

Children and young person's domestic abuse referral pathway

Do you have concerns or information about an unborn, baby, child or young person (under 18) being exposed to domestic abuse?

Yes

Is the child at immediate risk or are there any immediate safety concerns?

Yes

Emergency response

Call 999 and ensure the safety of the child

and

Phone the IOW MASH
01983 823436 office hours or
0300 555 1373 Out of Hours

No

Non-emergency response

Make a referral to the IOW Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) using the [Inter-Agency Referral Form \(IARF\)](#)

Use the [Threshold Chart](#) to support your referral

In all case, ensure you:

- **Listen actively and without judgment** – allow the child or young person to speak freely.
- **Validate their feelings** – reassure them that it's okay to talk and that they are not to blame.
- **Use age-appropriate language** – tailor your communication to their developmental level.
- **Avoid leading questions** – let them describe their experiences in their own words.
- **Be patient** – don't rush the conversation or pressure them to say more than they're ready to.
- **Assess immediate safety** – determine if the child or young person is at immediate risk of harm.
- **Don't promise confidentiality** – explain that you may need to share the information to keep them safe
- **Record accurately** – include what the child says, using their words and note their behaviour and presentation
- **Consider the whole family** – are there siblings or other family members that are also affected?

Useful links and contacts

- ★ Victim Care Hub: 0808 178 1641
- ★ Hampton Trust Advice Line: 02380 001061
- ★ Paragon (You Trust): 0800 234 6266
- ★ Isle of Wight Adult Social Care (safeguarding): 01983 82334
- ★ [Domestic Abuse pathway \(adults\)](#)
- ★ [Safe Lives Dash risk checklist for young people](#)
- ★ [Children and Young People Paragon referral form](#)
- ★ [Safety Planning with Children and Young People - A toolkit for working with children and youth exposed to domestic violence](#)
- ★ [HIPS Procedure for Safeguarding Children Exposed to Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)
- ★ [Paragon: Supporting children and young people](#)

Children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse (DA) is any single incident, course of conduct or pattern of abusive behaviour between individuals aged 16 or over who are 'personally connected' to each other as a result of being, or having been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also victims of domestic abuse. Behaviour is 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; or psychological, emotional or other abuse. This includes incidents where the abusive party directs their behaviour at another person (e.g. a child).

Children and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, **children are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, if they see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, and are related to or under parental responsibility of the perpetrator of the abuse or the victim of the abuse.**

Abuse directed towards a child is defined as child abuse.

What services are there to support children and young people?

Paragon - Paragon is the Isle of Wight Council's domestic abuse commissioned service supporting adults, children and young people. They also provide support and services to those experiencing child to parent abuse. Paragon delivers support across the Isle of Wight to children of all ages (0-18) who have been victims of domestic abuse. Support for children aged 0-4 would be delivered indirectly via a parent/carer.



**Children and Young People
Paragon referral form**

Hampton Trust - Hampton Trust work with individuals who have perpetrated or been the victims of domestic abuse. They also provide services for victim-survivors of sexual crimes through the Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs).



- ★ **Pathways to change** - a service designed to help individuals understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy actions associated with harmful behaviour. Participants will learn tools and strategies for more positive behaviours in their intimate relationships and make steps towards a better future. [Pathways to change leaflet](#).
- ★ **CARA** - An early intervention for low risk, first time offenders of domestic abuse who have received a conditional caution.

- ★ **JUNO** - A trauma informed, rehabilitative early intervention for women who have entered the criminal justice system as a result of minor offending and have received a conditional caution
- ★ **ISVA** - A support service for victims of sexual violence (current and historic) ISVAs offer personalised emotional and practical support, assisting survivors with navigating the criminal justice process, accessing counselling, and connecting with essential resource.

Victim Care Hub - Free, confidential support for victims and witness of crime. The victim care hub deliver support across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to children of all ages (0-18) who have been both victims and/or witnesses to crime. Support can be delivered whether the Domestic Abuse is ongoing or past abuse for that child/young person, and where that individual or family is in the criminal justice system, or whether the crime has been reported or not. Support for children aged 0-4 would be delivered indirectly via a parent/carer.



Victim Care Hub
Children and Young
People referral form

Talking to Children and Young People about domestic abuse

Talking to a child or young person about domestic abuse is a delicate and important task. Here are some guidelines to help you approach this conversation:

Tailor questions to their age and development. Encourage them to share, ask open-ended questions to explore their feelings and experiences and ensure they know about safe places and trusted adults who can support them.

- ★ **Create a Safe Environment:** Ensure the conversation takes place in a safe, private, and comfortable setting where the child feels secure. Help them explore their sense of safety by asking about family dynamics, trusted adults, and their understanding of respect and kindness.
- ★ **Ask open-ended questions:** Avoid closed or leading questions. Let the describe their experiences in their own words. Examples might include: "Can you tell me what a normal day looks like at home?" "Is there anything at home that makes you feel worried or scared sometimes?" "What do you do when someone at home is upset or angry?"
- ★ **Be Age-Appropriate:** Tailor your language and explanations to the child's age and developmental level. Use simple, clear language for younger children and more detailed explanations for older children and teenagers. Some prompts may include: "What makes you feel safe at home?", "Who can you talk to when you're scared?", "If something could change at home, what would you want that to be?"
- ★ **Listen actively without judgement:** Give the child your full attention. Listen without interrupting and validate their feelings. Let them know it's okay to express their emotions.

- ★ **Be Honest and Clear:** Ensure that you don't promise to keep what the child is saying to you confidential. Explain that you need to share the information to keep them safe. Be sure to emphasise that what they are experiencing is not their fault and that they are not alone.
- ★ **Be creative:** Encourage the child to express their feelings through talking, using toys/puppets, drawing, or writing. E.g.: "Can you draw or describe how things feel when people argue at home?" "Can you show me with toys or drawings what happens when someone is angry at home?"
- ★ **Provide Support:** Let the child know about the support available to them, such as trusted adults they can talk to, Childline and safe places they can go.
- ★ **Follow Up:** Keep the lines of communication open. Check in with the child regularly to see how they are feeling and to offer ongoing support.
- ★ **Seek Specialist Help:** If the child is struggling to cope, consider making a referral for specialist support services such as Paragon.

MARAC and HRDA

- ★ **MARAC** (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings focus on a comprehensive assessment of victims' needs, ensuring the right actions and services are in place to keep them safe.
- ★ **HRDA** (High-Risk Domestic Abuse) meetings focus on the highest-risk domestic abuse incidents, ensuring an urgent coordinated response.

MARAC referral form

Impact of domestic abuse on children

Children who are victims of domestic abuse are at risk of both short and long-term physical and mental health problems. Every child will be affected differently by the trauma of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse profoundly affects children and young people, even if they are not direct targets. Exposure to abuse can lead to emotional, psychological, and behavioural issues. Children may experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, eating disorders and difficulties forming healthy relationships. Witnessing abuse can also impair cognitive development, concentration, and academic performance. In some cases, children may replicate abusive behaviours or internalise guilt and blame.

Adolescents who are victims of domestic violence are more likely to engage in harmful behaviours, substance abuse, or develop mental health disorders. The long-term effects can extend into adulthood, influencing their ability to form stable relationships and maintain emotional well-being. Early intervention is crucial to mitigate these impacts and support recovery.

Examples of the [short-term effects, long-term effects and the signs and indicators of a child experiencing domestic abuse](#) you may see in children at different ages/stages of development.

Domestic abuse in pregnancy or with babies

There is significant evidence that domestic abuse often starts and escalates during pregnancy and poses significant safeguarding risks for both the mother and unborn child.

Victims who are assaulted while pregnant or when they have recently given birth, should be considered as high risk. This is in terms of future harm to them and to the unborn/baby. Abuse during pregnancy may lead to physical harm like miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight, while also impacting the mother's mental health. Emotional stress can affect the unborn child's development, resulting in long-term cognitive and behavioural challenges. Many women may not seek help due to fear, dependence, or not recognising abuse. Professionals must remain alert, offer safe environments, and ensure ongoing support to protect both the mother and child from harm.

Healthcare professionals play a vital role in identifying and supporting victims. Routine screening in maternity services is essential for early detection and intervention. It is crucial to conduct these screenings in a safe environment, never in the presence of the partner, to ensure the woman feels secure and supported.

Teenage relationships & child-on-child (peer on peer) abuse

Abuse in teenage relationships and between peers is when someone begins to feel scared or controlled by the person they're with. They may be confused because it feels like a loving relationship but often only when they behave in a certain way. This can happen at any age, regardless of gender. Addressing teenage relationship and child-on-child abuse is critical to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children and young people involved.

Professionals must offer a safe environment for disclosure and follow safeguarding procedures to protect children. Support services can focus on identifying abusive behaviours early, providing support to both the victim and the person using abusive behaviour, and educating young people about healthy relationships, respect, and empathy.

Additionally, services can work with children to raise awareness about consent, boundaries, and respectful communication, which can help prevent abusive behaviours from escalating.

Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA)

Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) refers to harmful behaviours by children or adolescents towards parents or caregivers, including physical violence, emotional abuse, threats, and controlling behaviours. Despite its serious impact, CAPVA is often underreported due to a range of emotional, social, and practical barriers. Many parents struggle to recognise it as abuse, fearing judgement, stigma, and the belief that parental authority should prevent such behaviour. Acknowledging harm from one's own child can be particularly painful, as parents often feel guilt, love, and responsibility, making it harder to seek help. Shame and self-blame may discourage them from reaching out, while concerns about criminalisation, family separation, or escalating the situation further add to their reluctance. A lack of awareness and limited support services also contribute to underreporting, leaving families feeling isolated and uncertain about where to turn. As a result, many parents endure repeated incidents before seeking help.

Safety planning with Children and Young People

Safety planning is crucial to protect children from domestic abuse. It involves identifying safe spaces, trusted adults, and simple steps for seeking help. Adapt plans to the child's age and needs, ensuring emotional and physical safety. Regularly review and update the plan. Safety planning not only provides an element of protection but also empowers children with a sense of control in otherwise chaotic situations. By involving them in the process, professionals can help children understand the importance of their safety and how to respond if abuse escalates. It is vital that the plan remains flexible, allowing for changes in the family dynamic or the child's environment.

[Safety Planning with Children and Young people - A toolkit for working with children and young people who are victims of domestic violence](#)

Operation Encompass

[Operation Encompass](#) is a Police and Education early intervention safeguarding protocol which supports school age children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse. The objective is for schools to be notified in a timely manner where children have witnessed or are present at an address where a domestic incident has taken place.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary aim to:

Ensure that schools have timely information about all police attended incidents of domestic abuse

- ★ To ensure all children who are victims of domestic abuse receive timely support in their school.
- ★ Operation Encompass within Hampshire and the IOW currently incorporates local authority and academy schools for Primary, Secondary age groups and some colleges.

Useful contacts

- ★ Isle of Wight Children's Services Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub: mash@iow.gov.uk or phone 01983 823436
- ★ Victim Care Hub: 0808 178 1641
- ★ Hampton Trust Advice Line: 02380 001061
- ★ Paragon: 0800 234 6266
- ★ Isle of Wight Adult Social Care (safeguarding): 01983 823340
- ★ [STAR counselling](#) or [Yellow Door](#) (sexual abuse) Useful Links
- ★ Independent Sexual Violence Advisor: isva@hamptontrust.org.uk / 02380 009898

Useful links

[Domestic Abuse pathway \(adults\)](#) help and support for domestic abuse

[Safe Lives Dash risk checklist for young people](#)

[Domestic abuse information for professionals – Isle of Wight Council](#)

Pregnancy / new baby:

- [HIPS Procedure: Unborn Baby Safeguarding Protocol](#)

Children and young people subjected to parental domestic abuse:

- [Paragon: Supporting children and young people](#)
- [HIPS Procedure: Safeguarding Children as victims of domestic abuse](#)
- [Family Approach Protocol and Toolkit](#)

Child on Child (Peer on Peer) abuse:

- [Harmful Sexual Behaviour](#)
- [Teenage Relationship Abuse - Childrens Society](#)
- [Child on Child \(Peer on Peer\) abuse | Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton](#)
- [Child on Child Abuse toolkit](#)

Child and adolescent to parent violence and abuse:

- [Respect](#)
- [Child to parent abuse - Parental Education Growth Support \(PEGS\)](#)
- [Who's in charge – Barnardo's](#) - 9 week program to help parents/carers manage child to parent violence

Training:

- [Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Training](#)