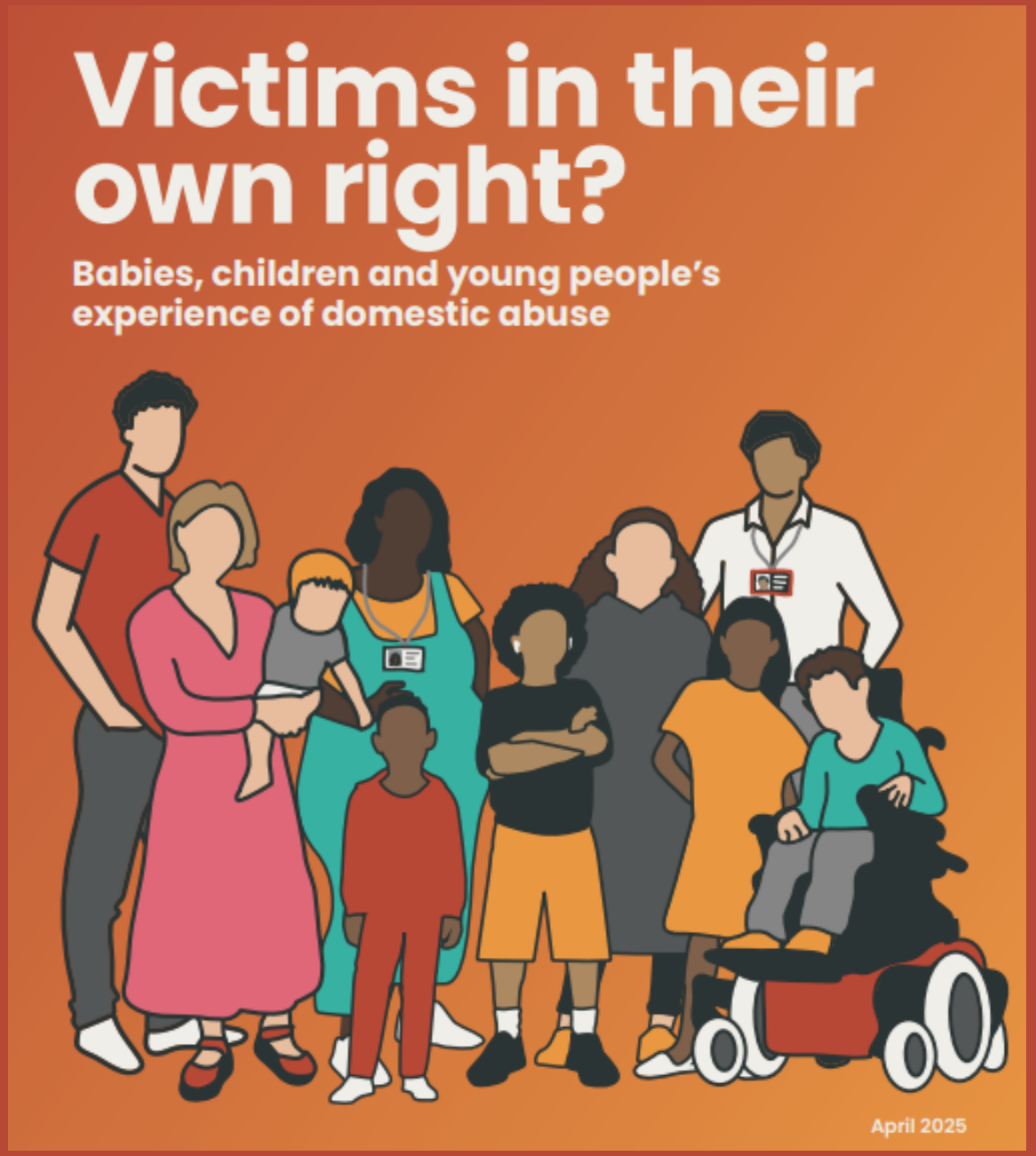


Victims in their own right

Webinar: Health

June 2025

domestic abuse commissioner

Agenda

Introduction
Tell Nicole findings
Health policy and practice recommendations
Q&A

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.



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.




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



- 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)

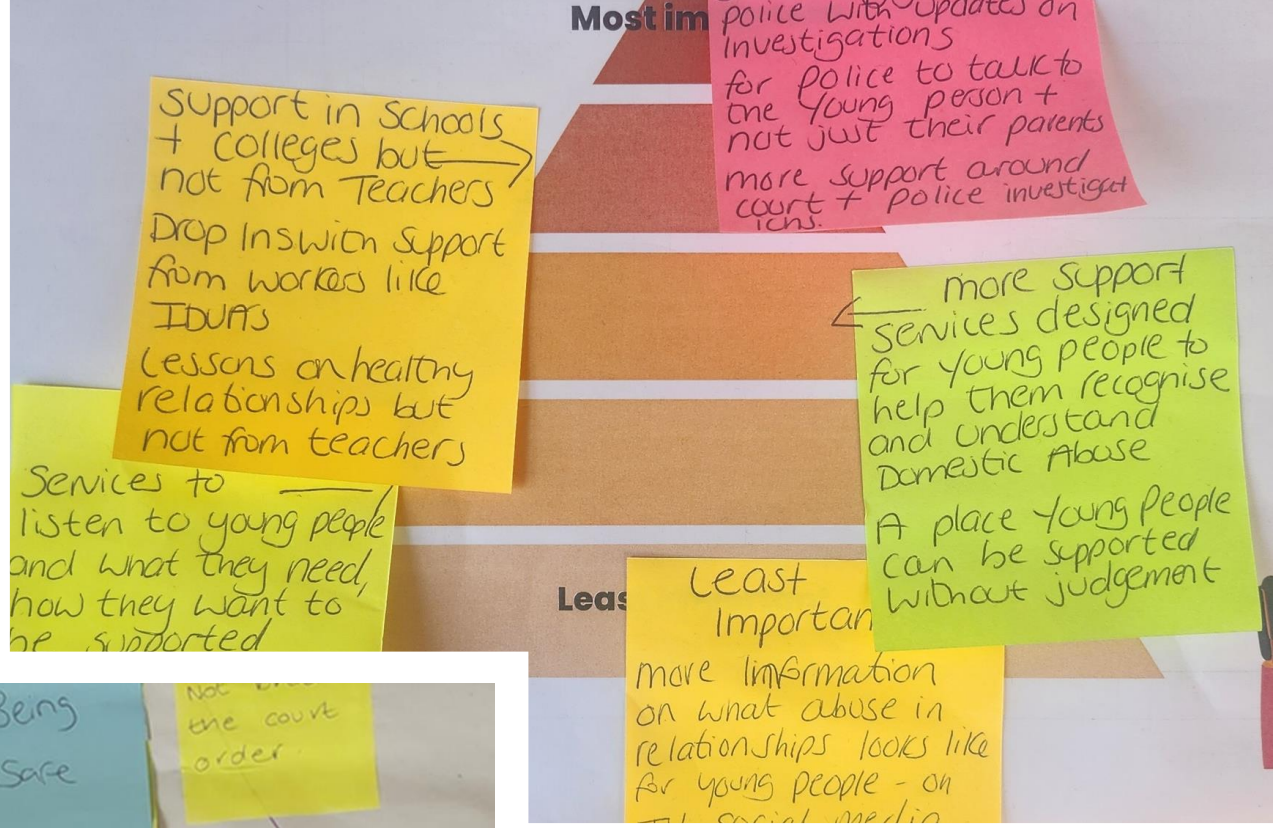
Tell Nicole

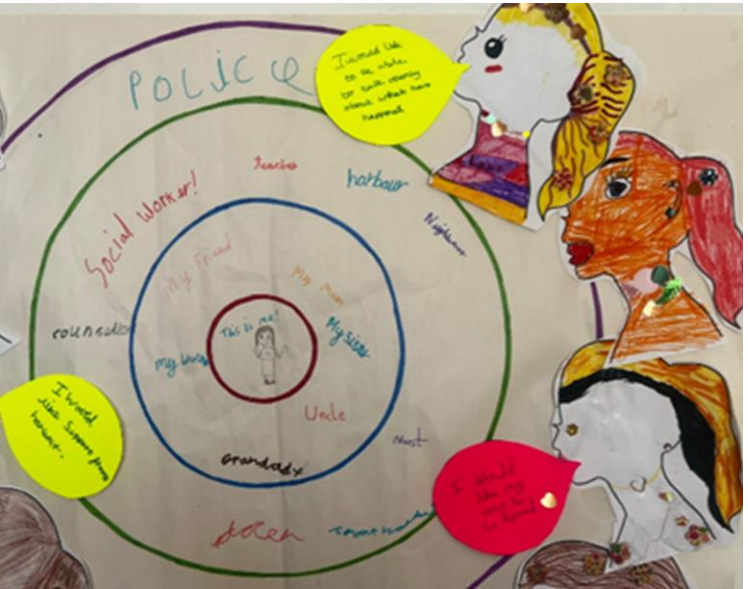
Stop saying Children Should be Seen not heard!

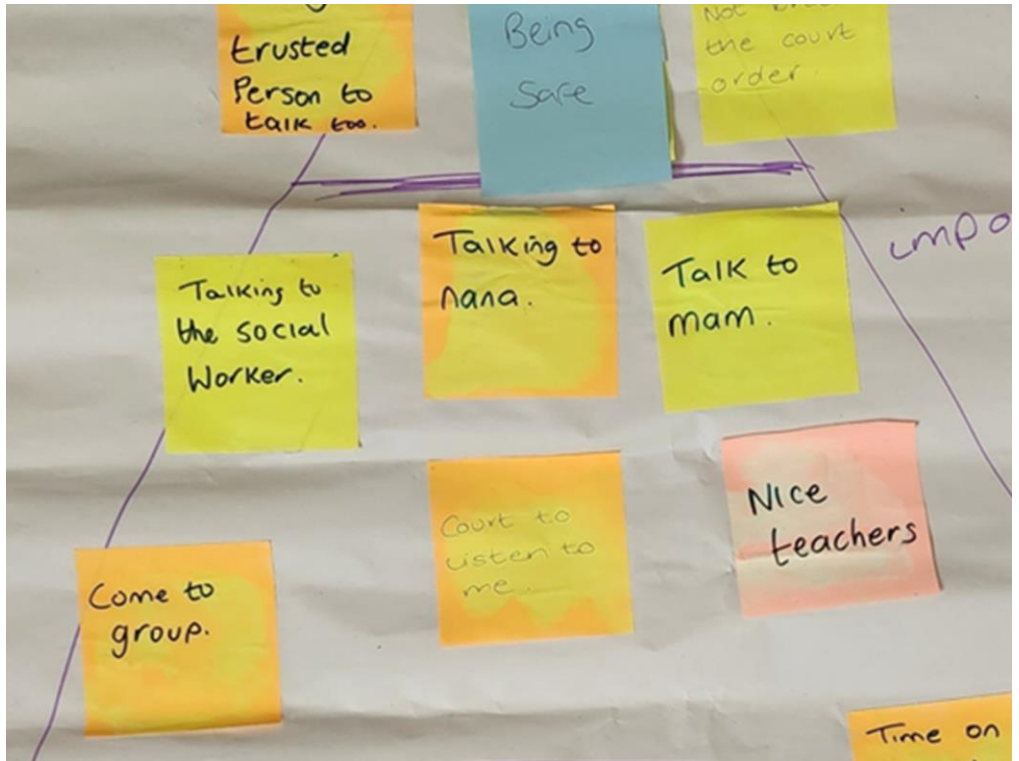
When Incidents happen after police/ Social care involvement For someone to then check in with the yp their thoughts + feelings

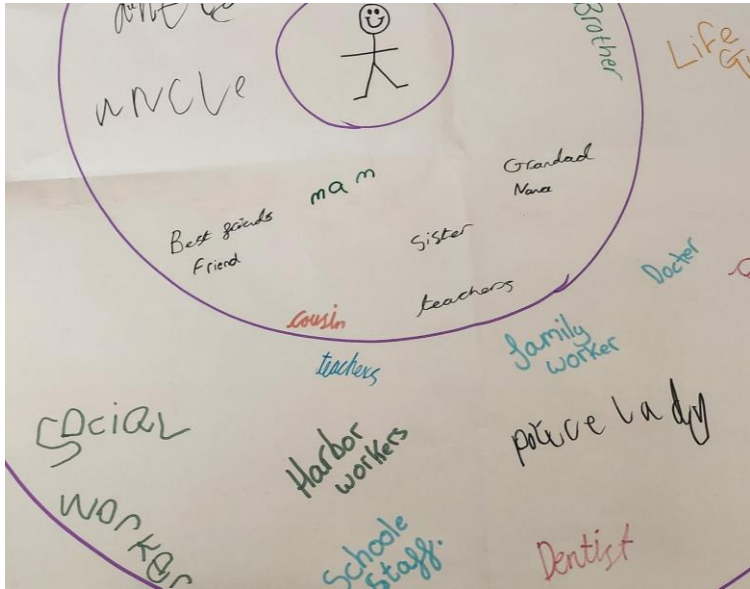
For Schools to incoporate domestic abuse in assemblys and share agencies with them what will help Support


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
Nan
Granddad
teacher
doctor


Trusted Person to talk too.
Being Safe
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

Qualities that children valued in professionals

Experienced and have a good understanding of domestic abuse.

Able to relate, having been through things themselves.

Kind and respectful to children.

Good listeners and able to keep calm and positive.

Patient and non-judgemental.

Children want professionals to:
Take more time to listen to them and work at their pace.

Recognise that adults have more power, which can be unfair for children, e.g. confidentiality.



Chapter 5

The role of health services





Advantages of health services

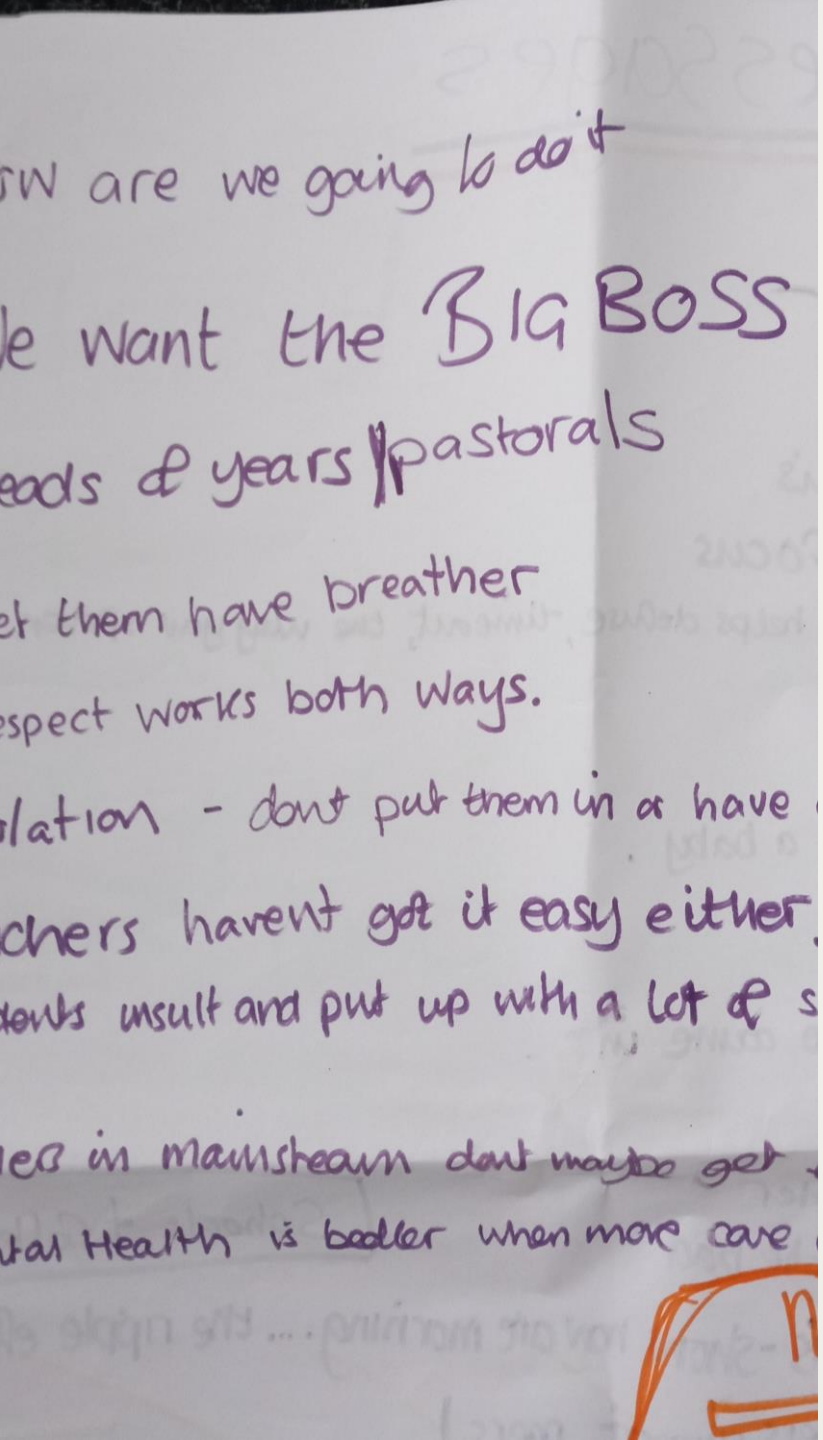
Trusted environment.

Risk of abuse increases during pregnancy

Regular contact during maternity care and health visiting provide opportunities for routine inquiry and professional curiosity.

Coverage: 97% of families see health visitor before the child is 9 months old.

Barriers: marginalised communities, limited number of disclosures, funding and capacity.



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.

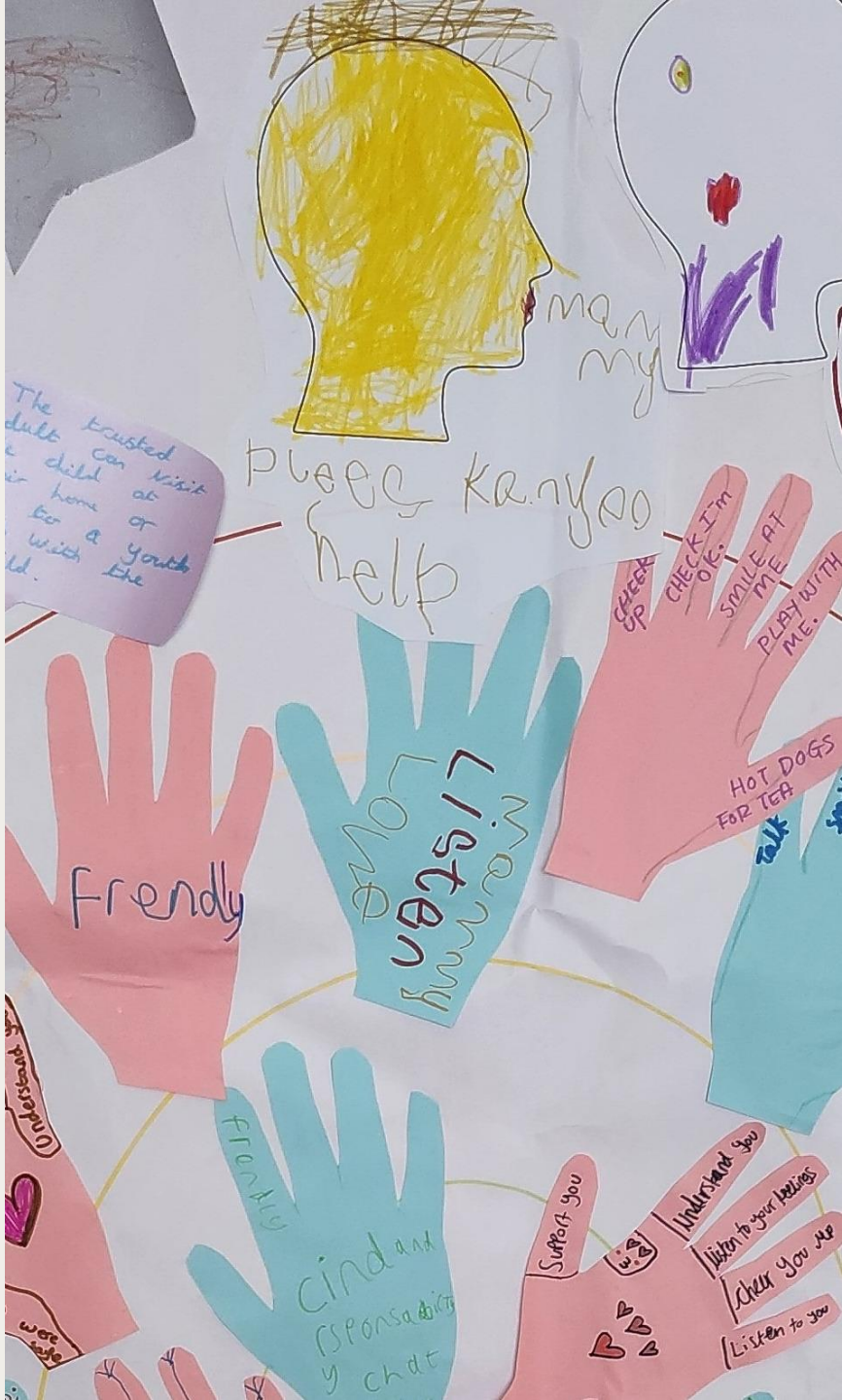
Holistic funding.

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

Policy 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 Home Office updates statutory guidance to require Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews to include the authentic voice of the child victim.

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

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 1: Centring children's voices

Children subject to domestic abuse, and their non-abusive parents or caregivers, must be listened to and involved in decision making about their own lives, at every level, by every agency.

Commissioners must consider how the experiences of children subject to domestic abuse can safely and meaningfully inform the shaping and delivery of services that are commissioned to support them. Commissioners could refer to existing best practice models, such as the CAFADA toolkit and Everyday Heroes' Participation Toolkit in Scotland.

Where children are bereaved by a domestic abuse-related death, children are given a voice and included in decision making about their future.

2: Stronger cross-departmental working and strategic leadership

Policy recommendations

The Department for Health and Social Care holds ICBs accountable for the representation of health professionals at Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards (DAPB) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (Marac).

The Department for Health and Social Care ensures Integrated Care Board (ICB) Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Leads, are giving adequate attention to child victims in their own right and taking a public health approach to domestic abuse across their areas.

The Department for Health and Social Care consults on and publishes a 10-year strategy to implement a Public Health Approach to Domestic Abuse across England, which has a dedicated focus on the needs of children and young people, alongside the Government's stated commitment to halve VAWG in a decade.

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.

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 2: Stronger cross-departmental working and strategic leadership

Domestic abuse is a **shared strategy** with a public health lens, across the CSP, LSCP, Safeguarding Adult Board, Local Family Justice Boards, and ICB, to ensure that there are shared objectives and a holistic whole-family strategy and approach across an area. This includes **pooling resources to fund shared posts for the development of a strategy and implementation**. This would be done by the **various boards sharing data on prevalence and demographics** as well as themes from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, serious case reviews, and other death reviews to inform strategy and needs assessments.

Where areas already have CSP led strategies, they should be refreshed and reviewed in partnership with the LSCP and Safeguarding Adult Board to ensure that children are represented equally to adults. As part of this arrangement, there should be agreed information sharing protocols put in place that each are held accountable for.

Any community health service strategy or approach recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, recognising the impact on children that leads to the convening of a response to meet their individual needs.

All ICBs should ensure that children are seen as victims in their own right and adopt Public Health Approaches to domestic abuse across their areas. ICB Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Leads should ensure they give **adequate attention to child victims in their own right alongside the attention given to adult victims.**

3: Holistic funding

Policy 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 Department for Health and Social Care invests in embedding domestic abuse and other types of VAWG expertise and specialism into health settings – by funding the provision of specialist domestic abuse services within health settings to support prevention activity and response work to child victims of domestic abuse

The Department for Health and Social Care funds counselling and therapeutic support for child victims of domestic abuse within specialist community-based services.



Children told us:

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

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 3: Holistic Funding.

Commissioners should create **joint strategic commissioning groups** to develop the Coordinated Community Response and respond to identified need through the Duty to Collaborate and the resulting **Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.**

Commissioners across all agencies in all areas collaborate on **understanding the prevalence and needs of children subject to domestic abuse**, including those with no recourse to public funds, and pool funding to commission specialist, independent community-based services, including 'by and for' services, to support them.

4: Data and evidence

Policy 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 Home Office and Ministry of Justice conduct a rapid evidence review of the experiences of children bereaved by domestic abuse, including a review of the statutory and voluntary sector provision available to them.

The Ministry of Justice ensures that the statutory guidance underpinning the Duty to Collaborate makes clear that safeguarding partners must include annual data on children subject to domestic abuse in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

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.

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 4: Data and Evidence

As part of their duties within the Duty to Collaborate, safeguarding partners, with the inclusion of education, must include **annual data on children subject to domestic abuse** in their area, to ensure that Joint Strategic Needs Assessments are as accurate as possible.

All services that are commissioned for any type of work with children and young people should **build safeguarding case numbers and nature of referrals into contract management with a specific domestic abuse flag**. This non-identifiable information should be **shared with the LSCP** so that analysis can be carried out to inform local assessments of need. This should be developed in line with government guidance and a shared linguistic framework to avoid confusion and discrepancy.

5: Specialist training for frontline professionals

Policy 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.

The development and delivery should be co-produced between the independent specialist domestic abuse sector and the independent specialist children's sector.

Where possible, local organisations, local knowledge and local context should be prioritised in the delivery of training.



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

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 5: Specialist training for frontline professionals

Universal for all professionals that have contact with babies, children and young people	Exercise **professional curiosity** and confidently **spot the signs** of all forms of domestic abuse (including coercive and controlling behaviour, technology-facilitated abuse, so-called 'honour-based' abuse and harmful practices) for all children. Respond appropriately to children who are experiencing domestic abuse. This **includes demonstrating trauma informed practice, age-appropriate communication methods, understanding barriers to engagement**, and best responses for children with diverse identities and needs, and protected characteristics, recognising the importance of **intersectionality**. Refer children (and associated adults) to relevant services. This includes **knowledge of local specialist services** and understanding both organisational and statutory **safeguarding systems and local protocols** for all levels of need, including early help. Professionals should be confident navigating local and interagency referral pathways.

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 5: Specialist training for frontline professionals

Tailored for professionals who have contact with children and young people in the context of their experiences of abuse	Understand children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse as **complex trauma,** including the **challenges faced by children and families.** Understand the **impact** of domestic abuse for children, young people, their families, and wider relationships and the coping mechanisms they may use in the context of intersectionality, recognising the **diverse nature of identities and need.** Understand the importance of **information sharing and multi-agency working** when working with children and young people with lived experience of domestic abuse. Understand **the link between domestic abuse and other forms of risk and harm**, including serious violence. Understand the **dynamics of domestic abuse,** including recognising 'victim blaming' and placing responsibility on perpetrators using harmful behaviours. Competence in **documenting interactions with children**, being mindful of appropriate terminology. Recognising **the protective role and strengths of the non-abusive parent** and the importance of protective relationships. Understand **typologies of perpetrators** (including various forms of presentation). Understand effective **strategies for prevention, identification and intervention** that ensure children and their non-abusive parent/guardian receive appropriate and timely support

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 5: Specialist training for frontline professionals

Specialist for professionals supporting children and young people affected by domestic abuse/professionals providing interventions for individuals using harmful behaviours	Competence in **assessing risk and need** and **tailoring support** for children experiencing domestic abuse. Competence in **planning focused support sessions** with children that are appropriate for children's age and development and align with their individual and intersecting needs. Understand how **to tailor support for children bereaved by domestic abuse-related deaths.** Understand how to **deliver domestic abuse content in an RSE setting** for various age ranges. Understand how to **engage with perpetrators**, supporting them to engage in behavioural change programmes while holding them to account. Understand how to **advocate for children**, both on an individual and institutional level.

6: Safeguarding

Policy recommendations

The Department for Health and Social Care increases CAMHS capacity to understand and respond to child victims of domestic abuse with mental health needs and ensure all CAMHS professionals have a solid understanding of domestic abuse.

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.

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 6: Safeguarding

All child safeguarding policies must be updated to reflect that children are victims in their own right as per the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 definition.

Where children are identified as victims in their own right, information must be shared in a timely and relevant way with a view to supporting child victims and the non abusive parent as early as possible, including referrals for advocacy and specialist support. **Communication between agencies and services should not be confined to formal meetings.**

There must be strong strategic and operational multi-agency working, governance and information sharing between Marac, MATAC, MAPPA and MASH, where these exist.

There must be **regular representation at Marac meetings** from children's social care, education safeguarding, **children's health safeguarding**, probation, police, housing and the specialist domestic abuse sector to specifically represent child as well as adult victims. **These representatives must prepare for, attend, and take actions from Marac. Each agency should record their own domestic abuse flags and case management for Marac.**

7: Ensuring practice is informed by specialists

Policy recommendations

The Department for Education ensures that all Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams are fully domestic abuse informed through robust guidance, strategic leadership, and the funding of support services to provide clear referral pathways to independent specialist services.

The Department for Education funds co-located independent specialist domestic abuse services in the new Family Help and Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams.

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.

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 7: Ensuring Practice is informed by specialists.

Independent specialist services (commissioned and non-commissioned) that work with child victims of domestic abuse should be able to access local training and guidance on child protection, adult safeguarding, the Mental Capacity Act, the Care Act, and other relevant information, in order to ensure their responses are informed within wider frameworks, and they are upskilled to be able to bid for local funding.

Universal access points for families, such as Family Hubs, **GP surgeries and other health** and education settings, **should display signposting information to specialist domestic abuse services.**

Commissioners should ensure that services they commission can take **self-referrals and be as accessible and flexible in their referral pathways as possible.**

Universal access points should receive **training and support to carry out routine enquiry** as part of their basic safeguarding duties. **Practical tools, resources and forms should be amended to prompt and then record that routine enquiry has happened.**

There should be **robust information sharing agreements in place between all commissioning bodies under the Duty to Collaborate.**

What this means for you

domestic abuse commissioner

Theme 7: Ensuring Practice is informed by specialists.

Local strategic leads and commissioners must recognise the value of the independent specialist sectors by:

- Treating them as subject experts and using their expertise to inform work on children affected by domestic abuse, as well as more universal prevention activity. This includes ensuring that any local and regional guidance produced that may relate to children as victims of domestic abuse reflects the Domestic Abuse Act.
- Appropriately building in full cost recovery to cover their time and expenses required to fully engage in local and regional consultations and strategy development in an institutional advocacy role. This goes beyond formal meetings and is relevant to preparation and action time required.
- Allowing reasonable timeframes for local and regional consultations and strategy development so that the independent specialist sectors are able to give each item the full attention it needs. Local and regional public bodies should coordinate their requests for information and consultation so that the specialist sectors are not put under undue pressure and time and financial constraints.
- Consider how to support the independent domestic abuse sector with recruitment, retention, and capacity building, in recognition of the integral part it plays in the multi-agency response. Local and regional processes must support the sector to thrive and not compound the multiple pressures they face.

Q&A

Which of the Commissioner's practice recommendations are relevant to your role or setting? What are the tangible actions you can be doing or starting a conversation about where you are?

Please share reflections, existing good practice and ideas on how responses can be improved for babies, children and young people.

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