

The purpose of this strategy and linked practice guidance and toolkit is to prevent and reduce the impact of Domestic Abuse on children within the city of Plymouth. We know that Domestic Abuse remains one of the key contributing factors for children placed on child protection plans in Plymouth and it remains one of our strategic priorities. This strategy in conjunction with our practice guidance and toolkit will provide a local understanding of the prevalence of Domestic Abuse and its impact on children, support our practitioners and improve identification and response to Domestic Abuse across all agencies working together.

What is Domestic abuse?

How does it impact children and Young People?

The DA Act 2021 recognises that DA consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse.
- violent or threatening behavior.
- controlling or coercive behavior
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

It does not matter whether the behavior consists of a single incident or a course of conduct. It can happen between intimate partners and wider family members.

The DA Act 2021 also recognises the devastating impact that domestic abuse can have on children who experience its effects in their homes and relationships.

Part 1 of the DA Act 2021 states that a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, domestic abuse and is related to or under parental responsibility of the person being abused or the perpetrator is also to be regarded as a victim of domestic abuse. Children are at risk of direct physical, sexual, emotional harm and coercive control. This means that children affected by DA are to be considered survivors in their own right and are entitled to local, specialist support.

Children and Young people who have received the right support at the right time around their experience with Domestic Abuse tell us:

- "Mum is happier, I am happier".
- "My relationship with my mum has become stronger and better".
- "I really liked how I could express my feelings".
- "I am more caring towards my mum".
- "My relationship with mum is a lot better, because they [Social Services] listened and helped us".
- "Before attending group I was a lot more upset and worried about my mental health and my wellbeing, now I'm not as worried how bad my problems are".
- "Relationships have got better – everything because now I feel that people listen about what's happened with Daddy."

Survivors whose children have received the right support at the right time around their experience with Domestic Abuse tell us:

- "It has made me and my daughter closer".
- "The best thing we've done to help the healing process"
- "Helped build my confidence up"
- "My children are learning to trust me"
- "You're able to share and not feel judged"

Our Key Principles

- We recognise children and young people as survivors in their own right.
- We adopt a whole family, coordinated community response approach, which includes:
 - Safeguarding the child(ren)
 - Employing a strengths-based model, focusing on keeping children safe with the non-abusive parent
 - Supporting the non-abusive parent
 - Holding the person causing harm to account providing opportunities for change at the earliest stage.
 - Recognising the impact that domestic abuse perpetration has on parenting.
 - Developing domestic abuse and trauma informed practice.
- We design interventions and support based on the voices and experiences of children and young people.
- We recognise our response must include prevention and early intervention as well as acute and long-term support for children and young people.
- We will build trust through prioritising relationships, fostering change and connecting rather than signposting people to services; we will strive to create conditions where the right care is delivered at the right time and place.
- We believe children have the right to childhood and resist adultification by ensuring our language and our interventions are age appropriate.

Our Ambitions

- To ensure all child survivors and young people, regardless of background, are safe and free from Domestic Abuse and receive the appropriate levels of effective specialist and universal support around their experience of Domestic Abuse when they need it for as long as they need it by a joined up coordinated community response.
- To prevent and stop inter-generational abuse.
- To have a workforce who is Domestic Abuse aware and confident in the identification of and whole family response to this issue.
- To support every child and young person to understand what a healthy relationship looks like.
- To make sure there is a greater focus on the needs of children, rather than just on the parent survivor and that the needs of every child survivor are assessed separately and independently.
- That every organisation in the city is clear on their role and responsibility for supporting children and young people affected by Domestic Abuse, which is backed up by financial and resource based commitment.

Our Priorities

- Develop a confident and informed workforce via:
 - Consistent learning across partnerships, supervision, workforce development and training.
 - Adopting and implementing the 'Safe and Together' model.
- Secure additional long-term, sustainable resources, joint funding and formal commissioning of specialist services for:
 - Young People and adults who are causing harm.
 - Child survivors affected by familial abuse.
 - Young People affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence in their own intimate relationships.
- Focus on prevention and early intervention:
 - Healthy relationships within schools and the community
 - Early identification of domestic abuse
 - Support available through Family Hubs

How will we measure and communicate positive change for our children and families?

- Children and young people in Plymouth report feeling listened to, heard and supported in their experience of Domestic Abuse.
- Significant adults around the child or young person report improved and more connected relationships.
- Increased confidence levels of practitioners in being able to work with adult and child survivors and young people and adults who cause harm via a strengths based, domestic abuse and trauma informed approach versus a "failure to protect" model.
- Increased confidence, trust and engagement of survivors with services.
- Increase the number of young people and adults who cause harm enrolled on, engaged with or completing behavioural change work.
- Increase the number of children and young people who receive individualised care plans or support around their experience of domestic abuse.
- Creation and delivery of an effective healthy relationships alliance in the city.
- Increase the number of schools who are delivering a whole schools approach to healthy relationships.
- Increase in the number of adult survivors feeling believed and supported in a strength based response versus experiencing a "failure to protect model"