

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Practitioner Guide

Understanding Domestic Abuse

Funded by Cheshire West and Chester Community Safety Partnership and developed with the support of West Cheshire Children's Trust - Our Way of Working



Overview:



This booklet of activities is designed to give young people an understanding of what domestic abuse is, and that it is not OK. It will enable them to have more of an understanding about what has happened in order for them to be able to regulate and explore their feelings and emotions positively.

They will be taking part in activities that will help them explore their feelings and allow them to recognise different emotions. They will also be encouraged to work on recognising safety and the people they feel safe with as well as completing a safety plan.

This guide will offer support on how to facilitate activities with young people. It is advised that activities are completed with the young person in order.

This booklet can be used with any young person of school age who has witnessed or been exposed to domestic abuse.



What we ask of you:

- Allow the young person to open up and talk in their own time at their own pace, it is important that they feel comfortable enough to express their thoughts and feelings.
- It is important that the young person understands why they are working through the booklet and what the activities will involve. This will reduce anxiety of the “unknown.”
- This booklet is designed to open up conversations and allow a young person a safe space to share, please ensure they are supported before and after any sessions.
- Session check-in and check-outs are helpful at the beginning and end of any session. Simply using traffic lights, smiley faces or a mixture of both.
- Stop cards are also useful to give the young person an opportunity to stop activities or discussion at any time if they feel uncomfortable or upset.
- Use the terminology “Domestic Abuse” throughout the programme as it is important for young people to be able to identify this in future relationships.
- The activities should be fun and friendly, having coloured pens, pencils and other craft materials available to the young person allows them to be creative.

Talking to the young person:

Be curious, ask questions, consider motivational interviewing techniques and trauma informed language:

- Tell me about....
- What do you think?
- Describe that to me.....
- Explain that....
- What is it about....you like/don't like/makes you sad...
- On a scale of 1-10 - what would make you higher/lower, what does '9' look like



-
- **Encouraging** - you can do this by reflecting a word or phrase to encourage them to carry on

Young Person: *"Things at home make me feel sad sometimes"*

Practitioner: *"Sad....?"*

-
- **Acknowledging** - show that you have some understanding

"That must have been difficult"

-
- **Checking** - you can show you've been listening by asking questions, this helps reinforce that you have an interest in what is being said

"How did that make you feel?"

"What happened after you said that?"

-
- **Clarification** - if you find that a young person is dodging or avoiding the issue you can encourage them to clarify points, this will not only help yourself but is likely to help them too.

"Tell me more about..."

-
- **Empathy** -

"... this sounds like it is/was hard for you"

-
- **Summarising** - this shows you've listened and understood what's been said. It also gives them a chance to correct you if you've misunderstood and it enables young people to hear it back

"I'm hearing you say that you're feeling upset because..."

Before You Start....

Self-Care as a Practitioner

Domestic abuse is a very sensitive topic and can trigger unexpected emotions, experiences, and feelings.

As practitioners we need to ensure we look after ourselves and need to be able to identify if we need support. Talking to a colleague, your line manager, Designated Teacher if you are in a school or in supervision if not in a school can be extremely useful whether it be as a debrief following a session or a more personal well-being supervision.

Below we have included some numbers that may be of use.

- National 24-hour Helpline 0808 200 247
- DV assist 0800 195 8699
- Domestic Abuse Intervention and Prevention Service – 0300 123 7037 (opt2)
- NCDV 0800 9702070
- Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Team 01233 907710
- Childrens Safeguarding and Early Help and Prevention Service 0300 123 7037 (opt1)

Guidelines and Safeguarding when Working with Young People and Families.

A key part of working with young people is honesty. Before sessions start, it is paramount that the young person is aware of our duty of care. You must ensure that guidelines are in place and although sessions are confidential, ensure you explain to the young person that if you have a safeguarding concern for them or another person you have a duty to report this to ensure everyone's safety.



Activity 1: All about me

Let the young person fill in what they want to. If they are struggling with what they are good at, ask what their friends may say. Young People may wish to make their own all about me page rather than use the template. If the Young Person has a One-Page Profile you can use this to support the activity.

Activity 2: What is Domestic Abuse?

This activity is to develop a young person's understanding of domestic abuse. It is important that they become aware of correct terminology, therefore do not shy away from using the term domestic abuse. It will also help them to identify any further domestic abuse they witness as young people or are subjected to in their adult relationships



Ask them to write down what they think domestic abuse is first

This definition below can be shared

In some families, adults sometimes argue or fight and may hurt one another. If one adult uses violence (hitting, punching, kicking or using weapons) or bullying (criticising, name calling, shouting) to hurt or control another adult, this is called 'domestic abuse'.

Domestic abuse can cause children and young people in the family a lot of worry, upset and even danger.

Allow the young person to share any thoughts they have on domestic abuse ensuring they know that is NOT ok and is NOT their fault. Violence or bullying should NEVER be used to hurt or control another person.

Following your discussions, ask the young person to create a poster that could be given to an alien to help them understand what domestic abuse is .

Following this, explore with the young person what a healthy relationship is by using the word search. They may have additional ideas themselves and allow them to add these words to the list

For young people age 13+ you may wish to use the teenage relationship wheels to explore with them the characteristics of unhealthy and healthy intimate relationships. First look at the healthy relationship wheel with the characteristics and explore with young people what they mean and examples of what behaviours they may see. For example, 'what does trust, and support mean to you, what does it look like in a healthy relationship?' Then look at the unhealthy relationship wheel and explore what abusive behaviour looks like in an intimate relationship.

There is also a page to help teenagers understand their relationship rights. Within this session, please consider speaking with young people about the legal age of consent for sexual activity: The law The age of consent or the legal age to have sex in the UK is 16. The laws are there to protect children and not to prosecute under 16s who have mutually consenting sexual activity. Any sort of sexual contact without consent is illegal, regardless.

You can explore consent with a young person, there is further information available at www.brook.org.uk/your-life/sex-and-consent and information and resources at www.thinkuknow.co.uk [Exploring_Healthy_Relationships.pdf](#) (splitz.org)

Young people can also download an app called **Healthy Relationships, Healthy You!** which will give them opportunity to learn how to spot signs of abusive relationships and unhealthy relationships using interactive quizzes and case studies

Activity 3: Emotions

This activity is designed to talk about feelings and allow young people to recognise how witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse may have made them feel.

Use the emojis for the young people first to identify what feeling each emoji links to. Support the young person to think of a time, place, memory or person that may have made them feel each emoji.

Please refer to the beginning of this guide for tips around discussions with young people.

Activity 4 - Desert Islands

Ask the young person to first draw their 'safe' island and draw themselves on it. They should be able to identify and add people or things that they love or think helps them to be safe.

When drawing their second island, they can add a boat or a draw-bridge, for people they would like to see but not all of the time. Help the young people explore, why it is that these people are on the second island.

Ask the young person to draw a third island surrounded by sharks which means they won't be able to visit the other two islands, who would they put on this island?

This activity helps young people to explore their safety and further explore their emotions and feelings linked to people they know. You can refer back to the previous activity to help them to understand their feelings further.

It is important the young person knows; you can still love someone and not like their behaviours or the way they make you feel.

There is a further space in the booklet for any thoughts and reflections the young person has following completion of the first four activities (this can be used at any time)

Activity 5 - Help Wanted

Revisit work around feelings and emotions from previous activities. Talk to the young person about what happens to their bodies with each (negative) feeling e.g. stomach cramps, headaches, clenching fists, grinding teeth, feeling hot, crying. Support the young person in identifying safe ways to reduce those feelings. Some ideas are in the booklet, ask them to think about whether there is anything they can do or they go to help them feel less of that feeling. Encourage them to practice before they get those feelings.

With younger children you may wish to read 'The Huge Bag of Worries' by Virginia Ironside or watch it here [Miss Smitheram reads The Huge Bag of Worries - YouTube](#)

Discuss with the young person how Jenny could not stop the bag getting bigger and bigger until she let them out slowly one by one by telling someone. Explore who the young person could share their worries with. This will help them identify a safe trusted adult.

Activity 6 - Safety

Go through the safety pages with the young person and help them to complete the safety plan

Activity 7 - Let it Go

This activity supports the young person to address any strong and conflicting emotions they have around their experiences. The idea is to ensure that the young person can start to manage some of their feelings and regulate some of their emotions.

Support the young person to write in the balloons in the booklet some things that they can't change or control. Help them to imagine letting them go and the balloons floating away.

Alternatively, you can use real balloons, which they can blow up, write on and then pop.

Activity 8 - Who Would You Tell?

Read through the poem in the booklet with the young person, allow them to revisit their safe people and put them in their body circle.

Finish the activity by sharing with them, as a young person they have the right:

To be safe, cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect.

To be brought up by their parents and carers in a family where they are safe.

To have their wishes taken into account in matters affecting them.

To be treated with dignity and respect.

Further resources to support you:

Our Way of Working website

<https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/>

Trauma Informed Language:

<https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/our-shared-language/>

Resources: <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/resources/>

To find out more about Motivational Interviewing:

<https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/training-for-you/>

