



## FACT SHEET: Domestic Abuse and Young People

Young people can be affected by domestic abuse if they have grown up witnessing it or they can experience abuse in their own relationships. Studies have found that 40% of teenagers know girls whose boyfriends pressured them to have sex, and 42% know girls whose boyfriends have hit them. Usually women and girls are the victims and men and boys are the abusers but it can happen to boys as well. It is just as common in same sex relationships. The definition of domestic abuse starts at age 16 for both victims and young people causing harm. The Sheffield Young People and Domestic Abuse pathway can be found at:

<http://sheffielddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/resources/local-strategies/>

### The impact on teenagers and young people

Domestic abuse at home or in their own relationships can have long lasting consequences for young people:

- They are at risk of being hurt themselves if they try and protect a parent who is being abused
- Unhappiness and fear at home can lead them to spend more time on the streets or with peer groups that engage in risky behaviour. Young men in particular can be more vulnerable to gang affiliation
- Young people may be encouraged to be abusive to their mothers or blame their mothers for domestic abuse in the household
- Young people affected are more likely to misuse substances or be involved with anti-social behaviour
- They may be more vulnerable to being abused themselves either by peers or by older young people or adults

The Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board Domestic Abuse guidance **Chapter 3.7** aims to promote a multi-agency approach to early, effective intervention and safeguarding of children and young people affected by domestic abuse. It emphasises risk assessment and safety planning, as a continuous, interlinked process. A pathway for young people affected by domestic abuse has been developed and is included in the guidance.

### Further information about safeguarding and risk assessment

For information about risk assessment processes such as MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and details of forms of domestic abuse for example: Physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, forced marriage and honour based violence visit the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board website ([http://sheffielddscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p\\_dom\\_abuse.html](http://sheffielddscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_dom_abuse.html)) or the Sheffield Domestic Abuse Co-ordination Team website (<http://sheffielddact.org.uk/>).

### Aspects to remember

- Young people's relationships can be hidden, less visible, and change rapidly. Abuse can escalate quickly and the violence can be serious
- Don't assume domestic abuse is the only issue – they may be vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation or other forms of sexually harmful behaviour, gang affiliation or be at risk from a peer or peer group
- They may be coping with the impact of parental domestic abuse which may affect their attitude to relationships and what they think is normal behavior
- If they are under 18 they are still a child legally and a referral to Social Care should be considered whether the young person is a victim or a young person causing harm (young perpetrator)
- If they are under 16 they **must** always be referred to Social Care
- If they are 16 years or over an ACPO DASH should be completed and a referral to MARAC and IDVAs made if they are deemed to be at high risk of serious harm or homicide
- There may be cultural factors that make it more difficult to disclose abuse or seek help due to shame or fear of repercussions in the family or community
- If a young person discloses abuse always take them seriously.
- They may change their story and retract due to pressure from the abuser, peers or family but it does not necessarily mean the incident did not happen
- With regard to sexual activity - think about the ages of the young people, the legal age of consent and their level of maturity and understanding when thinking about whether the behaviour engaged in is appropriate
- They may be at risk from abuse outside of the home e.g. at school, in the neighbourhood, within a peer group.
- Experience of living with parental domestic abuse can make young people more vulnerable because abusive behaviour is normalised, they may not want to be at home and therefore they may become reliant on peer groups that engage in risky behaviour and, particularly for young men, there is an increased risk of gang affiliation.

