

Domestic abuse can deeply affect children, even if they are not the direct target

Almost a million children are affected by domestic abuse across the UK every year*. Two thirds of child protection plans in Sutton have a domestic abuse element.**

Adverse experiences have a direct impact on a child's mental health, which can continue into adulthood: 1 in 3 adult mental health conditions relate directly to adverse childhood experiences***.

Children and families are less likely to report incidents of domestic abuse during school holidays. This is due to a number of factors including: fear, keeping the violence a secret because they have been told to do so, or not being at school so they are not in contact with a trusted person.

Families are likely to be spending more time together during the summer holidays, and if there is an increase in alcohol consumption this can contribute to an increase in the frequency and severity of incidents of domestic abuse (though alcohol itself does not cause otherwise non-abusive individuals to become abusive).

Many children intervene and attempt to stop the violence or try to be the peacemakers and get injured in the process. It is important to recognise any unusual behaviour, emotional outbursts, low mood or neglectful appearance from any children you come into contact with.

According to research carried out among residents in Sutton, uncertainty of what would happen to any children involved in the situation could be a barrier to reporting domestic abuse (46% said this)****. It's important to reassure people that there is no presumption that an abused parent cannot be a good parent. Wherever possible, the focus will be on supporting that parent and helping them to protect their children themselves.

Older teenagers can also find themselves in potentially abusive situations during the summer holidays. As they spend more time with their peers without adult supervision, they can come under pressure to do things they are uncomfortable with. Again, the presence of alcohol can contribute to incidents of controlling or coercive behaviour.

For more information, including details of local and national agencies that can help families and children, see www.notaloneinsutton.org.uk.

*Lorraine Radford, S. C. (2011). *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*. London: NSPCC.

**From Quality and Assurance data taken from monitoring forms

***Kessler RC, McLaughlin KA, Green JG, Gruber MJ, Sampson NA, Zaslavsky AM et al (2010) Childhood adversities and adult psychopathology in the WHO World Mental Health Surveys. *Br J Psychiatry* 197(5):378–385

**** Sutton Domestic Abuse Research Report 2017