference to facilitate the safety of high-risk victims of Domestic Violence and to reduce the chance of these victims suffering further incidents of abuse. The purpose of the conference is for agencies to share information with a view to identifying those at very high risk of further abuse, and thereafter jointly construct a safety plan to provide professional support for all those at risk. MARAC meetings are held on a monthly basis.

### **Key drivers of the MARAC are:**

- To reduce the risk to high-risk victims of Domestic Violence/Abuse;
- To increase the rate that DV/DA is reported;
- To ensure that victims of DV/DA are protected and supported.

### **Aims of the MARAC:**

- To risk assess and put safety plans in place for high-risk victims and their children;
- To share information between agencies to ensure the above aim is undertaken effectively, taking into account all available information;
- To reduce the rate of repeat victimisation, and thus reduce re-referrals to the MARAC

## **Role of Women's Aid**

Third sector organisations play a vital role in offering services to women and children who are living with or attempting to leave situations where there is domestic abuse.

### **Cambridge Women's Aid (CWA)**

P O Box 302

Cambridge

CB1 1EA

Refuge support - 01223 460947 Monday to Friday during office hours

Community based support-01223 361214 Monday to Friday during office hours

24 hr Emergency Helpline - 07730322098 outside of office hours

[refuge@cambridgewa.org.uk](mailto:refuge@cambridgewa.org.uk)

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0800 2000 247 (24 hr service).

Cambridge Women's Aid was established in 1977 and is run for women by women. Based at a central location in Cambridge city, CWA offers information, advice and ongoing practical and emotional support to women experiencing domestic abuse in strictest confidence. All women contacting CWA can access one to one support from a worker and group support at weekly coffee mornings. The Freedom Programme is available for women who want to look at how abusive relationships happen and to regain confidence and self-esteem. There is no charge for these services. Workers are experienced at listening to and supporting women. No-one is ever put under pressure to do anything they are not comfortable with. All advice and support takes place at the women's own pace. Workers always work in a way to improve women's safety and ensure that their safety is not jeopardised through contact with them.

CWA also offers emergency accommodation in a modern, purpose built refuge. The refuge is a safe house for women and children escaping domestic abuse. It is a confidential address where women can be sure they are safe, and where they and any children can access emotional and practical support from staff who understand what they have been through. Refuge is offered on a temporary basis and families are welcome to stay for a few days while they consider their options. If they decide to make a clean break from their abusive partner, they will normally stay in refuge until offered alternative accommodation. The average stay is under 6 months. The new Cambridge refuge opened in 2005 and offers a high standard of en-suite

accommodation and communal areas. CWA will find women refuge space outside of the city when it is not safe for them to remain in this area.

CWA offices are staffed during normal office hours and a worker is available on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As well as supporting women and children who have experienced domestic abuse, CWA can also offer help and advice to other agencies about how to approach individual cases.

Children are supported by the CWA Family Support Worker in refuge and CWA soon hope to be able to offer support to children living in the community too. There is no time limit to a place allocated within a refuge, as there needs to be time for recovery, and a focus upon future plans. If there are adolescent male children within a family, Women's Aid will always operate on a 'case by case' basis, regarding assessment of their suitability for refuge.

Cambridge Women's Aid offers community based support mainly to women living in Cambridge city and South Cambridgeshire. Support for women living in other areas of the county can be accessed through the national organisation Refuge. Currently Refuge do not offer direct support to children. You can contact Refuge by calling 07584233474 (Huntingdon) or 07787255821 (Fenland/East Cambs).

**Schools should be aware that they can actively promote Women's Aid when they are conscious that a family is experiencing DV/DA.**

## **5. Dealing with denial by a parent/carer or a child/Young Person**

Some parents/carers and children may disclose DV and later retract or withdraw their disclosure. Whilst in a small number of cases, the allegations may not be a true account of the home situation, it is likely that, in the majority of cases, the victim is in denial. There are many reasons why people refuse to recognise and deal with DV. These include:

- fear of the partner/the community/deportation/being alone/the financial implications of leaving
- fear of leaving the area where they live, and all the support structures they have
- the negative perception of Social Care agencies, which may become involved if they disclose
- fear of losing children
- lack of self-respect/confidence
- lack of money/fear of losing all of their possessions
- concern about accommodation
- guilt, or pity/love for the perpetrator
- belief that their partner can change, especially when there are periods of calm
- belief that they are responsible for the violence, and if THEY change, it will stop.

This list is not exhaustive; some of these may also explain why children withdraw disclosures, or do not disclose at all. **If a parent/carer or child retracts their disclosure, the Designated Person should still make the referral.**

The retraction should be noted on the Child Protection file and be passed on to Social Care via the Contact Centre with the referral. If a referral has already been phoned through to Social Care, then the information about the retraction should be telephoned through to the Contact Centre.

A professional may feel frustrated when a disclosure is retracted; however, it is crucial that the DP remains calm and objective, and maintains their empathy with the child or adult who has retracted. The reasons for retraction are very real to the victim and they may need to disclose again at a later date. It will often take several attempts before the child or parent/carer can acknowledge that the situation they are experiencing constitutes DV. It is much more likely that they will approach a professional again if they feel supported and valued.

It is important to continue to monitor the child to see if s/he is displaying signs of distress/anger/withdrawal, as DV may be ongoing. Concerns for child welfare must be addressed even in the absence of a firm disclosure.

## **6. How schools can deal with alleged perpetrators**

Allegations of DV may take time to resolve after disclosure. The alleged perpetrator may have parental responsibility and may continue to have dealings with a school, e.g. by requesting information about their child, or by attending school functions/information evenings.

Perpetrators of DV may be very adept at manipulating opinion; they may present a different image in public to that faced by those in the home environment. Alleged perpetrators may use conversations with professionals to divert attention away from their behaviour and its consequences, and to focus inappropriately on the behaviour of others. However congenially or aggressively the alleged perpetrator presents to school staff, on no account should they mention the disclosure to him/her, or challenge him/her about it.

Situations may arise, when the perpetrator is no longer living in the family home, when they make requests e.g. to come into school to speak with the child. Whilst staff may be aware of Parental Responsibilities, they should also remember that the child's welfare is paramount. A Headteacher has a right to refuse access to a parent when, in their professional judgment, such access would present difficulty to the child, other pupils and school staff. In the event of aggressive persistence by an alleged perpetrator, school staff should contact the police.

## **7. Ways of supporting a child/young person after a disclosure has been made**

It is important to maintain a normal exchange of information with the non-abusing parent/carer, in order to support the child.

In addition, any information relevant to the welfare of that child should be shared, using agreed protocols, with other agencies involved in supporting the family, e.g. Locality team.

For example, the school/relevant agency may release information on:

- changes in, or unusual, behaviour
- any further disclosures, unless there is a suspicion that doing so would place the child at risk of significant harm
- academic progress/difficulties
- progress with school – linked activities, such as Work Related Learning, or College-based courses

The non-abusing parent/carer, or other professional, should share with the school/relevant agency:

- whether the alleged perpetrator has Parental Responsibility, (see pages 16 and 17 for further information on PR)
- details of any contact arrangements formally agreed, which will have an impact upon the school
- definite plans to move to a Refuge or other accommodation, (although it may not be appropriate to share the address)
- details of incidents of DV attended by the police
- the likelihood of the perpetrator arriving at school, with an assessment of associated risks

- whether there is an injunction, or any other exclusion order, against the perpetrator, especially when it includes the school as well as the home. In relation to the likelihood of a perpetrator visiting work places such as schools/relevant agencies:
  - a written Risk Assessment should be carried out if there is a likelihood of the perpetrator arriving at the school, in relation to the victim(s), other pupils, and staff
  - relevant school staff should be made aware of the description of a perpetrator if they are presenting a danger to any of the above, with a photograph supplied if appropriate.
  - the Education Act 2002 gives Headteachers the right to request that a perpetrator leave the premises in the event of an act of threat or aggression, and to contact the Police if necessary.

## 8. Logging Concerns

Schools and other relevant agencies play an important part in monitoring the welfare of children, particularly those living with DV. The information available from monitoring such children is extremely useful, as it can inform professionals as to how best to support a child.

It is recognised that, dependent on the size of the school, the number of staff employed and the number of children attending the school, it can be very difficult to monitor a child robustly. It is recommended that any member of staff who has a concern about a child should record their concern using the 'Logging a Concern' form, and pass it to the school DP. This information may be requested by other agencies. Details recorded could relate to:

- changes in the behaviour of the child
- specific problems disclosed
- factual observation, but not personal feelings or judgments about the child (unless these are relevant to the context, and are clearly indicated as opinion, e.g. 'compared with his usual behaviour, D--- was very quiet and withdrawn').

## 9. Support packages and measures

All schools have a responsibility, under Section 175/157 of the Education Act 2002, to ensure that all their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children and young people in their care.

See Table 2 in the Appendices for ways in which young people can be supported.

### Secondary Schools

Schools need to provide an environment which may promote the young person's welfare, e.g. through pastoral support and PSHE modules. Some schools may consider that a formalised Pastoral Support Plan is appropriate to the young person's individual level of need.

N.B. Within Localities, professionals may feel the CAF framework would offer a high degree of support to any young person living with DV.

### Primary Schools

- Primary schools should work closely with the non-abusing parent/carer and any other agencies who are supporting the child and family, in order to monitor needs and implement a package of support for the child

- staff who have significant contact with the child on a daily basis (usually the Class Teacher/Teaching Assistant), should record the progress and concerns daily, using either a Home-School Book for routine matters, or the Logging a Concern procedure for Child Protection concerns, which will be dealt with by the Designated Person
- school staff should aim to have regular communication with the non-abusing parent/carer, perhaps at the beginning or end of the school day, in order to discuss briefly the child's behaviour and progress, especially if the family are living in a refuge.

N.B. Individual Risk Assessments should be developed with the non-abusing parent/carer, to ensure that any risk to the child from the perpetrator is reduced to a minimum.

## Curriculum Materials

Available to download from the Women's Aid website is the programme '**Expect Respect**', which has activities targeted at both Primary and Secondary pupils.

The Education Child Protection Service offers training on working with DV and details for schools are available from the Education Child Protection Service.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) also offers training on Domestic Abuse. Details are available on the website: [www.cambslscb.org.uk](http://www.cambslscb.org.uk)

## Early Years and Childcare settings

Staff in Early Years settings need to be aware of the extremely high vulnerability of the children in their care.

Staff should record concerns on a daily basis, if appropriate/necessary, according to LSCB guidance. Details recorded could relate to:

- changes in the behaviour of the child
- deterioration in the child's general well-being
- unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse/neglect
- factual observation, but not personal feelings or judgments about the child (unless these are relevant to the context, and are clearly indicated as opinion, e.g. 'Becky ran out of the playroom and hid in the toilets when her stepfather arrived. She appeared to be frightened')
- drawings, play or other activities which lead to disclosure

Staff should record pre-existing injuries in the normal way.

Staff should work closely with the non-abusing parent/carer in order to support the child, especially if the family are living in a refuge.

Advice for settings can be taken from the Early Years Safeguarding Manager, Gemma Hope 07868 038762

## 10. Information Sharing and Storage

Full guidance on the sharing of information is available within Chapter 1.2 of the LSCB Core Inter-agency Procedures and guidance from HM Government can be found at: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

Whilst it is desirable to seek the agreement of the non-abusing parent/carer, and of the child where appropriate, to share information, it should always be remembered that the safety and welfare of the child is paramount. If it is considered that seeking agreement to share information would put the child, or an adult,

at greater risk, advice should be sought before doing so. Where there is concern that they may be suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be paramount. Professionals should always record any reasons for their decision to share/not share information.

Storing of information should follow the same procedures as in the storing of Child Protection files, i.e. in a locked cabinet. If a child protection file already exists for a child, information relating to DV, including DV notifications, should be stored in that file. If a child protection file does not exist, when a DV notification is received, a file should be started. The name, details and, if necessary, photograph of the alleged perpetrator should be available to the Headteacher, the DP, and any other staff involved in school security, in order to protect the child, and any other pupils or staff considered to be at risk.

If the school is aware that the child is living with the alleged or known perpetrator of DV, the family may be in receipt of support from another agency e.g. Social Care or Locality Team. If the parent/carer consents, or if the school feels it is essential in order to protect the child from harm, information gathered within school may be shared with the other agency, via the Designated Person; the school may also play a part in identifying appropriate help and support for the child.

It is worth remembering that the Police send the same notifications to schools, Health and to Social Care so there would be no breach in confidentiality in these agencies sharing information with one another if the aim is to safeguard the child. The notifications are not currently sent to Locality Managers, so it would be appropriate for schools to share the information with Localities where they also have involvement with the family and particularly where they may be visiting the home.

DV is considered to be a potential cause of significant harm to children who witness it. As such professionals are expected to communicate with one another to reduce the risk to the children. If the Designated Person is in contact with a Lead Social Worker or Lead Professional from another agency supporting the non-abusing parent and the child, the DP should share information on a regular basis, e.g. once a week. In the event of a noticeable or urgent concern, the DP should share this concern the same day. If the school, via the DP or the Headteacher, needs to discuss an issue concerning the behaviour or welfare of the child, then an appointment to meet with the non-abusing parent should be made; if the school feels that to do this would pose a risk of harm to the child, then contact should initially be made with the Lead Social Worker or Lead Professional from the supporting agency.

If a child is living in a refuge: the child's school file will not disclose the refuge address; the Post Office box number may be written on the file. The Headteacher and the DP may hold the actual address of the refuge, which must be locked in the cabinet with the CP Records and should not be shared with other personnel under any circumstances.

## 11. Parental Responsibility (PR)

Where an alleged perpetrator has Parental Responsibility:

- parents do not have the right to access the Child Protection file, nor any supporting documentation. The alleged perpetrator should not have access to any information which may prejudice the prevention or detection of a crime, or the apprehension or prosecution of a perpetrator. Should such a request be made, it may be advisable to inform the other agencies investigating the matter, i.e. Police or Social Care
- if the alleged perpetrator requests to see the child's school file, (**N.B. not their child protection file**), as long as this file contains no sensitive information or information that would put the child at risk of harm, then this will normally be allowed, subject to the decision of the Headteacher
- where the alleged perpetrator has PR, they may seek information from the school, Social Care or other CYPS staff about the child for whom he/she has responsibility. In this instance, schools should:
  - check with the non-abusing parent/carer whether he/she consents to this information being disclosed to the alleged perpetrator that has PR;



- advise the non-abusive parent/carer that he or she should seek their own legal advice in order to prevent disclosure by obtaining a Court Order (Prohibited Steps).
- If the non-abusing parent does not consent to the disclosure of information, the alleged perpetrator should be told that consent has not been given. The school should then seek advice from the LA Legal Services Team.

Should the alleged perpetrator have PR and present at school asking to take the child, school staff should:

- contact the parent with whom the child normally lives, or to whom a residence order has been made, and obtain their permission prior to releasing the child
- contact the police by calling '999' if the alleged perpetrator becomes threatening or appears to pose a threat to the child, other children, staff or property

Underpinning these actions is Section 3 of the Children Act (2004), subsection 5:

'A person who –

- does not have PR for a particular child
- has care of the child

may (subject to the provisions of the Act) do what is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare'. This is often referred to as "holding power".

## 12. Starting a new school

Starting a new school can be an overwhelming experience in any case; children fleeing a DV situation will have to leave the family home and all that is familiar to them. Some may move to a Refuge, others to alternative, and often far from ideal, accommodation. The prospect of beginning again is likely to be very daunting. So that a child is able to make the best of starting a new school, the receiving school should aim to:

- introduce the child to a member of staff he/she can approach when they are feeling vulnerable or at risk
- discuss with them (and with the non-abusing parent/carer present to support the discussion if the child needs this), any support package or measure which the previous school had in place
- contact the DP from the previous school to discuss arrangements which were in place
- start a dialogue with the non-abusing parent/carer about all forms of support
- initiate active staff engagement with the child, so they can access quickly the existing structures for support, e.g. learning mentors, school counsellor, peer-support structures
- set up an agreement where necessary, together with the child and non-abusing parent, that will allow the child to experience a gradual introduction to the new school.

### Provision of transport

In exceptional circumstances, a school may consider applying to the Local Authority for funding for discretionary transport for a child who has moved to alternative accommodation where it would be crucial for them to maintain their placement at their existing school. Consideration of such cases would normally be made by the Locality Manager for the area in which the current school is located.

## 13. Exclusion from school

It is quite possible that a child experiencing DV may present challenging behaviours in school, which may lead to a fixed term exclusion. Exclusion of a child who is experiencing/fleeing DV may put them in a difficult position, and may exacerbate risk. Headteachers and senior staff would need to discuss alternatives wherever possible; information shared between professionals concerning a child would normally indicate in advance that such a situation was likely to arise.

N.B. For those children who are not in school because of a fixed-term or permanent exclusion, professionals should ensure that relevant information is shared with any agency supporting that child, e.g. County School, In-School Support Teacher or Education Welfare Officer. In cases where a child is educated in a Post-16 provision, information should be shared with the Designated Person within the establishment. In cases where the young person is aged between 16 and 18 and is not in education, information needs to be shared with the Locality Team and any other support worker involved with them.

## 14. Prevention of DV through awareness raising in all children and staff

The Women's Aid website offers downloadable resources within the 'Expect Respect' programme which can be used in a general or a targeted way: [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

Staff may be made more aware of the issues facing pupils by taking up training opportunities offered by the Education Child Protection Service and/or the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

## 15. Raising awareness of the wider school community including visitors

Schools should also make it clear to all visitors to the school that there is a clear expectation of acceptable behaviour on-site by displaying a poster in the Reception area and other relevant places.

Suggested wording might be:

*'Visitors are welcome in our school. However, if they are violent, threatening or abusive to any pupil, member of staff or other visitor, they will be asked to leave the premises, and may be subject to prosecution'.*

This statement is underpinned by both the Education Act 1996 and the Local Government Act.

Schools and other agencies should conduct a Risk Assessment, following LA guidelines, related to abusive/violent visitors.

Schools may raise awareness further by displaying publicity making it clear that DV is a crime, and will be reported if any member of staff witnesses or becomes aware of it.

## **16. Conclusion**

DV is widespread in our society, and many thousands of children and young people experience its negative effects. Because of their daily contact with pupils, staff in schools are in a unique position, both in terms of identifying signs and indicators, and in their power to act appropriately to ensure that a multi-agency response is initiated in situations where children and young people may come to harm as a result of DV. It is crucial to remember that DV is a crime, and that we should always perceive it as such. Part of our statutory responsibility is to actively promote the welfare of the children and young people in our care, and to be aware that those living with, or fleeing, DV cannot fulfil their individual potential.

**Table 1: Impact of DV on children / young people**

**Children/young people living in a household where there is DV/DA**

- an inability to concentrate because the problems at home are overwhelming
- loss of language skills
- absconding /running away
- quiet and withdrawn behaviour
- disruptive behaviour
- aggressive behaviour
- attempts to resolve potentially difficult situations by being overly-compliant
- difficulty in completing homework because of problems/volatility at home
- avoidance/delay in going home e.g. by joining in numerous after-school activities; hiding in school
- marked changes in behaviour/academic performance
- poverty/inability to pay for activities, uniform, etc., because perpetrator is withholding money from non-abusing parent
- fear/confusion/trauma
- physical injury
- illness and truanting
- stealing/lying
- tiredness due to caring-role/nightmares/sleeplessness
- lack of social life/reckless activities
- drug/alcohol/substance abuse
- self harm/eating problems
- protectiveness towards siblings/non-abusing parent
- participation in violence under duress

**Children/young people fleeing DV, e.g. in refuge or other temporary accommodation**

Children/young people living in these circumstances may experience some of the same issues as those living with DV.

In addition, they may experience:

- the after effects of living with abuse e.g. nightmares
- difficulties in making adjustment to the new surroundings/people
- fear of being found
- distress at losing pets
- distress at loss of toys/personal effects
- concern for the non-abusing parent/carer because of emotional problems/financial worries
- problems with homework due to lack of space/privacy
- loss of self-respect/guilt
- important schoolwork left in home
- not able to form new friendships
- separation from siblings (boys over 14 are not usually able to stay in refuges for women)

**Table 2: Support packages and measures**

**Support packages/measures for children/YPs living with DV**

- time out from lessons when they are seeing mentor/counsellor
- allowing outside agencies time to work with pupil in school
- additional support with homework
- developing Risk Assessments with the non-abusing parent and other agency professionals to reduce exposure to risk of harm
- targeted work on Personal Safety or PSHE programmes of study
- active engagement with support systems e.g. peer-support, mentoring
- identification of a named member of staff whom the child respects and trusts and who can be approached when they are feeling vulnerable
- where necessary, the formulation of a support plan, involving the child and appropriate professionals, targeting clear objectives/outcomes, both inside and outside school (for Secondary pupils, this may link with Work Related Learning planning/Vocational Education)
- discussions with other agencies, e.g. Social Care regarding provision of out-of-school activities to support pupil and non-abusing parent/carer
- Freedom Programme for young people

**Support packages/measures for children/YPs who are living in a refuge or other temporary accommodation**

- measures as for the pupil living with DV
- regular meetings of any professionals involved in support
- offering places and support for the completion of homework/coursework
- support with resources to enable tasks to be completed
- support with social time/activities
- offer of bursaries or grants for school trips/uniform/stationery
- targeted work to build resilience
- work with an adult mentor
- offering new opportunities within extended school day e.g. drama, sport

## Forced Marriage

In a forced marriage, unlike an arranged marriage, where there is an element of choice for the young people, one or both spouses do not freely consent to the marriage and some form of duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced Marriage is an abuse of human rights and, where a child is involved, an abuse of the rights of the child.

Detailed advice is given in Chapter 1.7 of the LSCB Core Inter-agency procedures. The leaflet '*Marriage: It's YOUR choice*' contains information about forced marriage, case studies, and information on where to seek help. They are intended specifically for children and young people and are available from the Department for Education website.



Many young people are afraid to discuss their worries with friends or others, in case their families find out. Symptoms of fear in these circumstances are very similar to other possible signs of DV.

How to respond:

If anyone suspects that a child (male or female) is at risk of a forced marriage, the information should be passed to the DP, who will refer to the specialist police unit: CHOICE on 0800 5 999 818.

At no time should:

- the child be sent back to the home and the concerns dismissed;
- members of their family or community be contacted, particularly in advance of any enquiries, and without the child's permission;

## Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships

If a young person is in a relationship where violence occurs, research shows that they are most likely to disclose to a friend; only a minority disclose to an adult. It is important therefore that appropriate guidance, information and advice is made available to young people in school through PSHE programmes in order for them to support their peers effectively.

When information or any hearsay about teenage partner violence is conveyed to staff, it should be logged and passed to the Designated Person. Similarly, any member of staff who has a reasonable suspicion that a young person is a victim of teenage partner violence should record their concerns in the same way.

## Children/ Young People as perpetrators of DA/DV

Violence and verbal aggression, damage to property and psychological control can be directed at parents by their own children but is rarely talked about.

Parents may need support to deal with this from schools and other professionals, e.g. School nurse. The Designated Person may need to consider making a referral to Social Care.

# Useful contact numbers and websites

## To make a referral or seek advice

**Cambridgeshire Direct Contact Centre** - 0345 045 5203

**Emergency Duty Team** (out of hours) Tel: 01733 234724 (8 p.m. – 8 a.m.)

**Integrated Access Team (Social Care)** Tel: 0345 045 1362

**Police – Multi-Agency Referral Unit (MARU)**

Tel: 01480 847743 / 0345 4564564

dv.referrals@cambs.pnn.police.uk

## Support and guidance for professionals

**Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Board**

[www.cambslscb.org.uk](http://www.cambslscb.org.uk)

**Education Child Protection Service Adviceline:**

Tel: 01223 703800

**Domestic Abuse Partnership Manager:**

07789 920401

**CHOICE** – specialist police unit – Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence

0800 5 999 818

**Forced Marriage (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)**

[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

## Support for victims and families:

**Childline (24 hour helpline for children)**

Tel: 0800 1111 (free)

**Women's Aid 24 – hour Domestic Violence Helpline**

Tel: 0808 2000 247

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**National DV Helpline**

Tel: 08844 8044 999

Text 60777 to NCDV

Website: [www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)

**Domestic Violence (Male) Advice and Enquiry Line**

Tel: 0808 801 0327

My ref:  
Your ref:  
Date:  
Contact: Social Care  
Direct 0345 045 1362  
E Mail: [ReferralCentre.Children@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:ReferralCentre.Children@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



**Children and Young People's Services**  
Chief Executive: Mark Lloyd

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Integrated Access Team**

The Headteacher  
[School]

Phone number 0345 045 1362

Dear Headteacher

**Notification of an Incident of Domestic Violence involving Children**

It has been brought to the attention of the Children's Social Care that an incident of domestic violence, as reported to the police, has occurred at the home(s) (or elsewhere) of the following child/children on roll at your school:

Child/children's name(s):

d.o.b:

The incident in question occurred on:

Date:

Incident No: CC:

Risk Assessment: Standard/Medium/High

**Dual Registration:**

**A duplicate letter has been sent to CAES (\*\*\*\*\*)/School *(delete if not appropriate)***

The police summary of the incident was that it involved:

*[Choose options below]*

**Were the child/ren present at time of incident – Yes/No**

**A verbal altercation between adults**

**A physical altercation between adults**

**An altercation involving damage to property**

**Harassment/Stalking**

**Other: *(to be inserted in accordance with nature of incident)***

**Delete as appropriate**

The police have shared this information with Children's Social Care in the interests of the children involved. (When the incident was first reported to the police the parents/carers of the child/children were advised by the investigating police officer that the headteacher(s) of their child/children's school would be notified of the incident.)

This information is confidential and should be shared with your staff strictly on a need-to-know basis. Please

refer to the Domestic Violence Guidance for Schools, available from the Education Child Protection Service, for further advice.

Should you have any concerns about the child/children concerned you may wish to contact the Integrated Access Team on the above telephone number.

Service Manager  
Integrated Access Team