

If you feel that you are not coping with your child or that their behaviour is worsening or dangerous it is important to get help and support as soon as possible. You can speak with your IDVA, a teacher, your health visitor, your midwife or your GP.

All of the above agencies have a duty of care to you and your child. If your child is considered at significant risk of harm then these agencies may have to share information with each other. Where possible, we, and they, will attempt to get your permission to share information. In some cases though, we may need to share information without your permission if it would put your

Other factsheets in this series

- Leaflet 1** Pregnancy and domestic abuse
- Leaflet 1a** You, your child and domestic abuse
- Leaflet 2** Parenting Babies under 18 months
- Leaflet 3** Parenting Toddlers (18 -24 months)
- Leaflet 4** Parenting Preschool Children
- Leaflet 5** Parenting 5 - 12 year olds
- Leaflet 6** Parenting Teenagers
- Leaflet 7** Separation, Moving home & Contact
- Leaflet 9** Communicating with your child about domestic abuse. What children need to hear from the victim
- Leaflet 10** Successful Parenting

You can access these factsheets and find out more information about domestic abuse at the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership website

www.cambsdasv.org.uk

Cambridge Women's Aid **01223 361214**
(City/South Cambs)
Refuge **07787 255821**
(Fenland, East Cambs, Hunts)

Children's Social Care (Cambridgeshire)
0345 045 5203
Specialist abuse services for children
& young people (Peterborough) **01733 669404**



**Cambridgeshire
& Peterborough**
Domestic Abuse & Sexual
Violence Partnership

What children learn when they experience domestic abuse



Leaflet 8

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN WHEN THEY EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC ABUSE

This leaflet is one of a series of ten. They are designed to give you information on how domestic abuse may impact on your children and how you can help your child to overcome the effects of domestic abuse.

Leaflet 8 - Children who experience domestic abuse and/or violence can often have a skewed view on relationships and how people should behave with each other. It is very important that you understand what your child's belief systems are about abuse and how to help them overcome negative beliefs and explore healthy relationships. This leaflet will briefly explore what children can learn when they have witnessed domestic abuse and encourage you to think about how the abuse has impacted on your children directly.

It is important that you begin to think of your children as inside the abusive situation and affected by it in many different ways and acknowledge how they will have felt during an incident of abuse and/or violence.

SOME OF THESE FEELINGS MAY INCLUDE:

Scared
Powerless
Confused
Bad
Helpless
Angry
Self Blaming
Anxious
Guilt at loving the abusive parent
Guilt at not being able to protect you

Worried about the future
Insecure
Hopeless
Split down the middle
Numb

Children experience all of the emotions that we as adults experience. However, they are less knowledgeable about their world than adults. Situations that we may see as manageable may seem insurmountable to them. Without us talking to them about abuse, they can be left with the feelings discussed above and no way to make sense of their situation, emotions and thoughts. If we don't talk to our children about the abuse they have experienced they may develop belief systems about the world that are untrue.

THEY MAY LEARN:

Other people are responsible for my behaviour (it is my sister's fault that I hit her because she wouldn't do what I said)
I am responsible for other people's behaviour (my mum and dad had a fight and she was cross. She wouldn't have hit me if my room had been clean)
Men have the right to control women (my mum never stops him)
Violence is a way to solve problems (my dad hit my mum because tea wasn't ready on time)
The abuse/violence was my mum's fault
Women have no rights
My mum can't protect me
Nothing is safe
Domestic abuse/violence is normal
If I intimidate people I will get what I want
Other people have the right to abuse me
The abuse was my fault
It's ok to abuse my mum

It's ok to abuse other people
You should not talk about abuse/violence
You must deny your own feelings

It is very important that you speak with your child and allow them to tell you how they have felt about the abuse. Without talking, they also get unrealistic beliefs about the causes of abuse which are listed above. You can begin to work with them on their negative beliefs and views on people and relationships.

BELOW ARE SOME THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP THEM:

Talk to them when they are ready
Listen to them
Talk about their feelings
Show understanding

It's a lot scarier for children when no one talks to them about the abuse. The benefits of talking to our children about domestic abuse and/or violence are that they feel safer, learn that abuse is not their fault, that it is never ok, it also helps them feel cared for and that it is ok to talk about feelings. The Leaflet entitled "Communicating with children about domestic abuse: What children need to hear from the victim" will help you to understand how to talk to your children further about your experiences.