

Effects of domestic violence on children

The physical, psychological and emotional effects of domestic violence on children can be severe and long-lasting. Some children may become withdrawn and find it difficult to communicate. Others may act out the aggression they have witnessed, or blame themselves for the abuse. All children living with abuse are under stress.

That stress may lead to any of the following:

- Withdrawal
- Aggression or bullying
- Tantrums
- Vandalism
- Problems in school, truancy, speech problems, difficulties with learning
- Attention seeking
- Nightmares or insomnia
- Bed-wetting
- Anxiety, depression, fear of abandonment
- Feelings of inferiority
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Eating disorders
- Constant colds, headaches, mouth ulcers, asthma, eczema

Many people think that a child who has experienced domestic violence will inevitably become a perpetrator or victim of abuse later in their lives. This is not true.

Many children do cope with and survive abuse, displaying extraordinary resilience. But witnessing or experiencing domestic violence represents one of the most serious risks to children in our society.

No child should have to live with violence or fear..

Help for children

All children have the right to be safe. You should not be scared of anyone at home or feel upset because your mum, dad or carer is getting hurt.

If you're worried or scared about what is going on at home, it can help to talk to someone. Maybe there's a teacher you like, or another adult you trust.

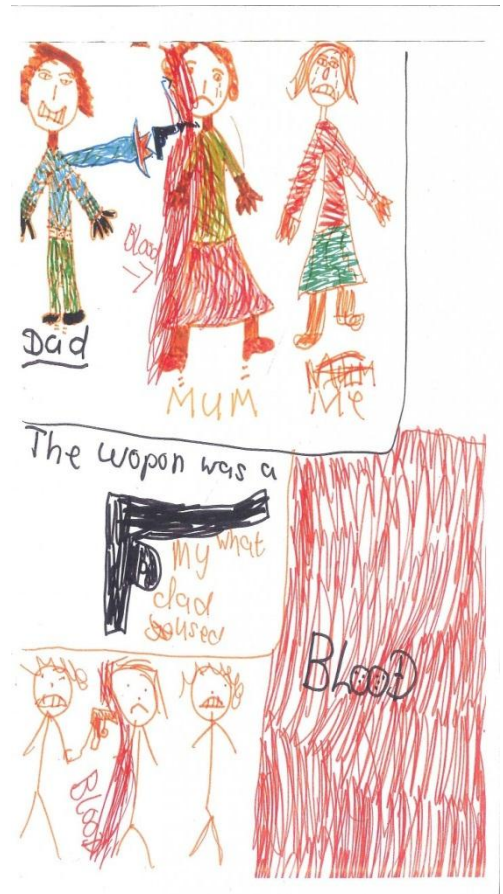
Try to remember these things:

- What's happening is not your fault
- You don't have to deal with it alone
- It's not your responsibility to protect anyone else
- There are people who can help you cope with what is happening
- Hitting or hurting someone is against the law – no-one has the right to hurt another person

Who can I talk to?

The police

If you need help right away you should call the police. Dial 999 and ask for the police. You should give your name, address and telephone number and tell the police what is happening. Don't hang up – if you do, the police might call back and this could give your dad, step-dad or mum's boyfriend the chance to tell them that everything is okay and that the call was a mistake. It's better to leave the phone off the hook so they can hear what is going on.



The police will come to your house and talk to your mum, dad or any other adults. They may even talk to you. They should make sure you are okay and have not been hurt. They may take away the person who was violent. Whatever happens you should remember that the abuse is not your fault.

Childline and the NSPCC

If you can talk safely to someone about what is happening, you can call Childline (0800 1111) or the NSPCC (0808 800 5000). You don't have to tell them your name and the calls are free. They will listen to you, talk to you about what is happening and help you decide what to do next.

A teacher, doctor or other adult you trust

Talking to someone like a teacher, doctor or another adult you trust can help. They will want to make sure that you and your mum are safe so they might want to talk to your mum too. If they are worried that you might get hurt they may have to tell someone else. They should always tell you what they are doing and who they are planning to talk to.