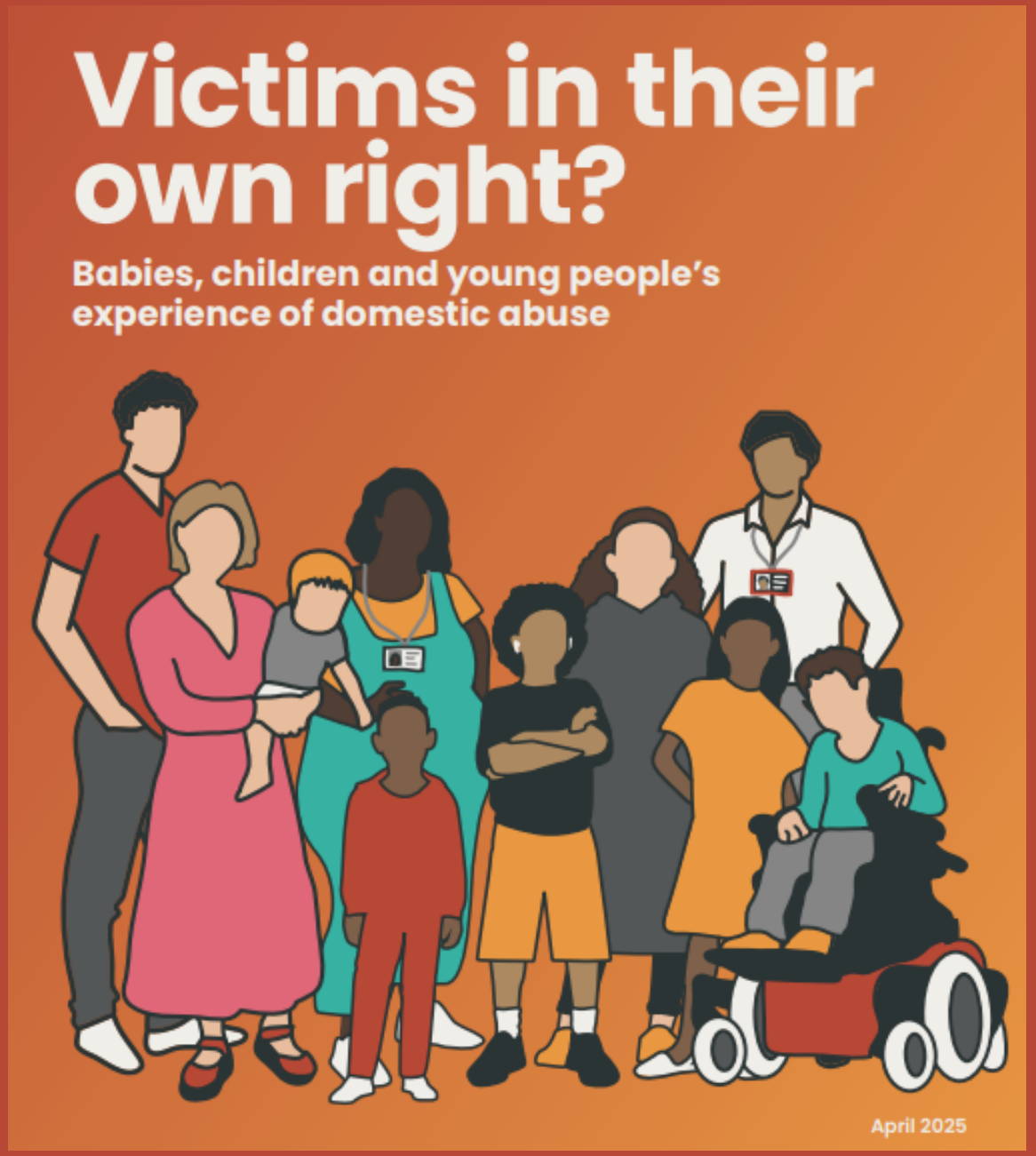


Victims in their own right

Webinar G1 : Overarching Themes

May 2025

domestic abuse commissioner

Agenda

Introduction & background
Sources and Methodology
Tell Nicole
Exploration of support services
Key messages
Recommendations and levers

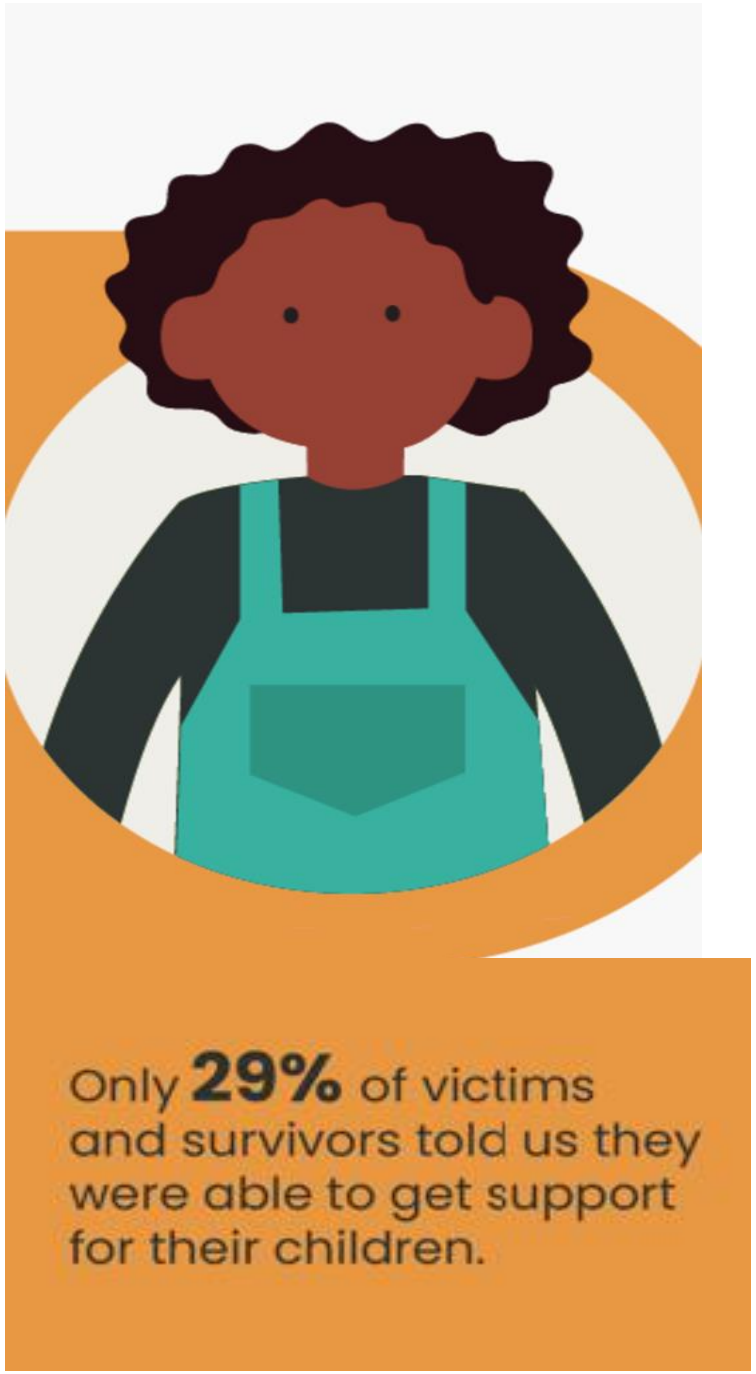
Commissioner@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk

Content warning: The presentation does not include any direct descriptions of domestic abuse. There are words and pictures that children have written and made, which describe their feelings about the help they did or did not receive. They also describe what they wish would change. Some people may find the children's words upsetting. Please take a break away from the presentation if you need to.






A Patchwork of Provision
How to meet the needs of victims and survivors across England and Wales
SUMMARY REPORT


Only 29% of victims and survivors told us they were able to get support for their children.

Six key priorities



Domestic abuse service provision



Family Court



The police & criminal justice



Domestic abuse related deaths



Babies, children & young people

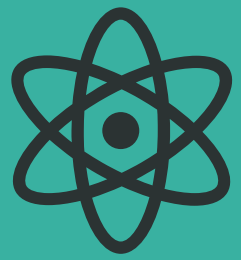


Migrant survivors

The Lens



Centered on the voices of children and young people



Intersectional and gender-informed



Coordinated Community Response

domestic abuse commissioner

Background

In 2021, children were, for the first time, recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right in England and Wales.

Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines a child victim as any child who “sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse.”

Despite this welcome change, it is still unclear what this means in practice.



Methodology and Sources

- Literature Review – impacts and interventions for children
- Tell Nicole – engagement of children and young people
- Commissioner Survey
- Service Provider Survey
- Roundtables
- Visits and Practice and Partnerships team engagement
- Children's and Domestic Abuse Sector engagement
- Statutory sector engagement:
  - National level (e.g. Ofsted)
  - Local level (e.g. LSCPs)

Roundtables

Insights from 870 professionals:

- All 41 Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) areas within England and Wales
- 97 social workers from across England and Wales
- 130 teachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) across England and Wales
- 40 professionals from ‘by and for’ services in England and Wales
- 100 Family Hub professionals from England

Funders roundtables


tell
nicole

Tell Nicole enables children and young people to have the opportunity to ‘tell’ the Commissioner what they think about domestic abuse issues in a way that is meaningful to them.

The key to this framework is to collaborate with professional who are already involved in children’s lives through voice, participation and engagement work. Materials and guidance documents were shared by the DAC team to enable engagement.

The guidance is flexible and encouraged workers to tailor sessions according to age, needs, and interests of young people



Tell Nicole: SAAFERR Framework

Safety

Accessibility

Analytical

Flexibility

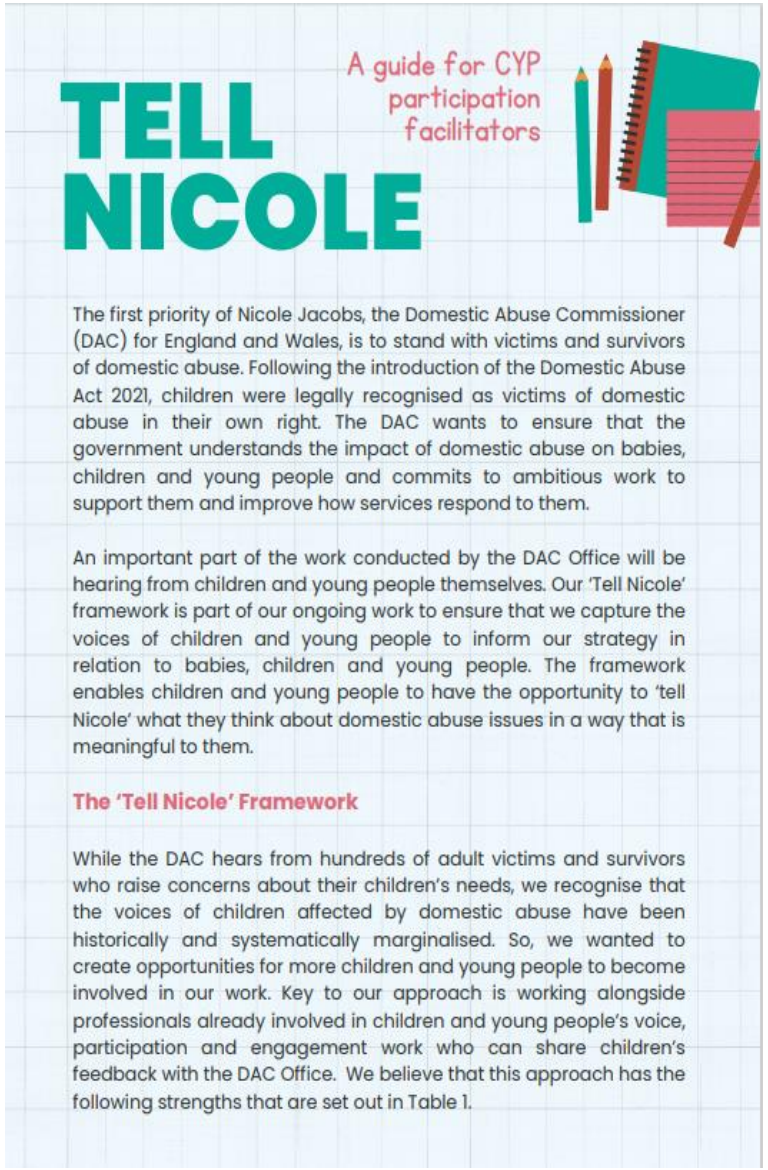
Engage

Relevance

Reach



Guide for session facilitators



TELL NICOLE

A guide for CYP participation facilitators

The first priority of Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) for England and Wales, is to stand with victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children were legally recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right. The DAC wants to ensure that the government understands the impact of domestic abuse on babies, children and young people and commits to ambitious work to support them and improve how services respond to them.

An important part of the work conducted by the DAC Office will be hearing from children and young people themselves. Our 'Tell Nicole' framework is part of our ongoing work to ensure that we capture the voices of children and young people to inform our strategy in relation to babies, children and young people. The framework enables children and young people to have the opportunity to 'tell Nicole' what they think about domestic abuse issues in a way that is meaningful to them.

The 'Tell Nicole' Framework

While the DAC hears from hundreds of adult victims and survivors who raise concerns about their children's needs, we recognise that the voices of children affected by domestic abuse have been historically and systematically marginalised. So, we wanted to create opportunities for more children and young people to become involved in our work. Key to our approach is working alongside professionals already involved in children and young people's voice, participation and engagement work who can share children's feedback with the DAC Office. We believe that this approach has the following strengths that are set out in Table 1.

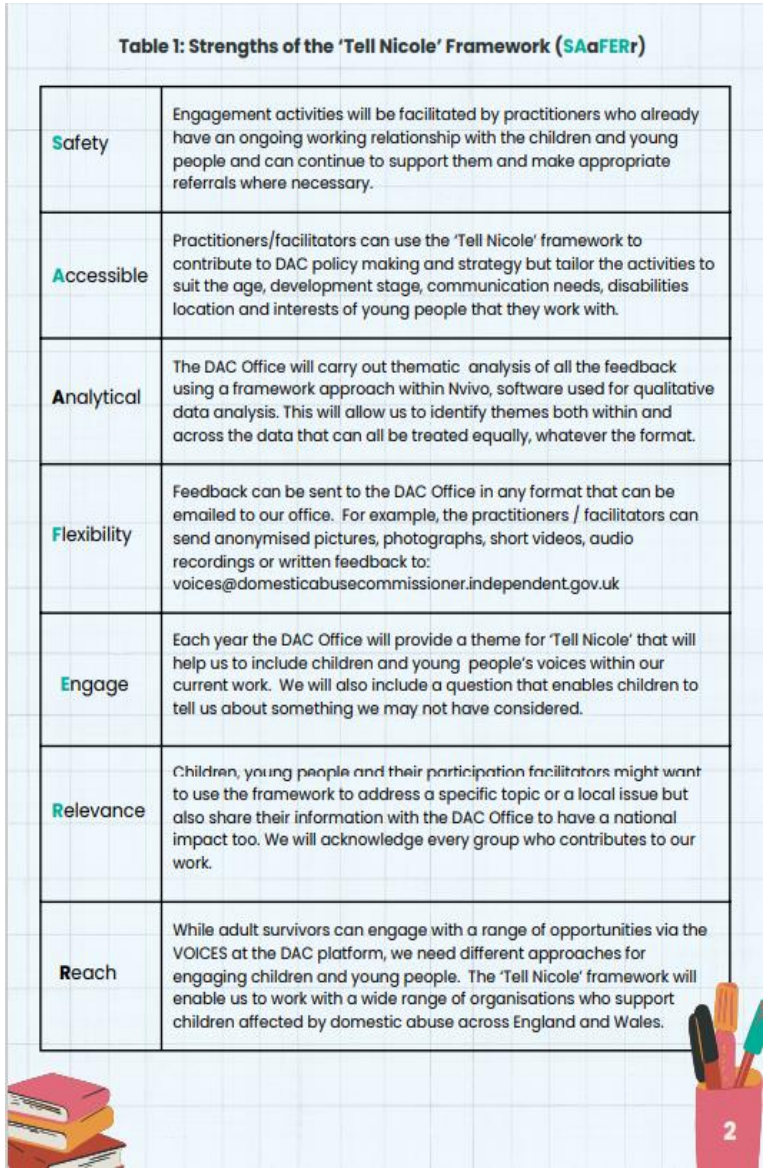
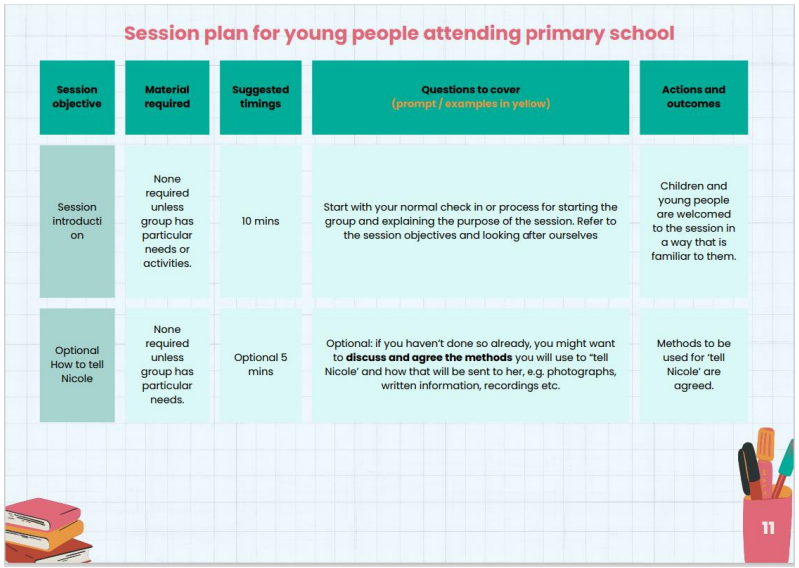


Table 1: Strengths of the 'Tell Nicole' Framework (SAaFERr)

Safety	Engagement activities will be facilitated by practitioners who already have an ongoing working relationship with the children and young people and can continue to support them and make appropriate referrals where necessary.
Accessible	Practitioners/facilitators can use the 'Tell Nicole' framework to contribute to DAC policy making and strategy but tailor the activities to suit the age, development stage, communication needs, disabilities location and interests of young people that they work with.
Analytical	The DAC Office will carry out thematic analysis of all the feedback using a framework approach within Nvivo, software used for qualitative data analysis. This will allow us to identify themes both within and across the data that can all be treated equally, whatever the format.
Flexibility	Feedback can be sent to the DAC Office in any format that can be emailed to our office. For example, the practitioners / facilitators can send anonymised pictures, photographs, short videos, audio recordings or written feedback to: voices@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk
Engage	Each year the DAC Office will provide a theme for 'Tell Nicole' that will help us to include children and young people's voices within our current work. We will also include a question that enables children to tell us about something we may not have considered.
Relevance	Children, young people and their participation facilitators might want to use the framework to address a specific topic or a local issue but also share their information with the DAC Office to have a national impact too. We will acknowledge every group who contributes to our work.
Reach	While adult survivors can engage with a range of opportunities via the VOICES at the DAC platform, we need different approaches for engaging children and young people. The 'Tell Nicole' framework will enable us to work with a wide range of organisations who support children affected by domestic abuse across England and Wales.

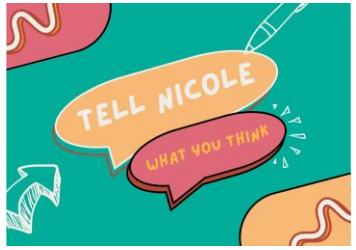


Session plan for young people attending primary school

Session objective	Material required	Suggested timings	Questions to cover (prompt / examples in yellow)	Actions and outcomes
Session introduction	None required unless group has particular needs or activities.	10 mins	Start with your normal check in or process for starting the group and explaining the purpose of the session. Refer to the session objectives and looking after ourselves	Children and young people are welcomed to the session in a way that is familiar to them.
Optional How to tell Nicole	None required unless group has particular needs.	Optional 5 mins	Optional: if you haven't done so already, you might want to **discuss and agree the methods** you will use to "tell Nicole' and how that will be sent to her, e.g. photographs, written information, recordings etc.	Methods to be used for 'tell Nicole' are agreed.



Circles of support





- Schools should go more into detail about what is happen abusive relacionships.

- There is still kind of a saying around ' children should be seen and not heard' - This shouldn't be a thing.

domestic abuse and don't speak to people or hear about the help or if they can't see the wrong in it they could become the abuser.

always have to tell the ins and outs of the situation.

- Children can overthink if parents lie to them.

- Children can react angrily and lose respect for the people lying to them if they find out later the truth.

SEE rejection AS A redirection

I AM GRATEFUL FOR TODAY

- They will listen to their parents as they will trust them. Feel safe around them.
- Trust their bestfriends and tell them how they feel to get it off of their chest.
- They might trust their siblings as they could be going through what you

WHAT MIGHT STOP SUPPORT

* Not knowing what support is out there?
* Scared and embrassed
* Not being aloud to seek help

* People finding out Scared being in a group.
* Transport nor being able to get there.
* Can be overwhelming
* Not ready for support.

What Type of Support Do Children Need?

-> Need someone to speak to
-> Support helping them to get through the tough times going on.
-> Support can even being someone listening
-> Feeling understood, wanted to be heard is good support.
-> Supporting them just being there for them.

More education around abuse in Schools to allow understanding and to stop future abuse(s)

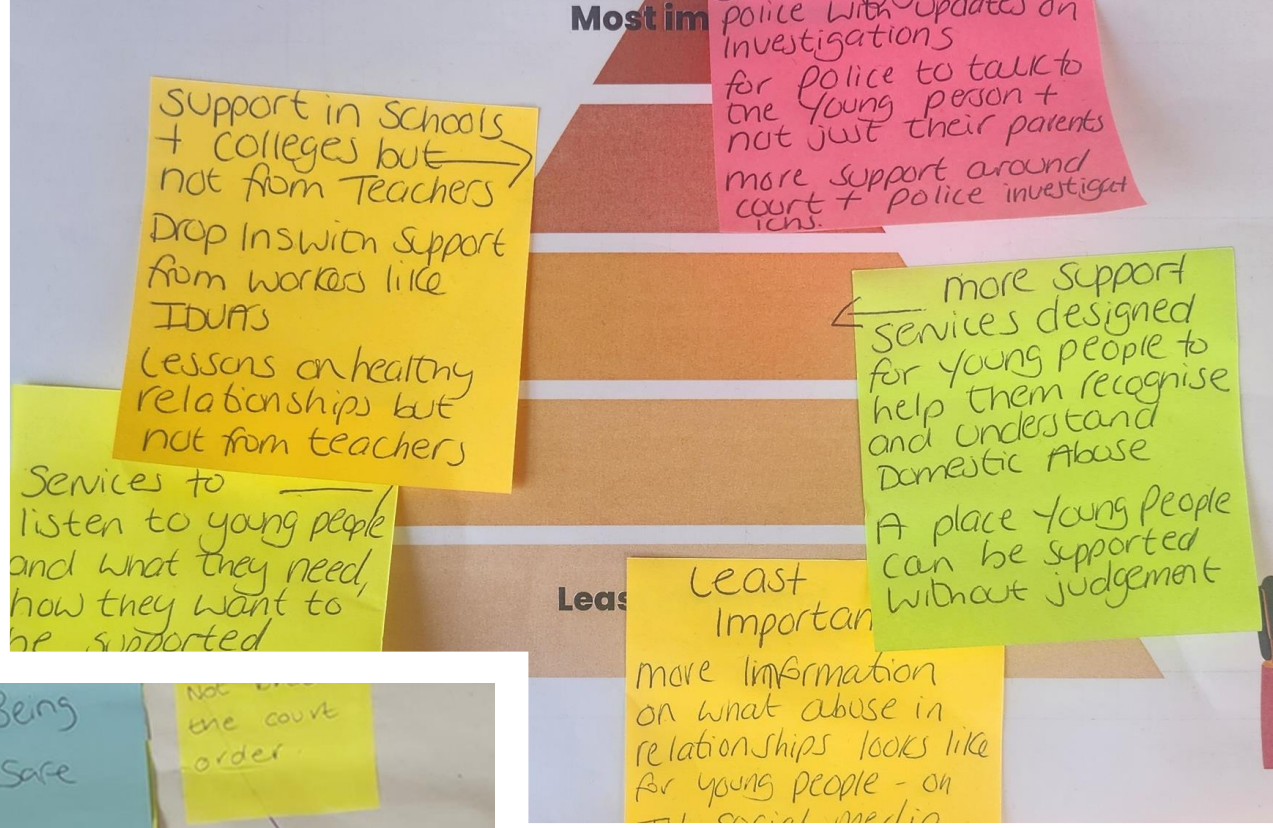
Tell Nicole

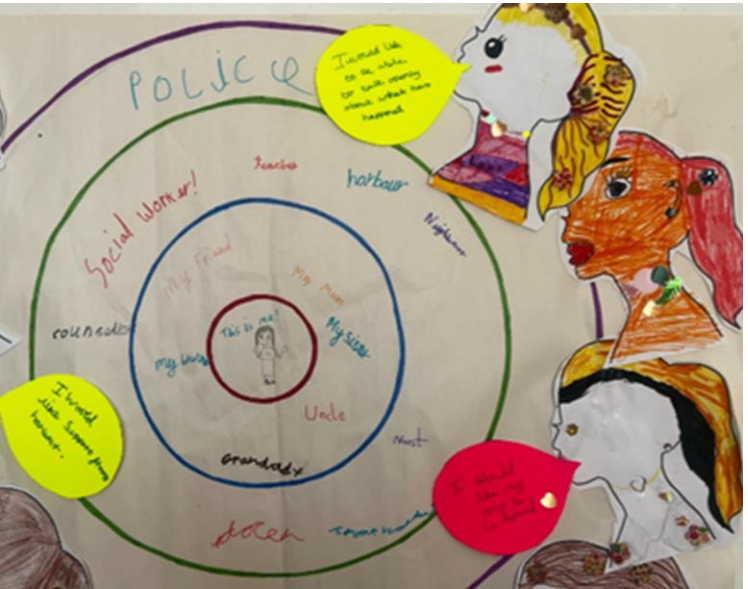
Stop saying Children Should be Seen not heard!

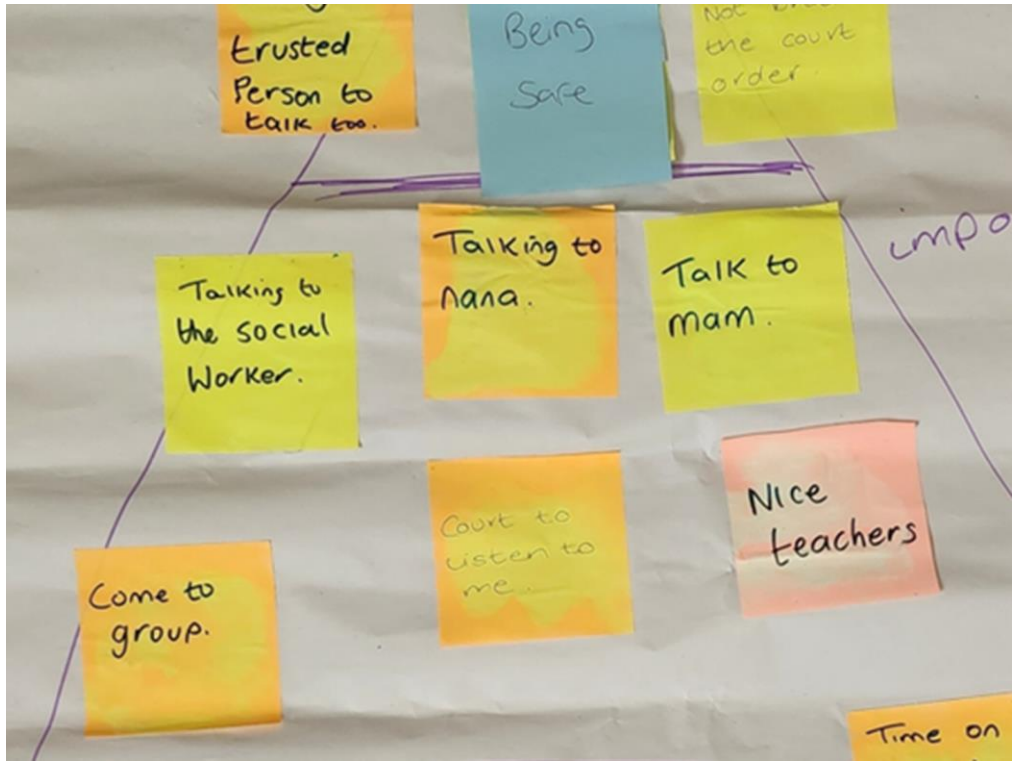
When Incidents happen after police/ Social care involvement For someone to then check in with the yp their thoughts + feelings

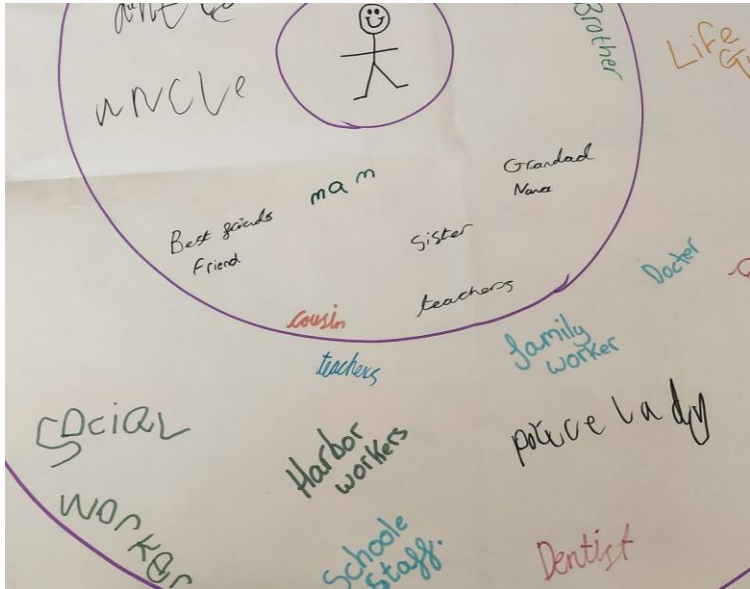
For Schools to incoporate domestic abuse in assemblys and share agencies with them what will help Support


more sessions in mental health x childrens
more time in group
Support in homes
Groups in School
more help
to meet workers in school before group
D.A Sessions in School
make school food
Least import


Most im
police with updates on investigations
for police to talk to the young person + not just their parents
more support around court + police investigat ions.
Support in Schools + colleges but not from Teachers
Drop Ins with support from workers like IDVAS
Lessons on healthy relationships but not from teachers
Services to listen to young people and what they need, how they want to
more support services designed for young people to help them recognise and understand Domestic Abuse
A place young People can be supported without judgement
Leas
Least Importan
more information on what abuse in relationships looks like for young people - on


POLICE
Social Worker
harbour
My Friend
My Mum
My Sister
Uncle
Nana
Granddad
teacher

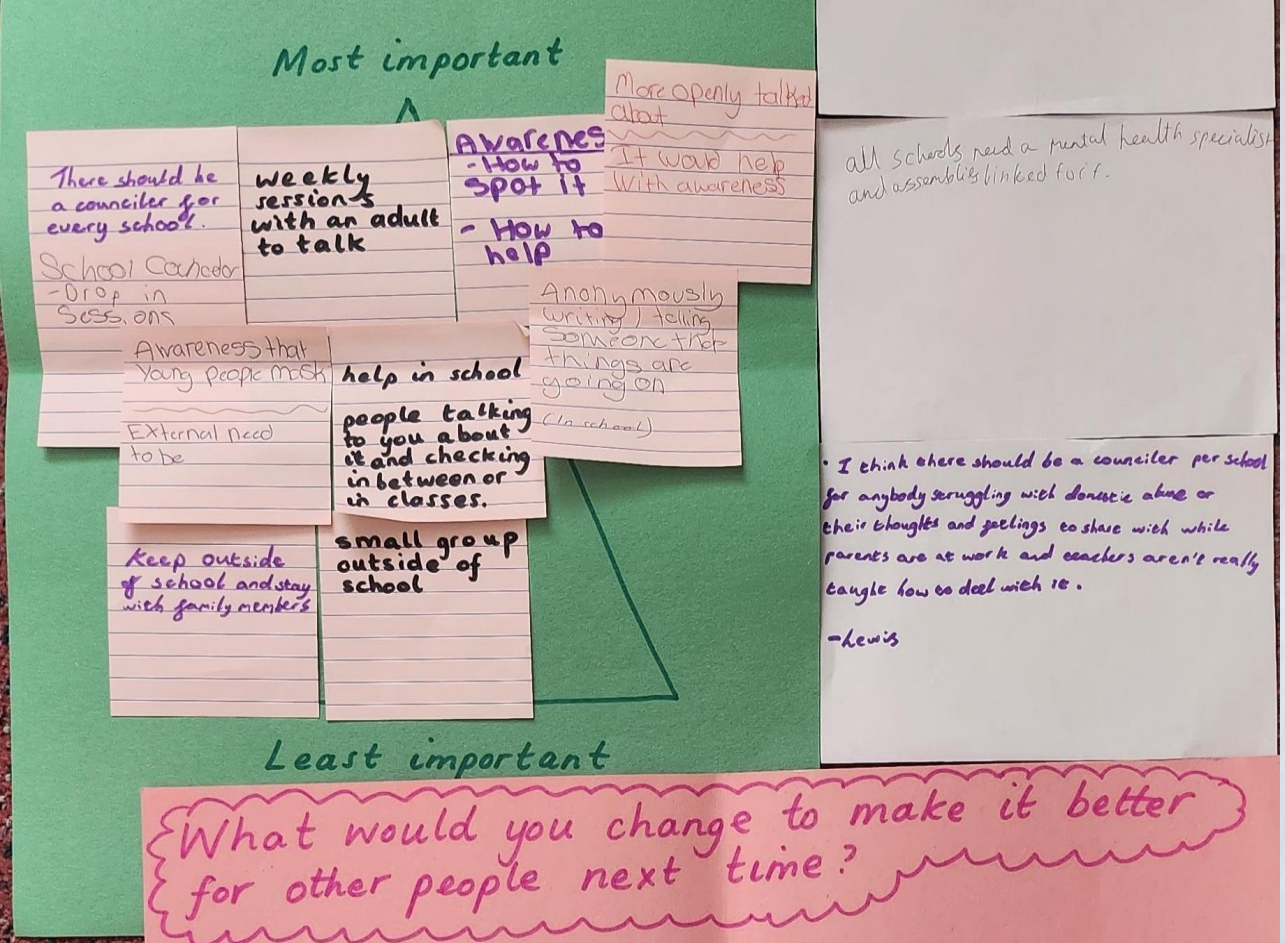

Trusted Person to talk too.
Being Safe
the court order
Talking to the Social Worker.
Talking to nana.
Talk to mam.
Court to listen to me.
Nice teachers
Come to group.
Time on


UNCLE
Brother
Life
mam
Granddad
Nana
Best friends Friend
Sister
teachers
Doctor
cousin
teachers
family worker
Social
Harbor workers
police lady
Dentist


being
You listen to us!
We might have things to share in private!
Emotions
SAFE HANDS
TRUSTED Adult
Seperate from School!
TELL NICOLE
THE DEN!
Mental Heath
My worker Respects me. My worker is experienced.
more time!
Respect us!
Meet other people!
more resources
We can speak up!
1:1 Support time!
FUN!
Friendships.
ALL CHILDREN SHOULD FEEL SAFE!


Be Kind
age 8
Be Nice
age 8
Be Happy
age 8
Talk to children


Talking to my mum
WHAT CAN HELP
Nice teachers
Squishy
Alone time
Police
Fight
Rubix Ball
Who can Help
Talking to my teachers
ihpad
I had a sotawork
Came in a Sagsup train



all schools need a mental health specialist and assemblies linked to it.

- I think there should be a counciler per school for anybody struggling with domestic abuse or their thoughts and feelings to share with while parents are at work and teachers aren't really taught how to deal with it.

-lewis

What would you change to make it better for other people next time?

Keep the same

Nicole,

Tell the government —

* We need people like my IDVA worker in schools
* Services to listen to young people about their relationships
* Support for victims going to court
* Changes in the law to support young victims of Domestic Abuse

Tell the police —

* Better support when going through a police investigation
  - regular contact
  - speak to us not just our parents
* Young peoples experiences of Domestic Abuse is just as scary as adults!

HAVING SOMEONE ELSE THERE TO SUPPORT ME ... LIKE A FRIEND.

on our level

Ask us what we want to happen...

Let us decide who we share our story to.

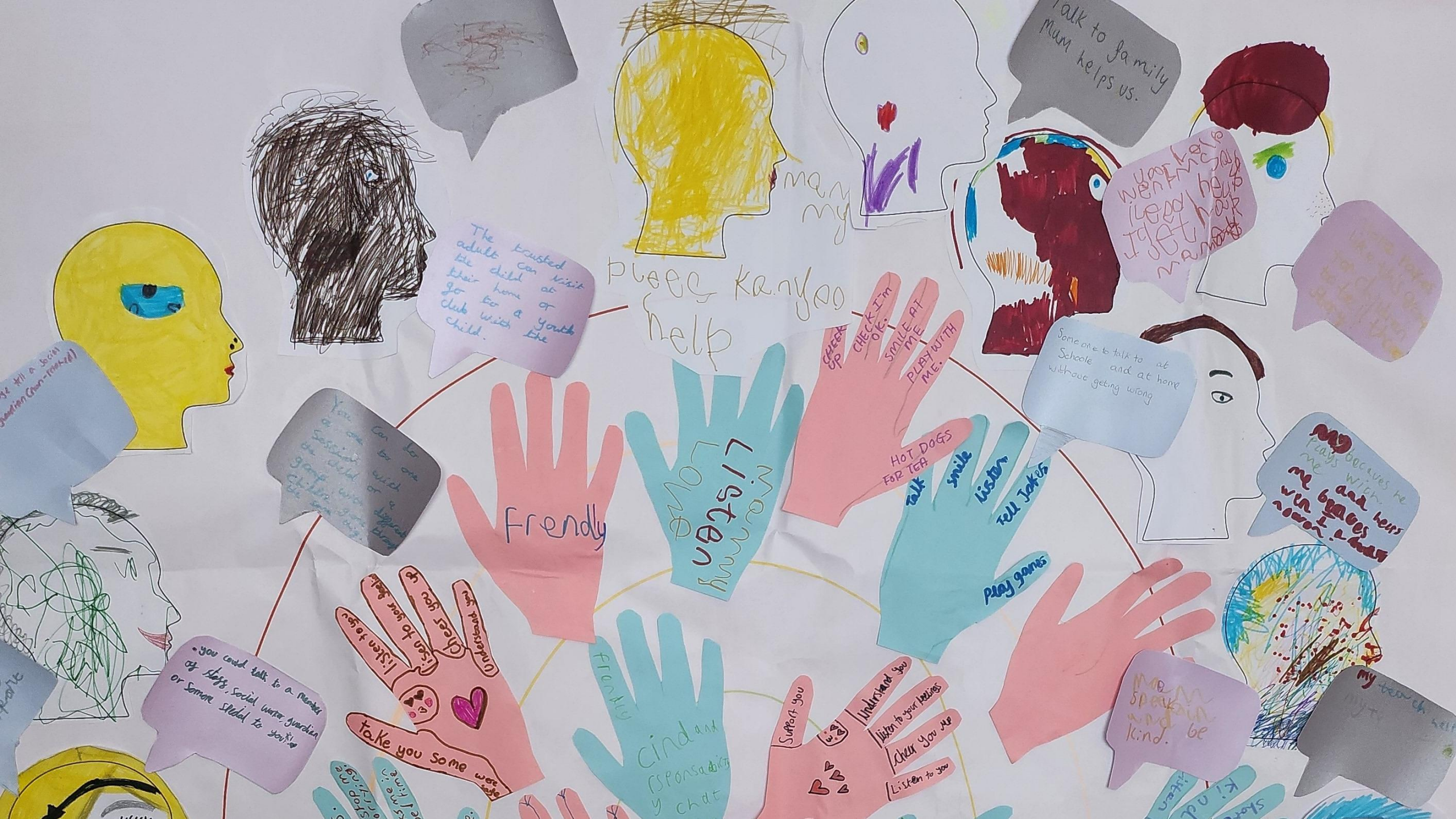


quicker support and warning signs noticed by schools

more support from school about safe relationships

For the police to ask us our version of events

listen to both sides equally and not be more likely to believe adults over children


Talk to family Mum helps us.
The trusted adult can visit the child at their home or go to a youth club with the child.
Please kanyoo help
Frendly
Listen
Love
Kindness
CHEER UP
CHECK I'm OK.
SMILE AT ME
PLAY WITH ME.
HOT DOGS FOR TEA
talk
smile
listen
tell Jokes
play games
Someone to talk to at Schoole and at home without getting wrong
Listen to you
Cheer you up
Understand you
take you some where
Support you
Understand you
Listen to your feelings
Cheer you up
Listen to you
frendly
kind
Be kind.

Support you

Understand you

Listen to your feelings

Cheer you up


I would like to be heard
I like grow better than my own
I would like my voice to be heard
I would want to share my own
bingo
Fun
groups is more fun
I would change learning in groups
I think I would like
Share my own story
Be creative
Bring some toys that
Make us do Harder Jobs

Our thanks to the following organisations:

Acorns, Tender, The Den, The Dash Charity, Limes College, Hounslow Social Services, My Harbour, West Yorkshire Youth Commission

Key themes: “Our feelings matter”

The importance of listening to children: the consequences of failing to listen, advice to professionals.

“We need to be listened to and taken seriously and be believed - especially around contact arrangements.”

(Postcard completed by a child aged between 7 to 19 years)

Barriers to getting support: awareness, readiness to talk, previous negative experiences, fears of impact on family.



Key themes: Tell the Government

Better **understanding** of children's experience of domestic abuse.

The **legal system** supports children affected by abuse.

Greater awareness of what **support** is helpful.

Improve the **availability of services**.

"Even though children are now classified as victims, their voices still feel hidden."

(Comment from online group meeting)



Key themes: Schools

Teachers being able to **identify signs** of domestic abuse.

> "Schools need to look out for the signs. If someone is acting up, instead of being hard on them, pay attention, find out why, give them a safe space."
>
> (Postcard, young person aged 7 to 19 years)

Helping children to recognise what is an abusive relationship.

Providing support to children experiencing abuse.

Better **understanding of trauma**.



Support services for children affected by domestic abuse

TECHNICAL REPORT



domestic abuse commissioner

April 2025

Two surveys of commissioners and providers of domestic abuse support services to children held during 2024.

Commissioning of services for children affected by domestic abuse

Figure 2: Does your organisation or local community safety partnership currently commission any services that are designed for children affected by domestic abuse?

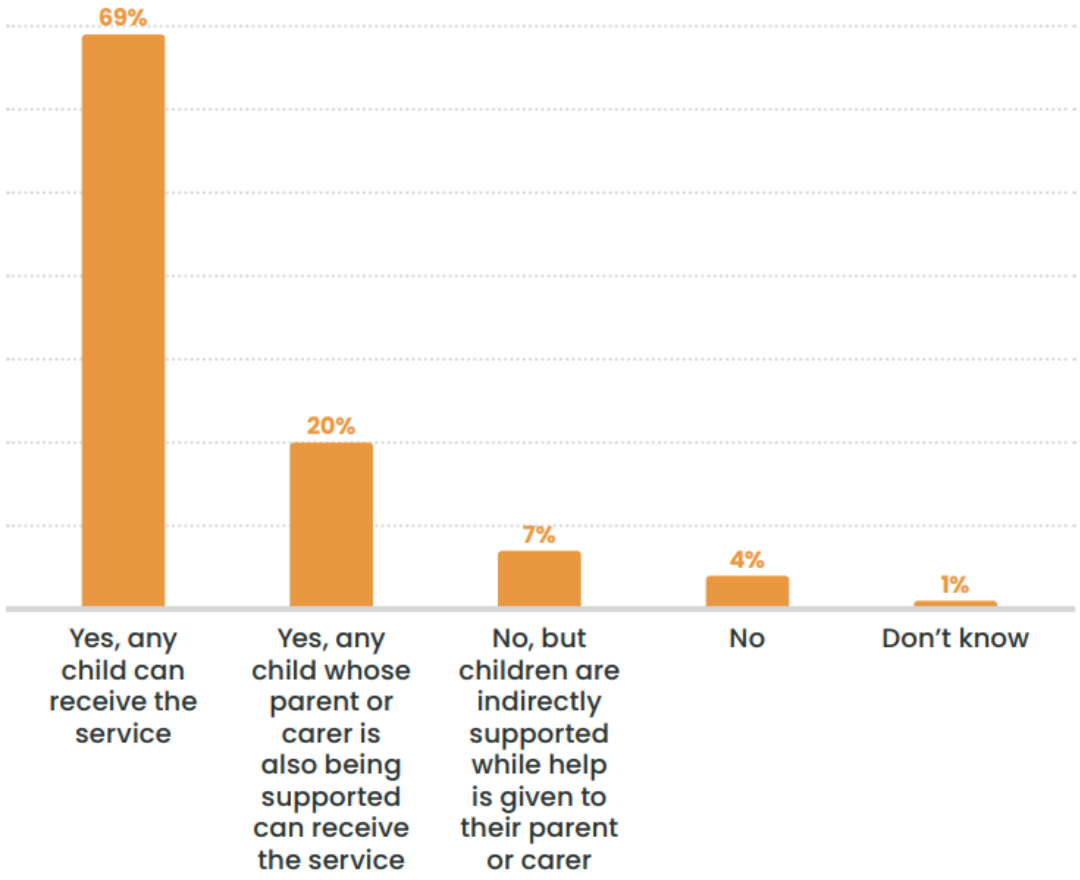
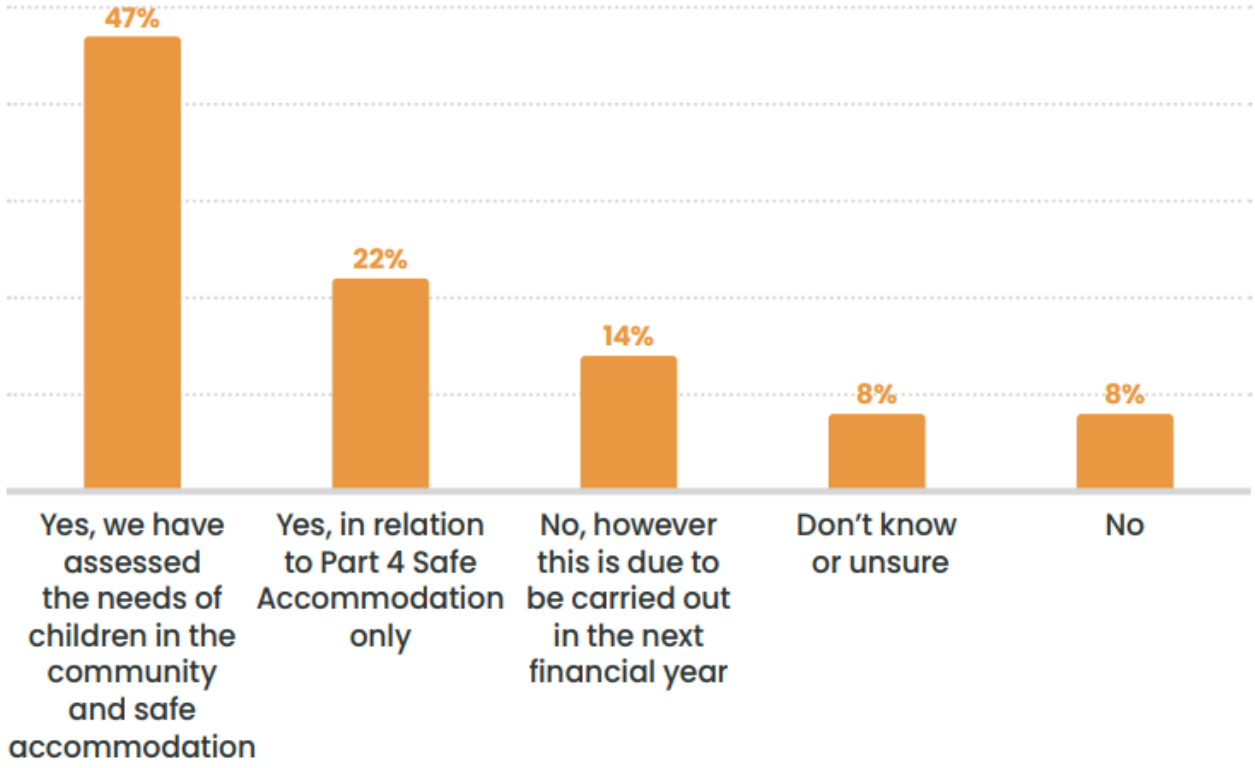


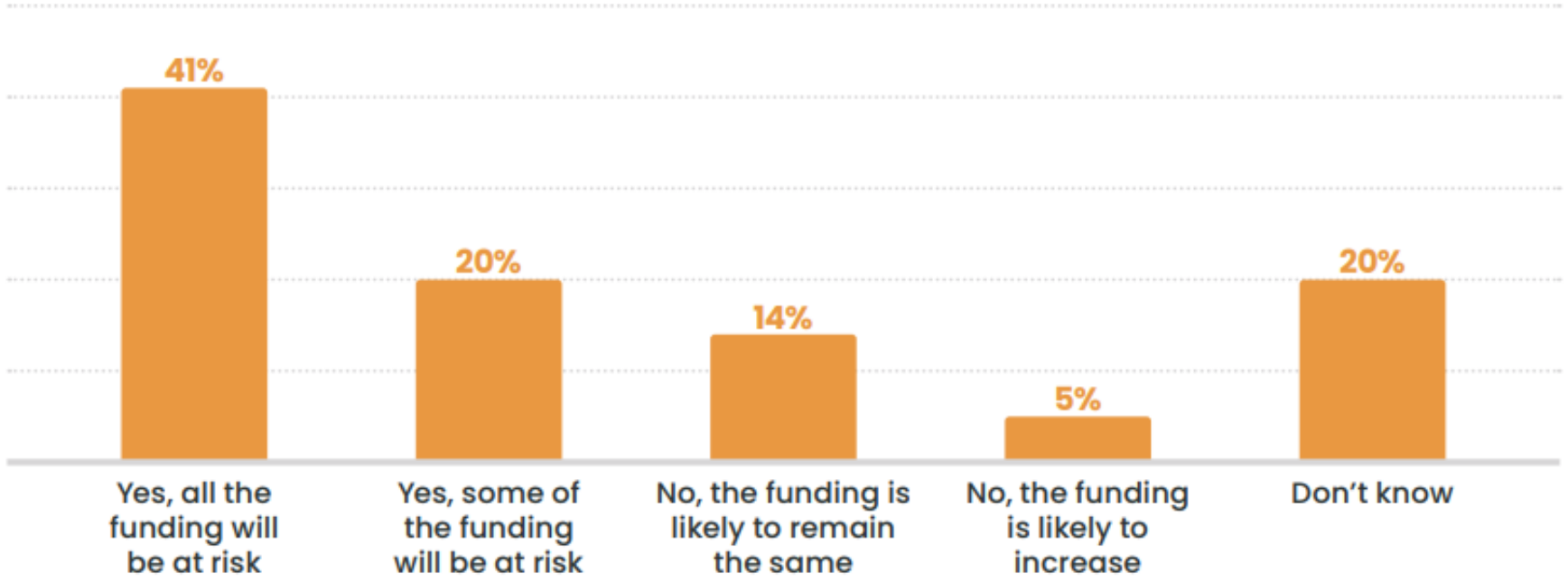
Figure 3: Has your organisation carried out a local needs assessment for domestic abuse that includes a comprehensive section on children and young people?



* Missing data (n=1) excluded from chart

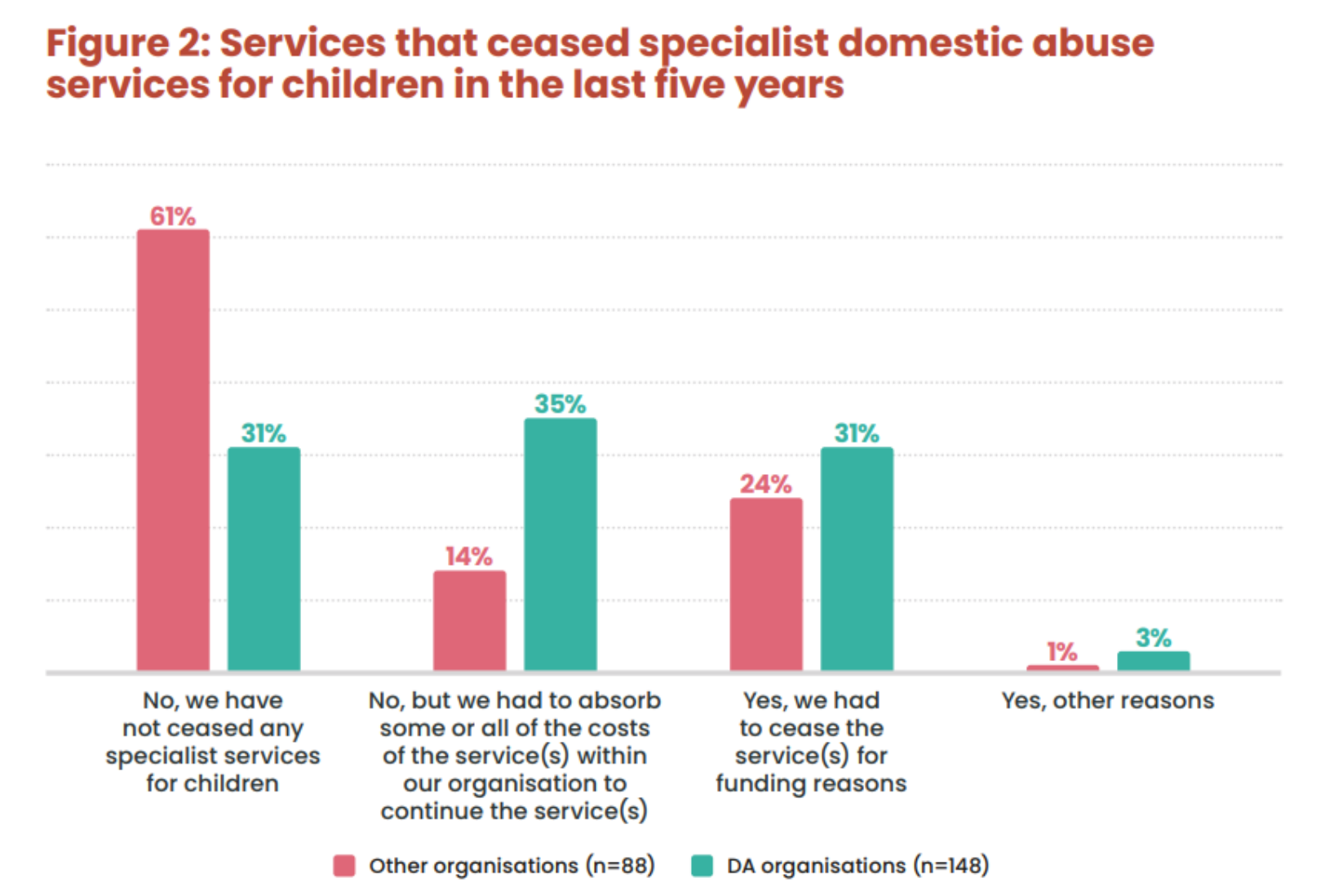
Funding of domestic abuse services for children is at risk

Figure 1: Commissioners' views on whether the funding for the service is at risk of being cut or reduced when the current funding comes to an end



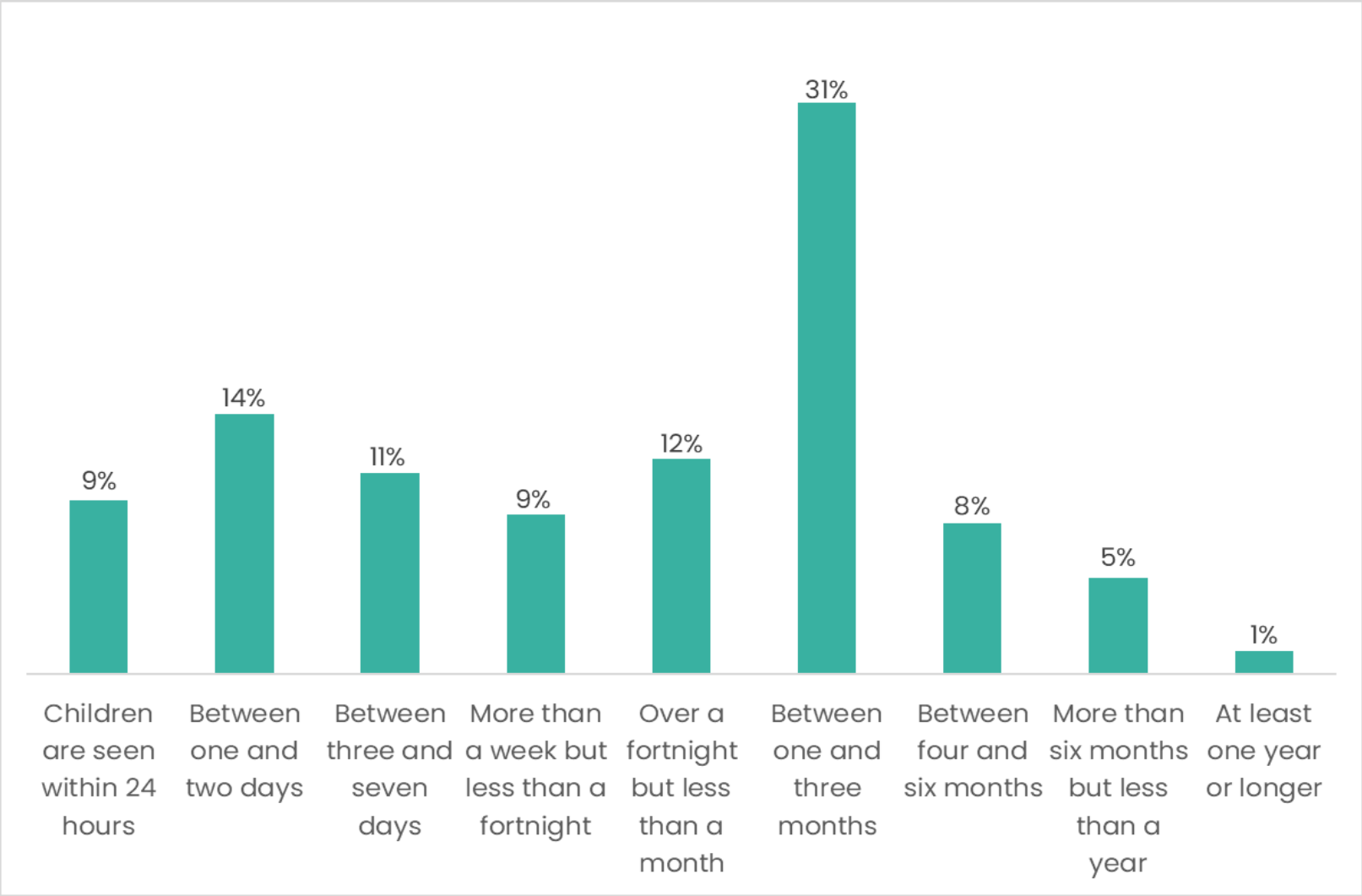
Only one in five commissioned services had secure funding arrangements.

Services within domestic abuse organisations at greater risk



Majority of domestic abuse services reported that in the past 5 years they had to cease a service a service for children or absorb costs to continue delivering it.

Children’s access to services: waiting times reported by service providers



Over a quarter of services (27%) said that they had to turn away referrals because they received more referrals than they had the capacity or funding to support.

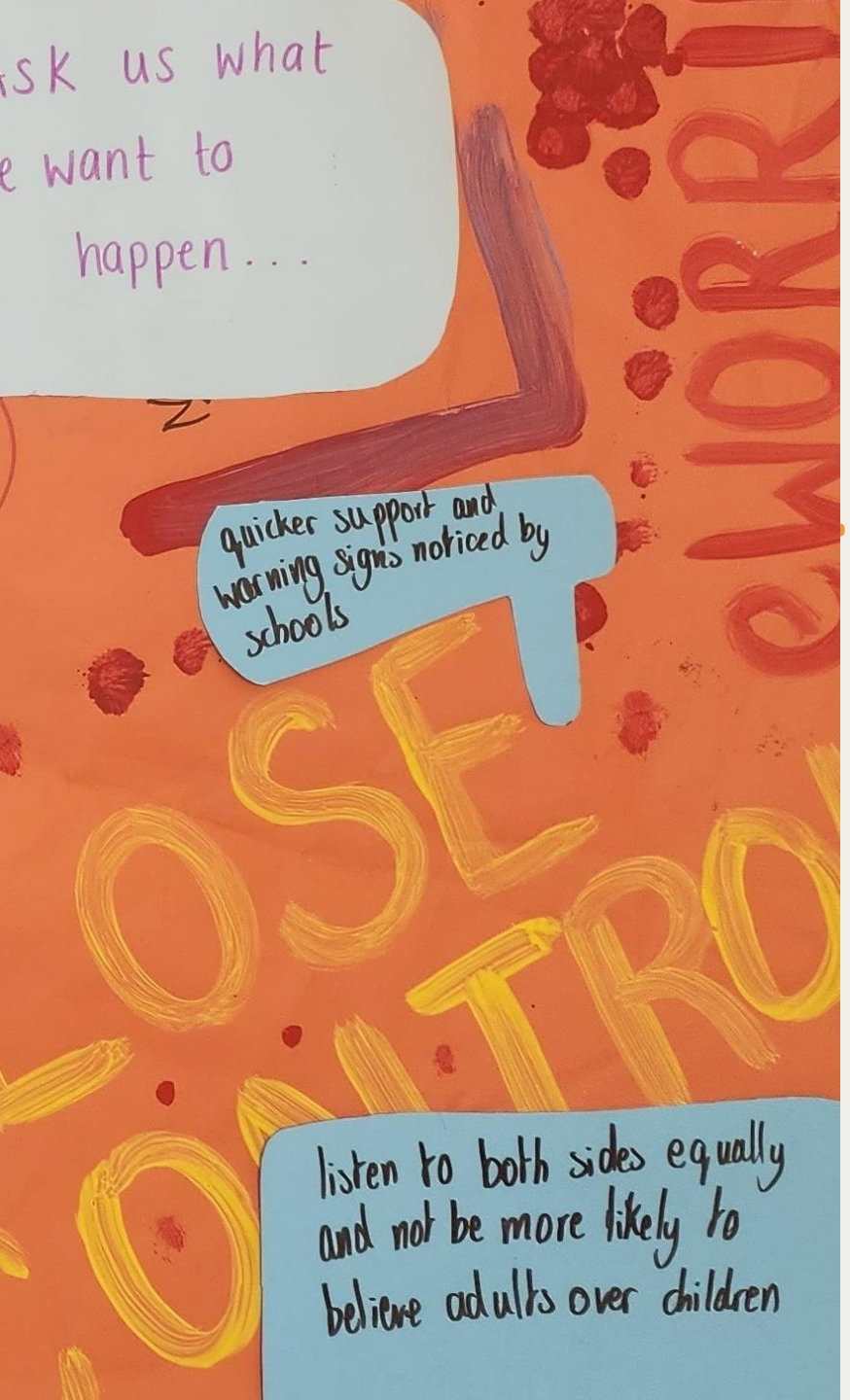
Key Messages

Estimates of the number of children affected by domestic abuse vary and are hampered by underreporting.

The lack of a prevalence survey and limited official statistics in England and Wales makes assessing the numbers of children affected difficult

The most recent crime survey data found that 2.3 million people aged 16–59 experienced domestic abuse in 2023/24 many of whom will have children





Impacts

Impact will vary according to gender, age, severity of abuse, and length of time subject to abuse.

Further compounded by disadvantage, marginalisation, access to support.

Distress experienced during abuse includes increased levels of fear, inhibition, isolation, loss, anxiety and depression.

Coupled with likelihood of longer-term trauma, affecting physical and mental health, development, behaviour and emotional wellbeing.

As a result of coercive control, children are likely to experience a lack of security and safety, a reluctance to trust others and limited opportunities to choose, feel free and develop a sense of independence.

Mental health impact

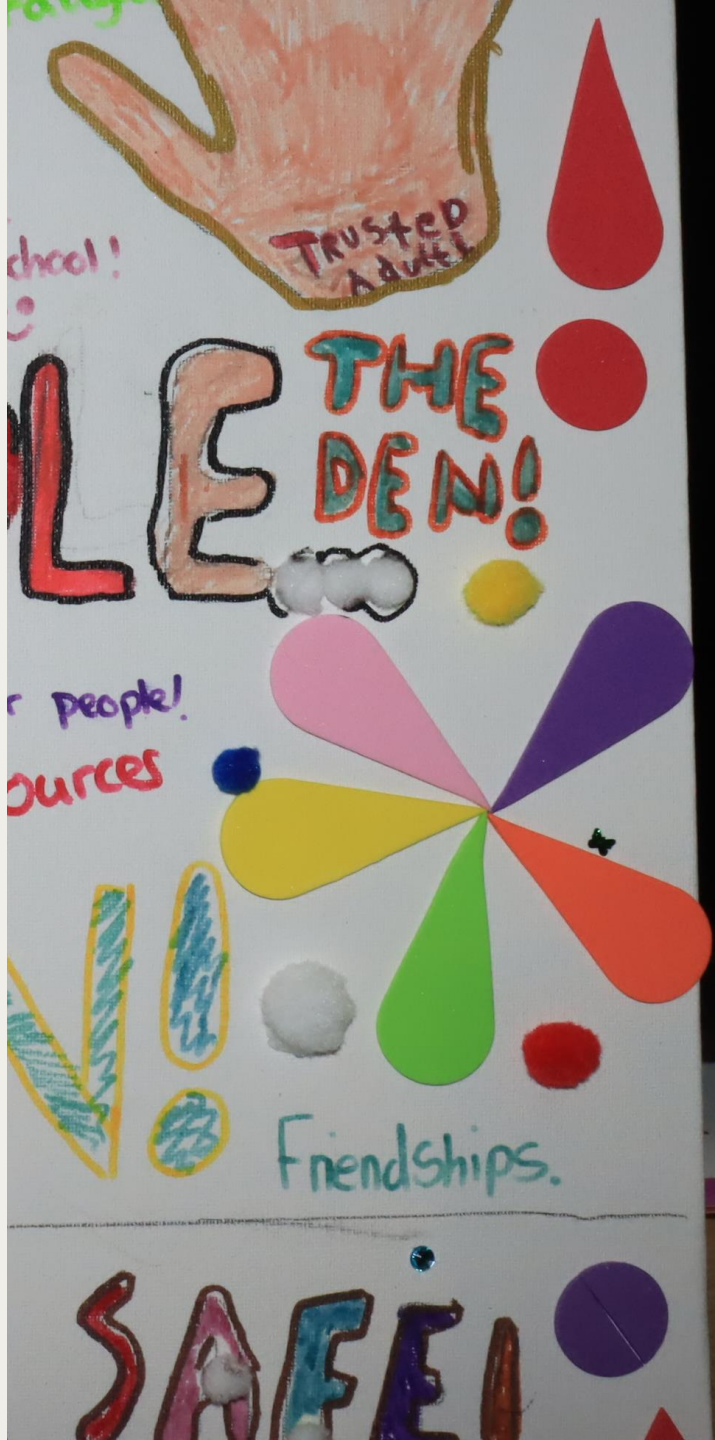
Patients in CAMHS were twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse compared with the general population, with almost 50% of patients reporting exposure to domestic abuse or child abuse.

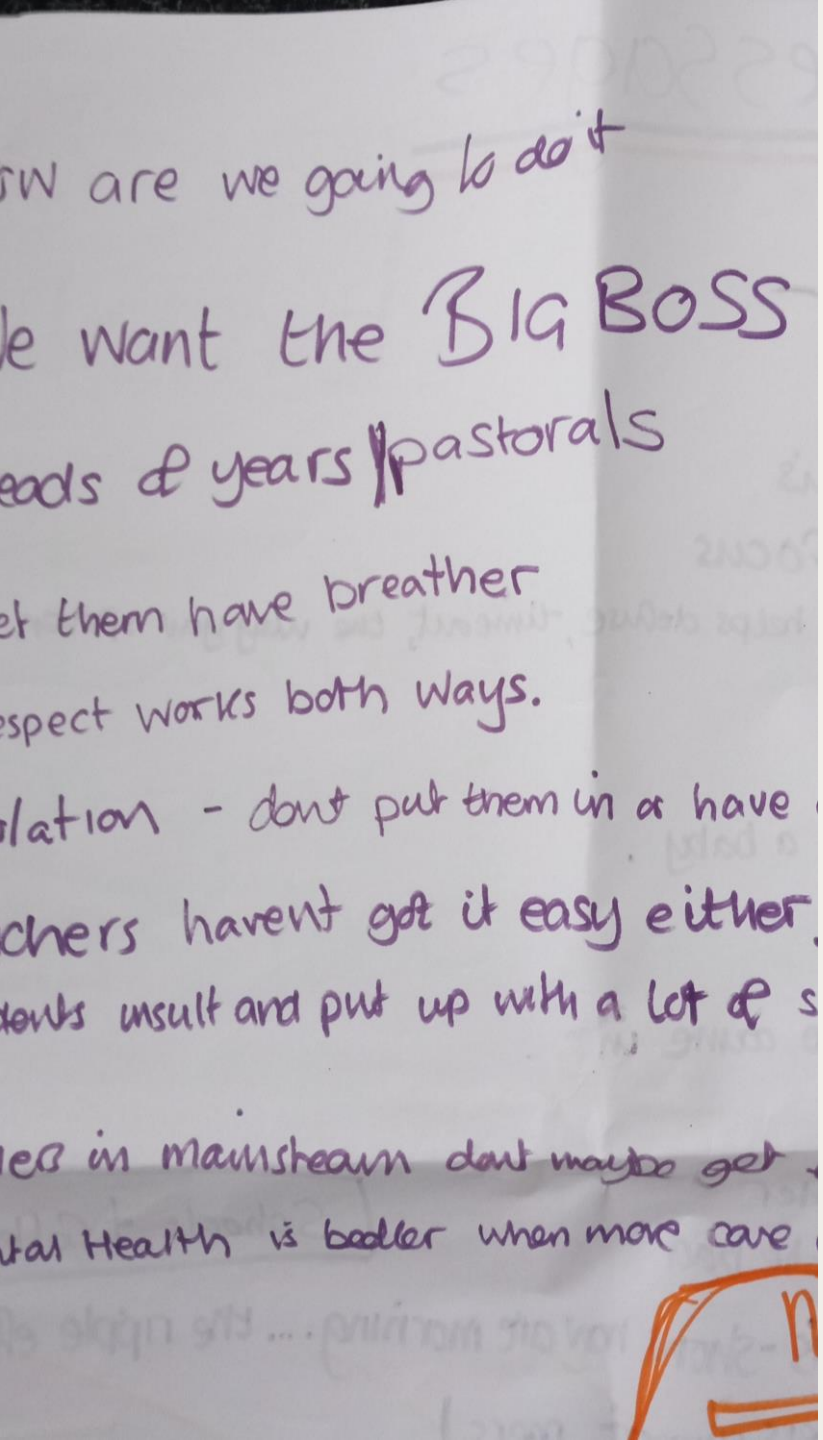
Social and support networks can fall away after repeatedly having to change phones or move school and home to access safety.

Contributing to the confusion and anger about what has happened to them, children suffer the loss of:

- friendship groups,
- wider family members,
- their home,
- pets,
- Possessions.

Having to keep silent to protect family members can cause a further sense of isolation and, together, these changes create additional layers of complex trauma for children.





This is a critical moment for the new Government.

- The forthcoming Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy,
- Spring 2025 Spending Review
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

Bold leadership is needed for the Government to meet its ambition to halve VAWG within a decade.

This requires contribution from the whole machinery of the Government, requiring buy-in and coordination across each of its missions.

The Commissioner's recommendations represent a blueprint towards supporting children subject to domestic abuse and preventing future harm; as such, they should be considered in full.

Seven key themes

Representing a consistent thread throughout the report.

Centring children's voices.

Stronger cross-departmental working and strategic leadership.

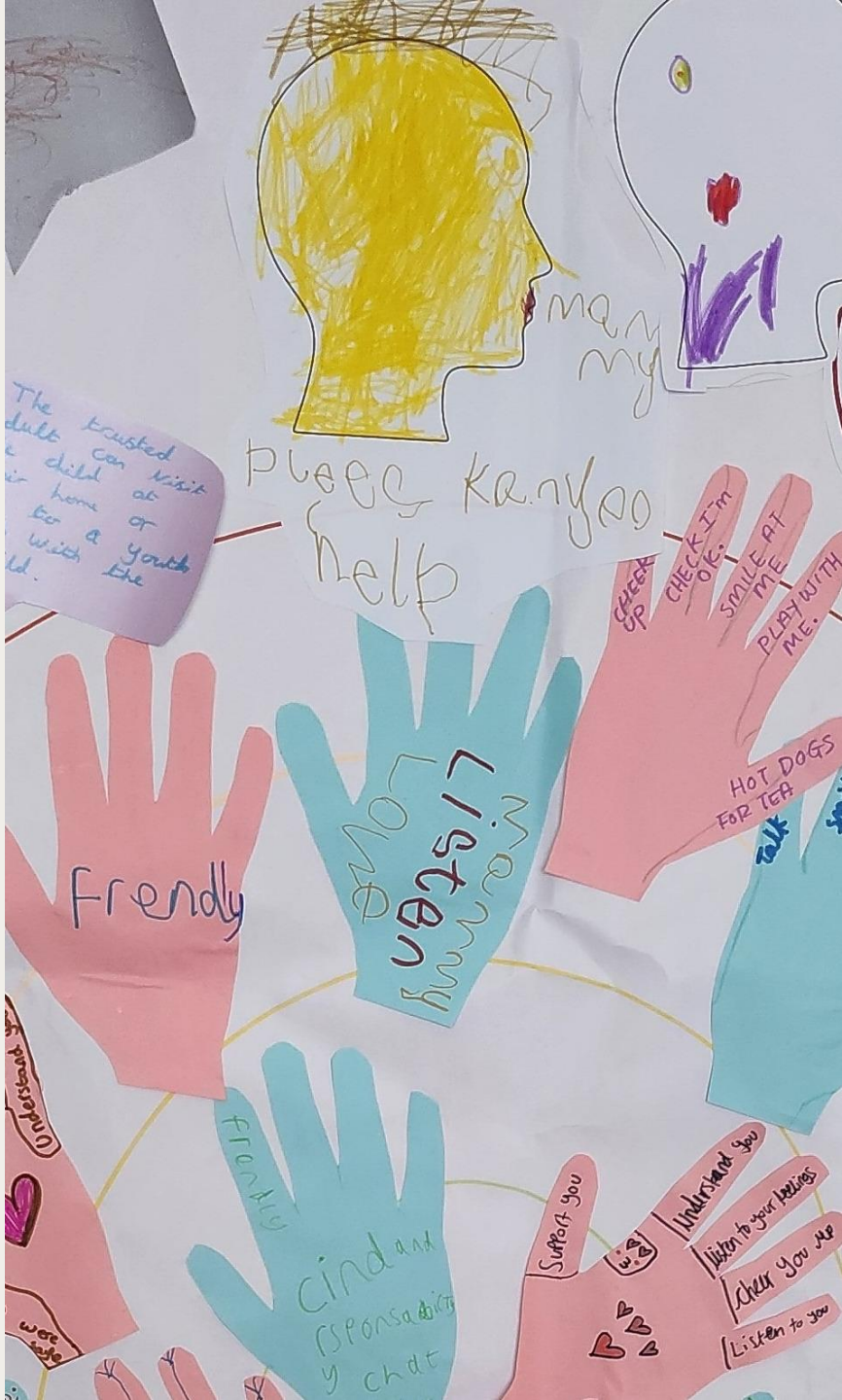
Holistic funding.

Data and evidence.

Specialist training for every frontline professional who may work with babies, children or young people.

Safeguarding.

Ensuring practice is informed by specialists



1: Centring Children's Voices

Recommendations

The Home Office and the DfE jointly funds the DAC Office to pilot the creation of a national youth panel, to inform policy, in England and Wales.

Every member department of the proposed cross-Government working group reviews and develops their response to children as victims, to reflect that children's voice is paramount in any interaction or policy development. This must include a review of the public bodies that they are responsible for.

The Ministry of Justice develops a specific Victims' Code for children and statutory guidance for professionals who are key to supporting children to access their rights under the Victims' Code and best practice in Achieving Best Evidence.

Children told us:

- they needed physical and emotional safety and space where they can talk to someone who will believe them and listen to them
- their accounts of what was happening may differ from those of their parents, carers and siblings
- their views have often been sidelined or considered secondary to those of adults

2: Stronger cross-departmental working and strategic leadership

Recommendations

Every Government Department contributes to ensuring that the new statutory guidance accompanying the forthcoming Child and Wellbeing Act includes substantial detail for frontline practice on what Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act means in practice, alongside a child-friendly version of this guidance.

The DfE develops updated RSE guidance.

Government focuses on child victims at the VAWG Ministerial Board, culminating in an annual progress report and agreed metrics to assess accountability. This should be done through the creation of a cross-Government working group, specifically focused on child victims of domestic abuse.

CQC, HMICFRS and HMIP carry out bi-annual joint thematic inspections of local areas focused on domestic abuse.

Children told us:

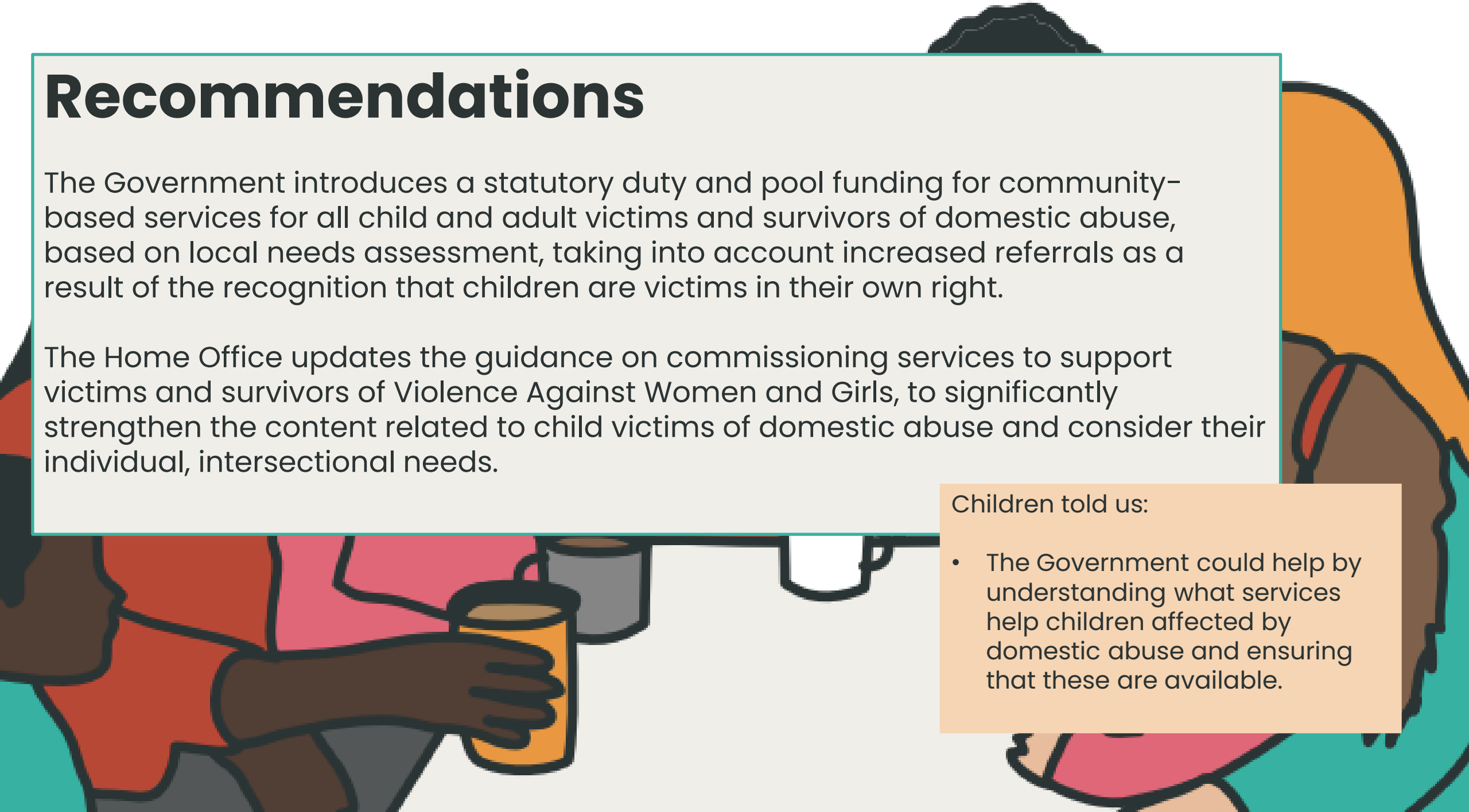
- We should take their messages to those at the very top of government: "We want the BIG BOSS!"
- Those in charge did not fully appreciate the impact that domestic abuse can have on children's lives.
- All children needed to have basic information about domestic abuse.

3: Holistic funding

Recommendations

The Government introduces a statutory duty and pool funding for community-based services for all child and adult victims and survivors of domestic abuse, based on local needs assessment, taking into account increased referrals as a result of the recognition that children are victims in their own right.

The Home Office updates the guidance on commissioning services to support victims and survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls, to significantly strengthen the content related to child victims of domestic abuse and consider their individual, intersectional needs.



Children told us:

- The Government could help by understanding what services help children affected by domestic abuse and ensuring that these are available.

4: Data and evidence

Recommendations

The ONS commits to rolling out the Child Abuse Prevalence Survey, with specific questions on childhood exposure to and experience of domestic abuse.

The DfE amends the Child in Need categories to ensure that children who are victims of domestic abuse are categorised as so, and not just as experiencing 'neglect', to understand the prevalence of child victims and to ensure that their needs are properly identified.

The MHCLG conducts a review of the Safe Accommodation Duty and the response to children and young people subject to domestic abuse, including the types of child-specific support offered in safe accommodation, how that support can be extended, the reasons why children are turned away, as well as specifically, the experiences of teenage boys accessing support.

Children told us:

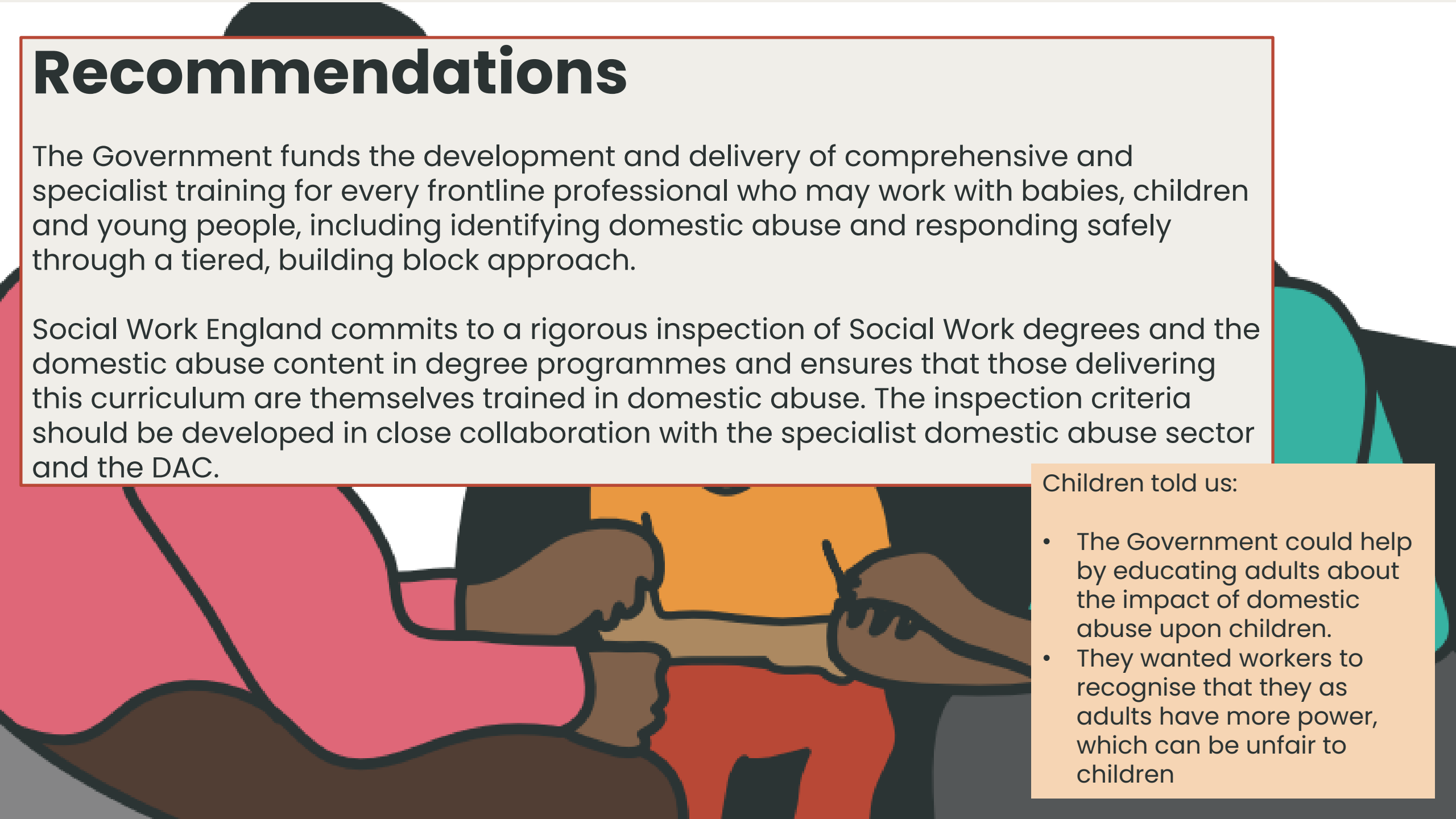
- The Government could make things better for children by ensuring that availability of support services is consistent across the country, quick for children who need them, and suitable for children with differing needs.

5: Specialist training for frontline professionals

Recommendations

The Government funds the development and delivery of comprehensive and specialist training for every frontline professional who may work with babies, children and young people, including identifying domestic abuse and responding safely through a tiered, building block approach.

Social Work England commits to a rigorous inspection of Social Work degrees and the domestic abuse content in degree programmes and ensures that those delivering this curriculum are themselves trained in domestic abuse. The inspection criteria should be developed in close collaboration with the specialist domestic abuse sector and the DAC.



Children told us:

- The Government could help by educating adults about the impact of domestic abuse upon children.
- They wanted workers to recognise that they as adults have more power, which can be unfair to children

6: Safeguarding

Recommendations

The DfE makes education settings the fourth statutory safeguarding partner through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

The DfE should fund a two-year pilot of 'Dedicated Safeguarding Leads', whose role is solely safeguarding (across all harm types) and family liaison and support work within schools and building effective partnerships.

The Home Office conducts a full review of risk identification tools and Marac, through a whole-systems lens, including the extent to which the needs and risk to child victims are considered and have a voice in decisions that affect them. This must extend to research into, and the development of, child-specific tools and guidance to assess both risk and need alongside each other, with age-appropriate variations to cover all babies, children and young people.

Children told us that:

- The Government could help by placing a greater role on schools to support children affected by domestic abuse.
- They wanted workers who are experienced, understand domestic abuse, and who are kind and respectful to children.

7: Ensuring practice is informed by specialists

Recommendations

The DfE funds the co-location of independent domestic abuse specialist services in children's social care.

The DfE implements learning into the new Child Protection and Family Help Offer, including models that partner with the non-abusive parent and hold the perpetrator to account, such as Safe and Together.

Children told us that:

- To help them recover from domestic abuse, they needed greater choice over the length, location and type of support they receive .
- They want workers who understand domestic abuse and who are good at working with children and young people.

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