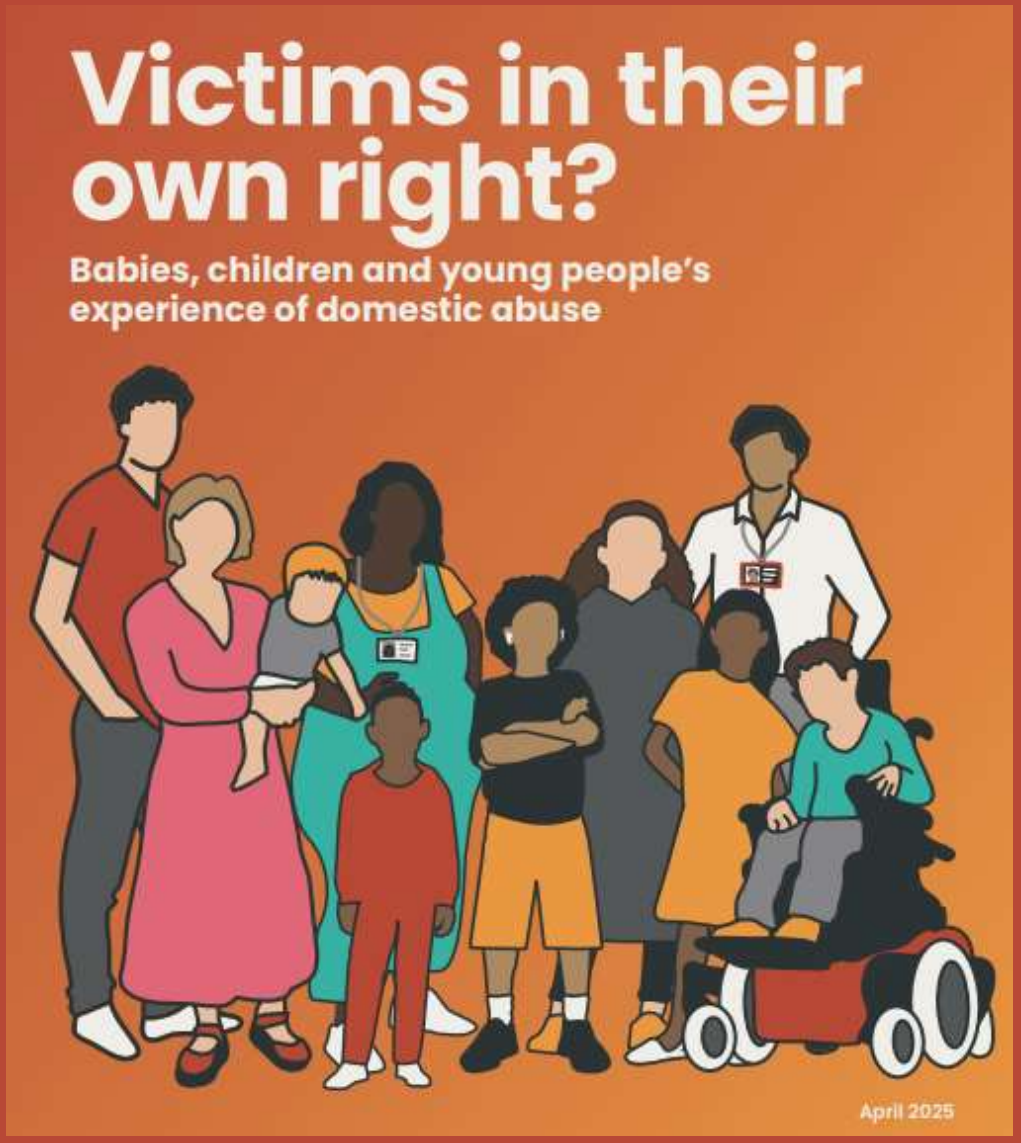


Victims in their own right

Webinar : Housing

June 2025

domestic abuse commissioner

Agenda

Introduction
Tell Nicole
Exploration of support services
Recommendations- for policy and practice
Q&A

Go to Menti.com and type code: 1539 2621

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 professionals 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



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.

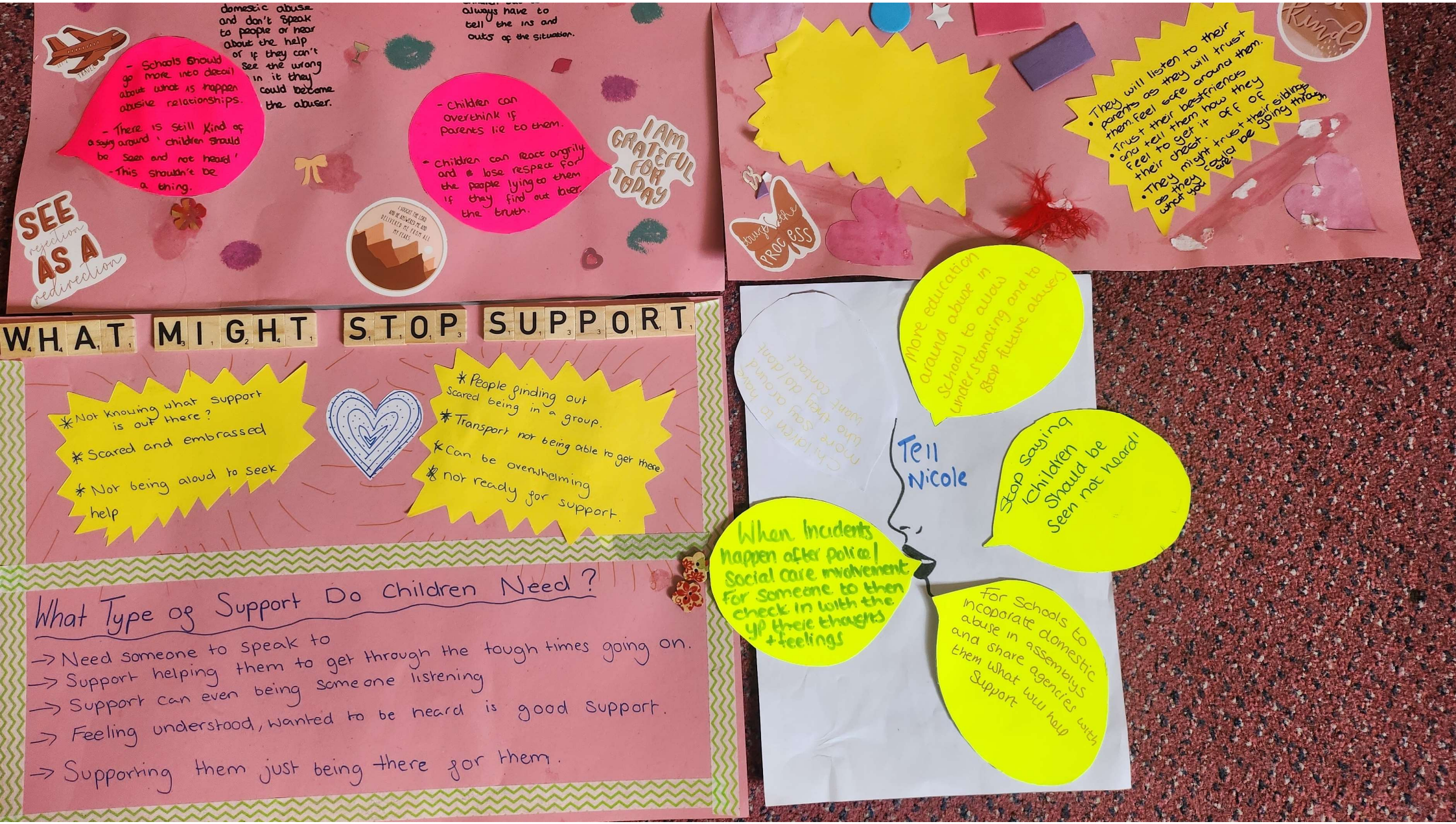


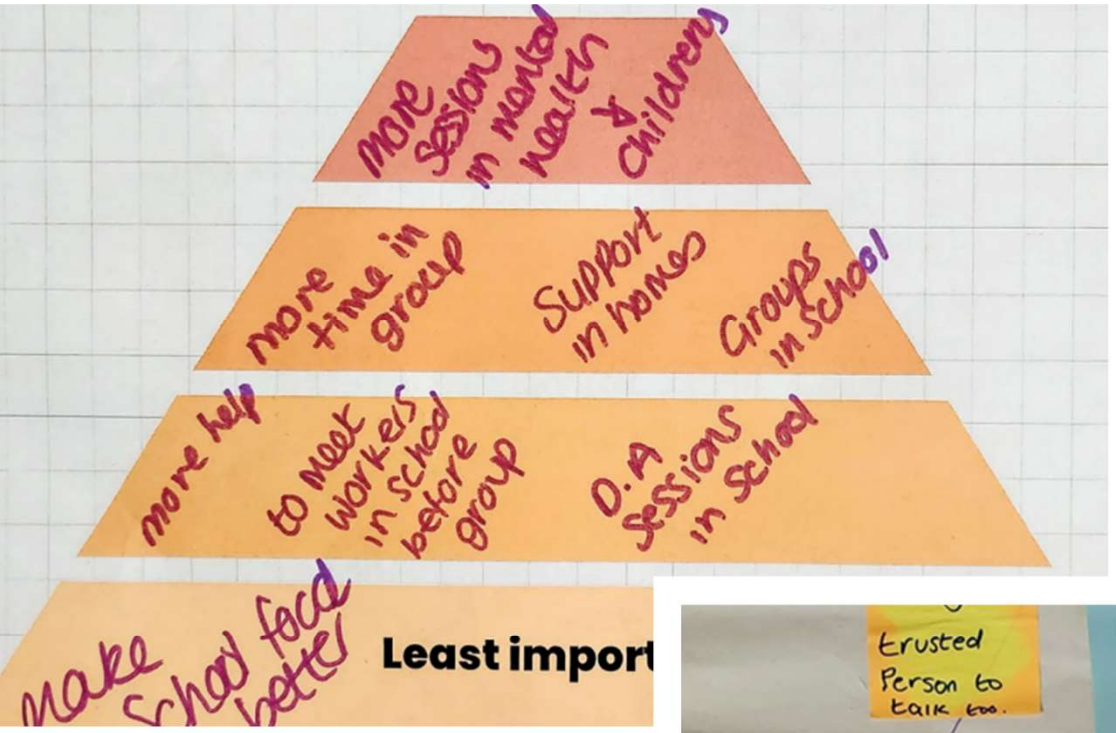
quicker support and warning signs noticed by schools

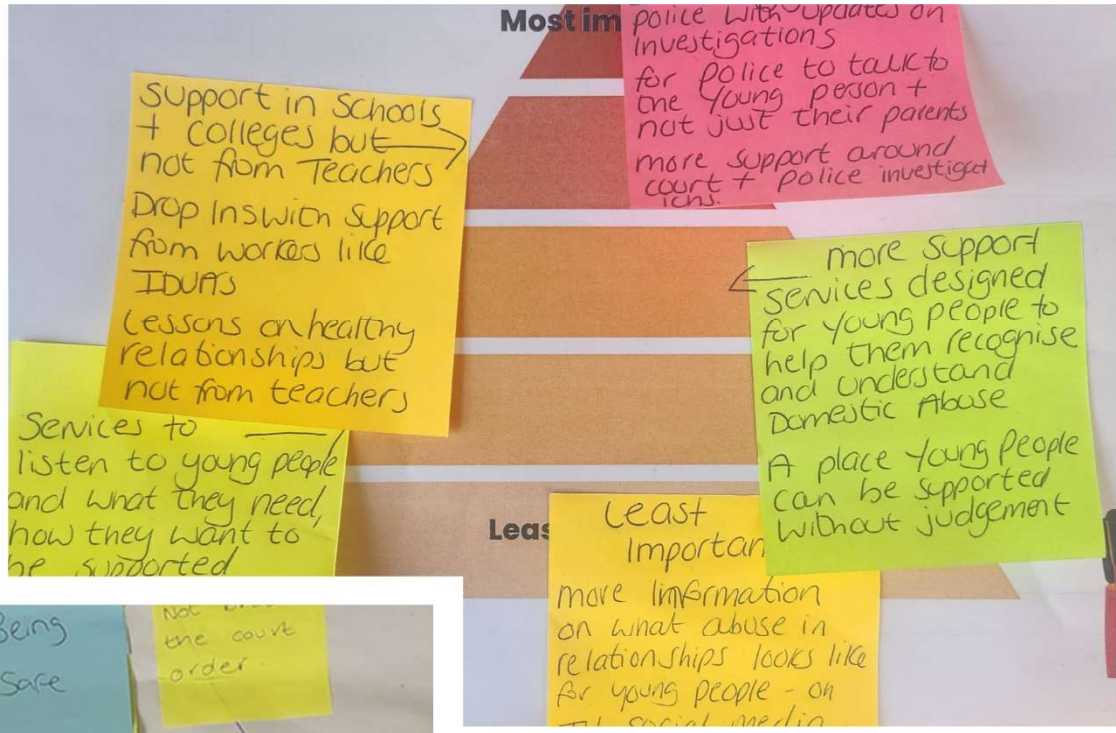
more support from school about safe relationships

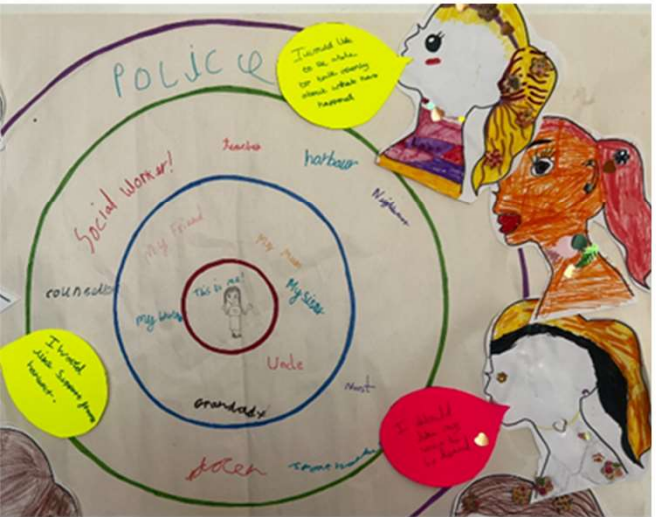
For the police to ask us our version of events

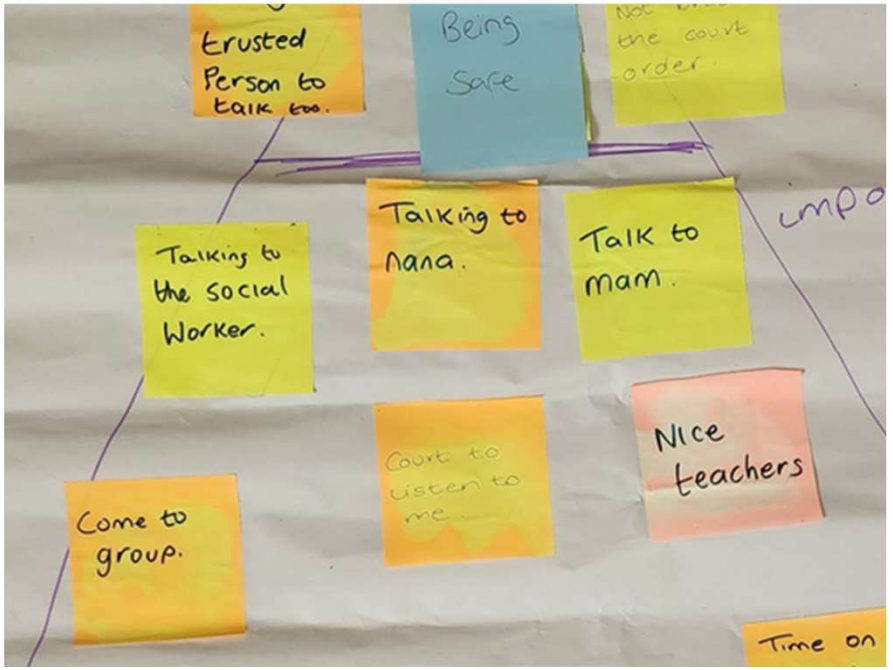
listen to both sides equally and not be more likely to believe adults over children

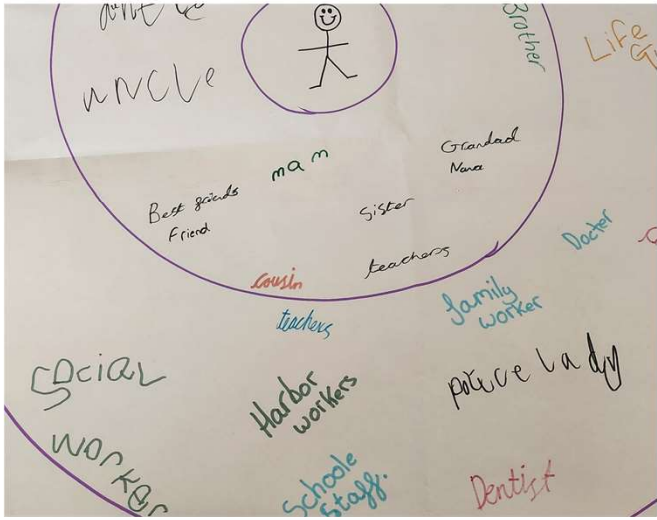

domestic abuse and don't speak to people or hear about the help or if they can't see the wrong in it they could become the abuser.
always have to tell the ins and outs of the situation.
- Schools should go more into detail about what is happen abusive relationships.
- There is still kind of a saying around 'children should be seen and not heard'
- This shouldn't be a thing.
- 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.
I AM GRATEFUL FOR TODAY
SEE rejection AS A redirection
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 are going through what you are.
WHAT MIGHT STOP SUPPORT
* Not knowing what support is out there?
* Scared and embrassed
* Nor 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 abuses
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 they help support


more sessions in mental health & 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 better
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
Support in Schools + Colleges but not from Teachers
Drop Ins with support from workers like IDVAS
Lessons on healthy relationships but not from teachers
more support services designed for young people to help them recognise and understand Domestic Abuse
A place young people can be supported without judgement
Services to listen to young people and what they need, how they want to
Leas
Least Importan
more information on what abuse in relationships looks like for young people - on


POLICE
Social Worker
teacher
harbour
Neighbour
My Friend
My Mum
My Sister
counsellor
my baby
This is me!
Uncle
Aunt
grandaddy
doctor
somewhere


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
Grandad
Nana
Best friends
Friend
sister
cousin
teachers
Doctor
family worker
teachers
social
Harbor workers
police lady
worker
schools staff
Dentist

“I don’t feel comfortable in my ‘temporary accommodation.’

- Dirty.
- Can’t invite friends.
- Bugs.
- Reception won’t listen to complaints.
- I feel like a bother/’animal’ in this flat.”



“Made homeless, sitting in a policeman’s car, he said ‘can you stay at your friends because I need to go soon’.

Went to council same day – felt numb – sat there for 2 hours and they said, ‘can you leave, we are closing soon’. Went to a restaurant.

Laughable, this is such a joke.”

Support services for children affected by domestic abuse

TECHNICAL REPORT



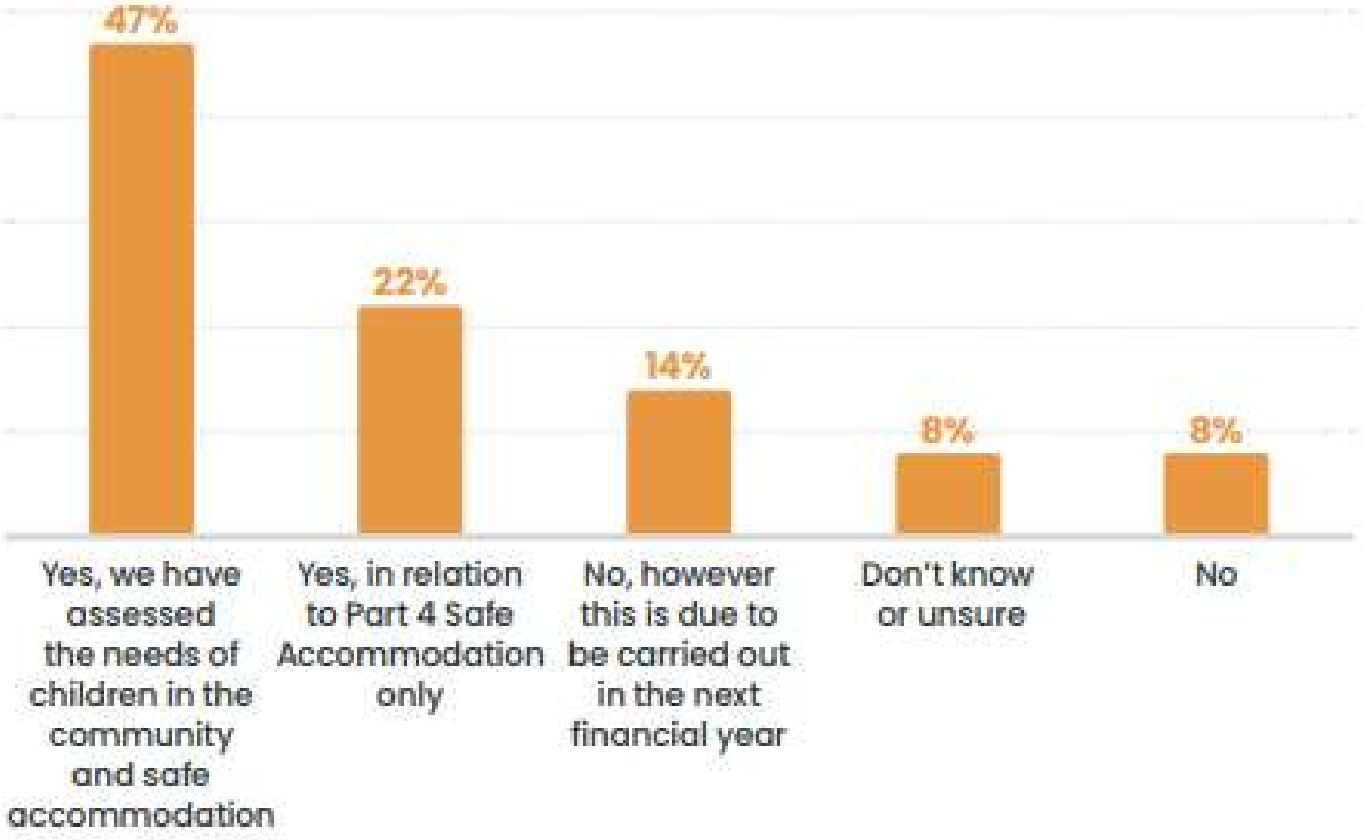
domestic abuse commissioner

April 2025

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

Assessing the needs of children experiencing domestic abuse still linked to safe accommodation.

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

Access to accommodation-based services (ABS)

Average of 98 children per year receive ABS support.

Three quarters of children were seen by ABS within 2 days.

Nearly half of ABS (46%) receive more referrals than they have the capacity or funding to support.

Funding for ABS ranged from under £3000 to nearly £4.5 million.

8% of 143 services that closed within past 5 years were ABS.

Chapter 7

The crisis response





Key findings

In the year ending March 2024, 63,950 individuals were supported via the Safe Accommodation Duty. Of those individuals supported, 24,940, or 39%, were children.

In the same year there were 26,870 households that were referred to a safe accommodation service but were turned away.

Accommodation-based services were the service type mostly likely to say that they have to turn away referrals, with nearly half of services (46%) saying that they receive more referrals than they have the capacity or funding to support.

Women's Aid's recent report, Nowhere to Turn, of the families included in the study, just 27.8% of families with more than three children could be accommodated in a refuge.

There can be restrictions for teenage boys in accessing safe accommodation, with siblings sometimes separated as a result of rules regarding their placement.

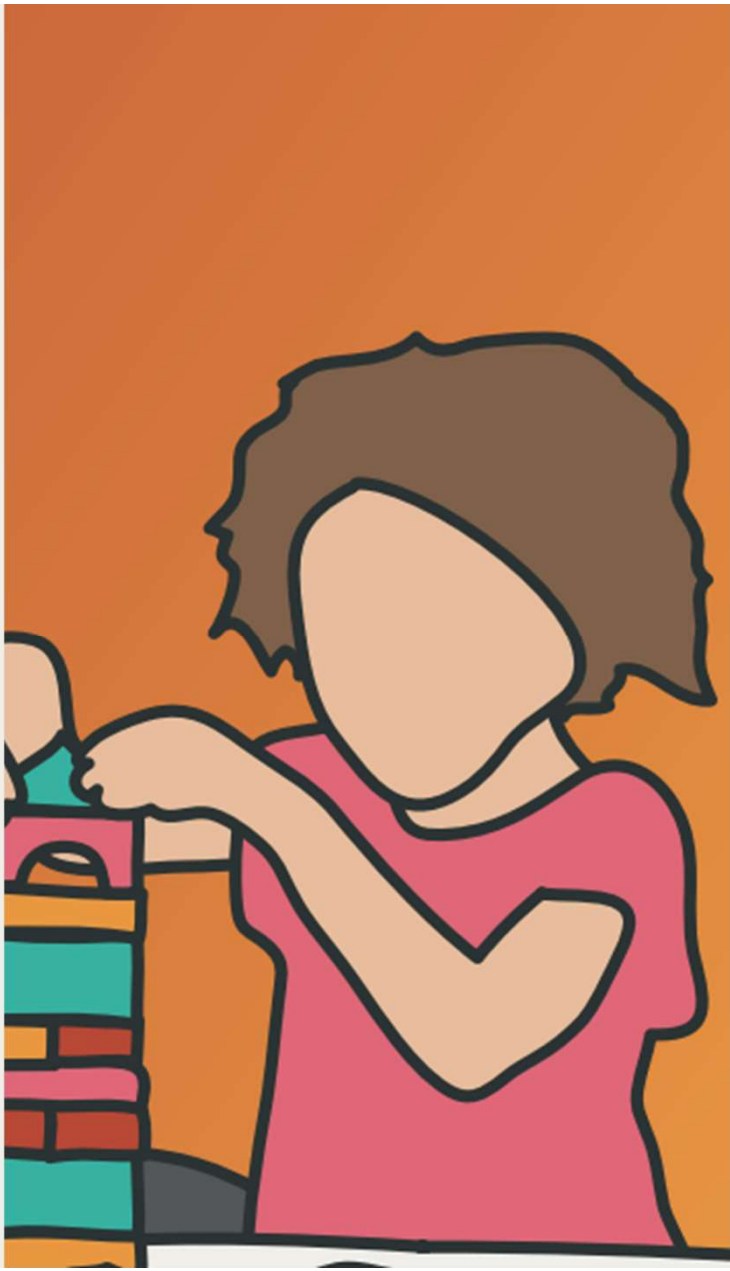
Key findings

Those who present to their local authority as homeless as a result of domestic abuse (and therefore in priority need), will not always access support in safe accommodation.

If the victim or survivor is assessed as having a priority need, and requiring homelessness support via the Housing Act 1996, they will instead be entitled to access temporary accommodation.

In the latest annual data set, for the period April 2023/March 2024, 64,960 households were found to be owed a main housing duty. Of these, 4,900 households (8%) were in priority need as a result of experiencing domestic abuse.

Within the same dataset, households with children in temporary accommodation increased by 14.7% to 74,530. Given these numbers, there will be an extremely high number of child victims of domestic abuse who are living in unsuitable temporary accommodation, not accessing any support for their experiences.





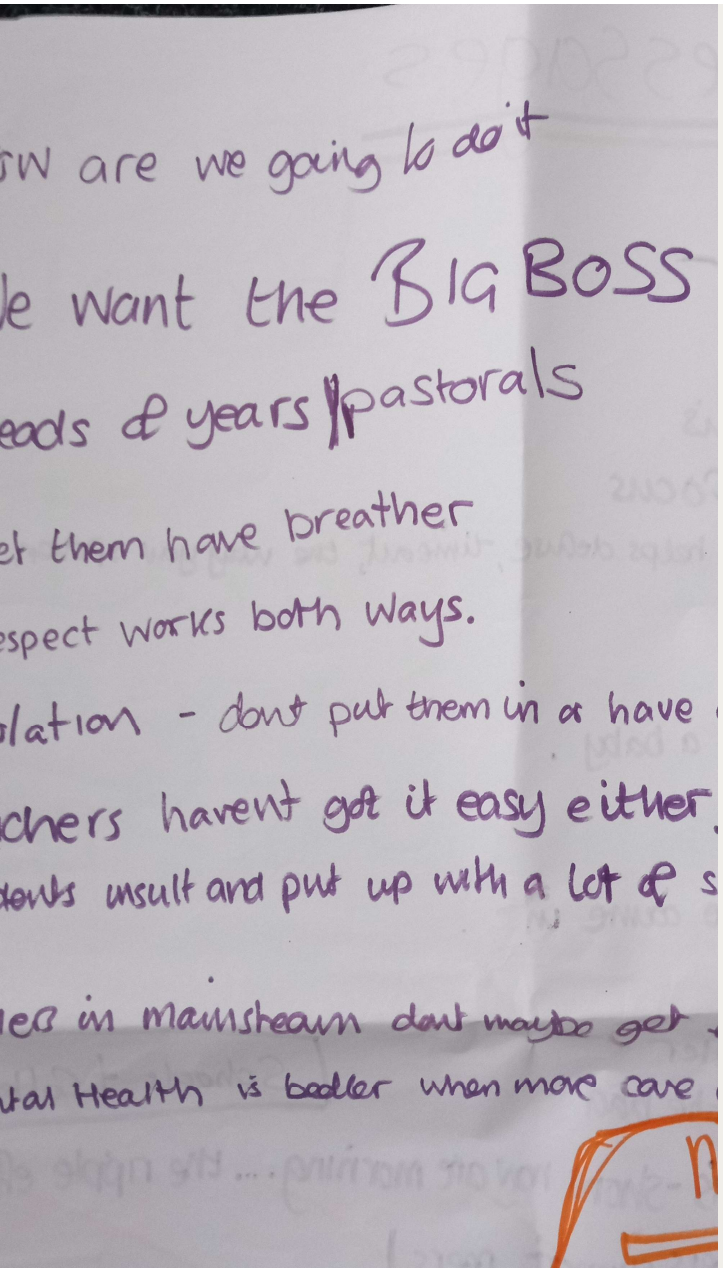
Key findings

Older children in refuges have described feeling trapped and lacking independence. Curtailments include not being allowed a key, restricted internet access, curfews and not leaving the premises.

Insufficient access to computers and the internet compounded feelings of isolation as it reduced opportunities for social interaction with peers via social media, entertainment and school work.

Teenagers spent on average 13.8 weeks out of education. Reasons for this include problems with transportation to schools in other areas, a shortage of available school places locally, enrolment delays, and welfare concerns.

Residing in safe accommodation can also create practical difficulties in completing homework, due to a lack of appropriate equipment, quiet spaces, computers and internet access.



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.

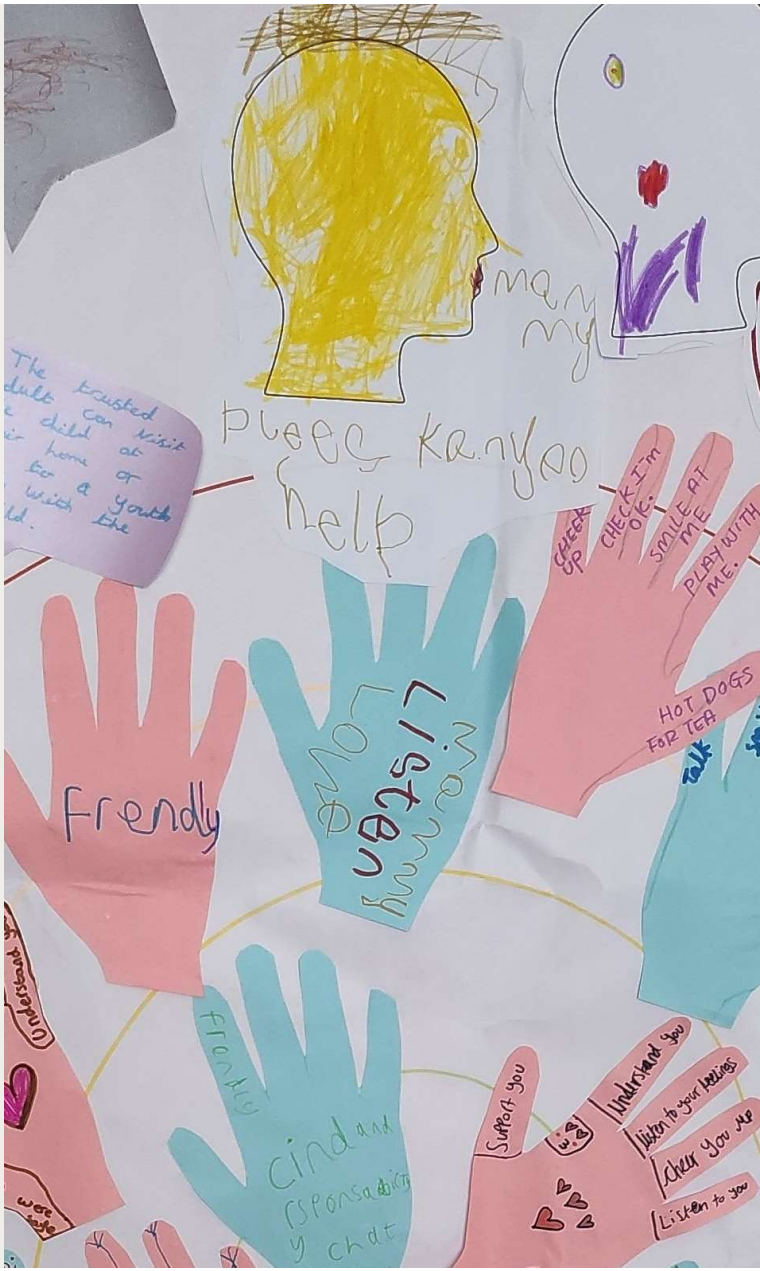
Holistic funding.

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 responsibl

The MHCLG publishes guidance requiring each local authority to capture the views and experiences of children in safe accommodation within their needs assessments, data monitoring forms and strategies, and commits to ensuring children's voices are represented.

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

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

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.

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.

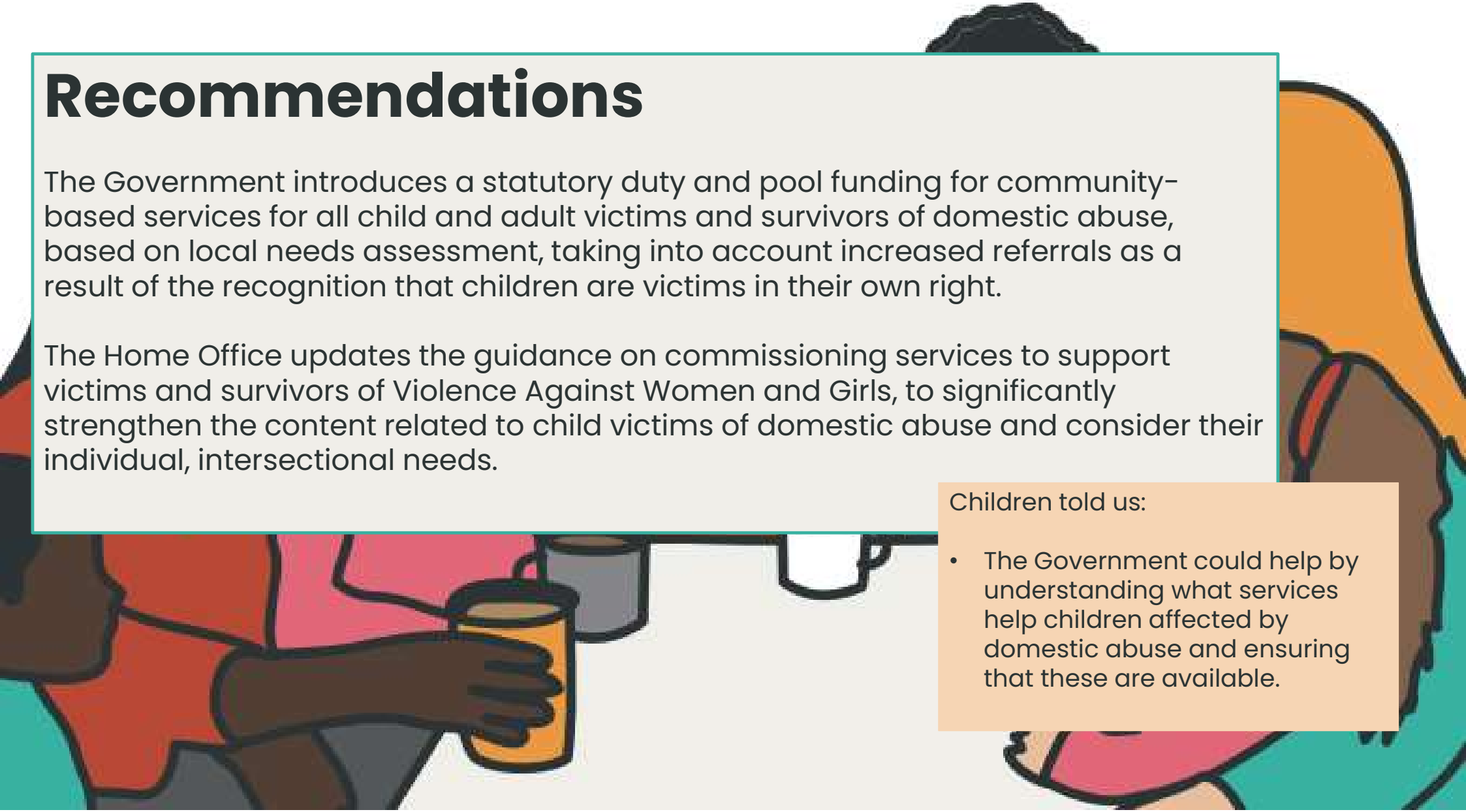
Local Safeguarding Children's Partnerships must give dedicated attention and resource to child victims of domestic abuse. This must include the oversight of multiagency domestic abuse and children and young people training, the collation and sharing of data, service information, referral pathways and strategies on how to support children subject to 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.

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

Recommendations

The MHCLG ensures that adult and child victims and survivors who are living in temporary accommodation are included in the Safe Accommodation Duty data, concerning families who were unable to be supported in safe accommodation, to ensure an accurate measure of the scale of the problem.

The MHCLG collects better data regarding child victims of domestic abuse residing in safe accommodation. This should include outcomes for children and families, the ages of children, reasons why children cannot be supported, and the type of child-specific support service accessed in the accommodation. This must include the experiences of teenage boys

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.

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.

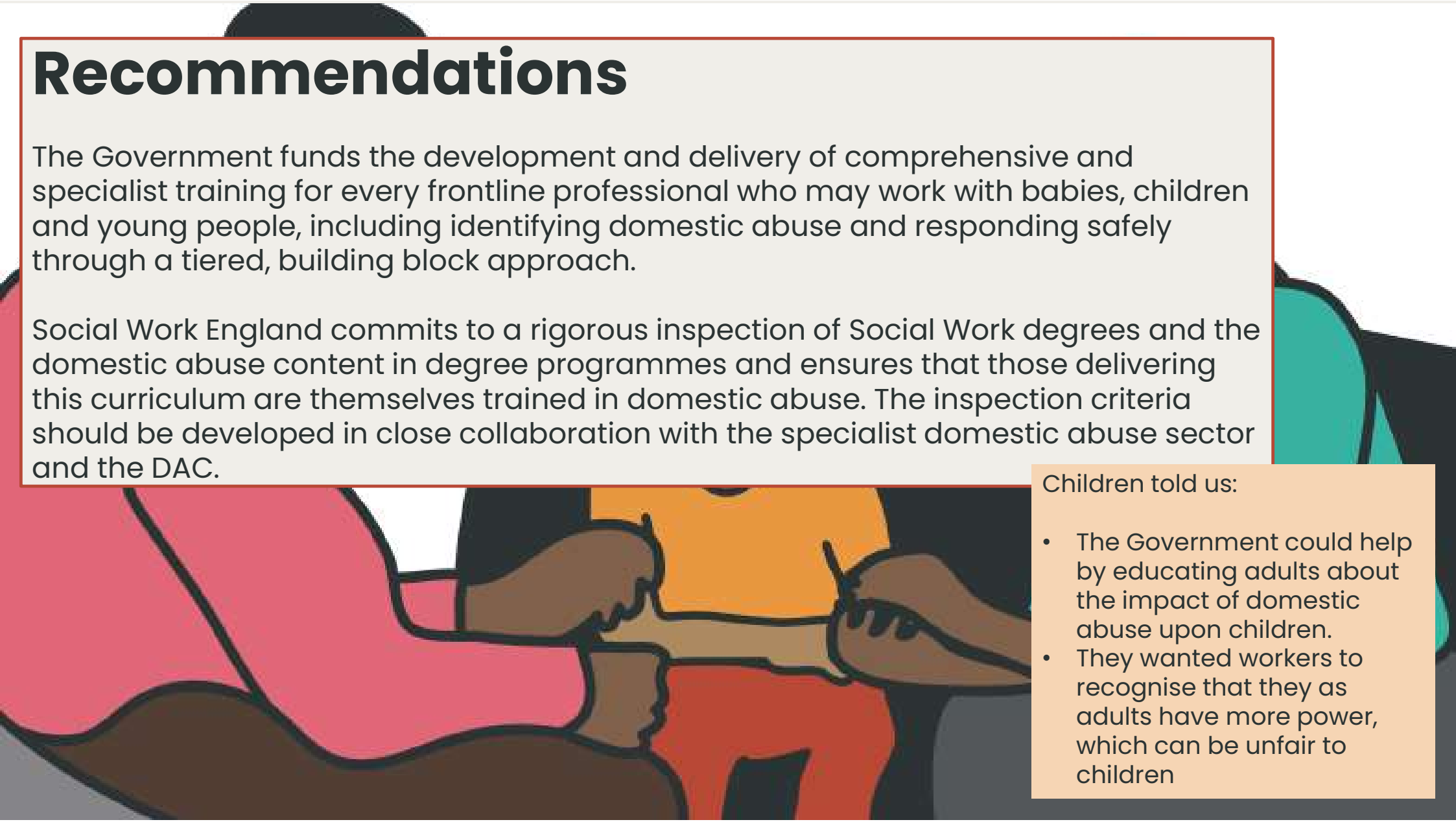
All services that are commissioned for any type of work with children and young people should **build safeguarding case numbers and nature of referrals into contract management with a specific domestic abuse flag**. This non-identifiable information should be **shared with the LSCP** so that analysis 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

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

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

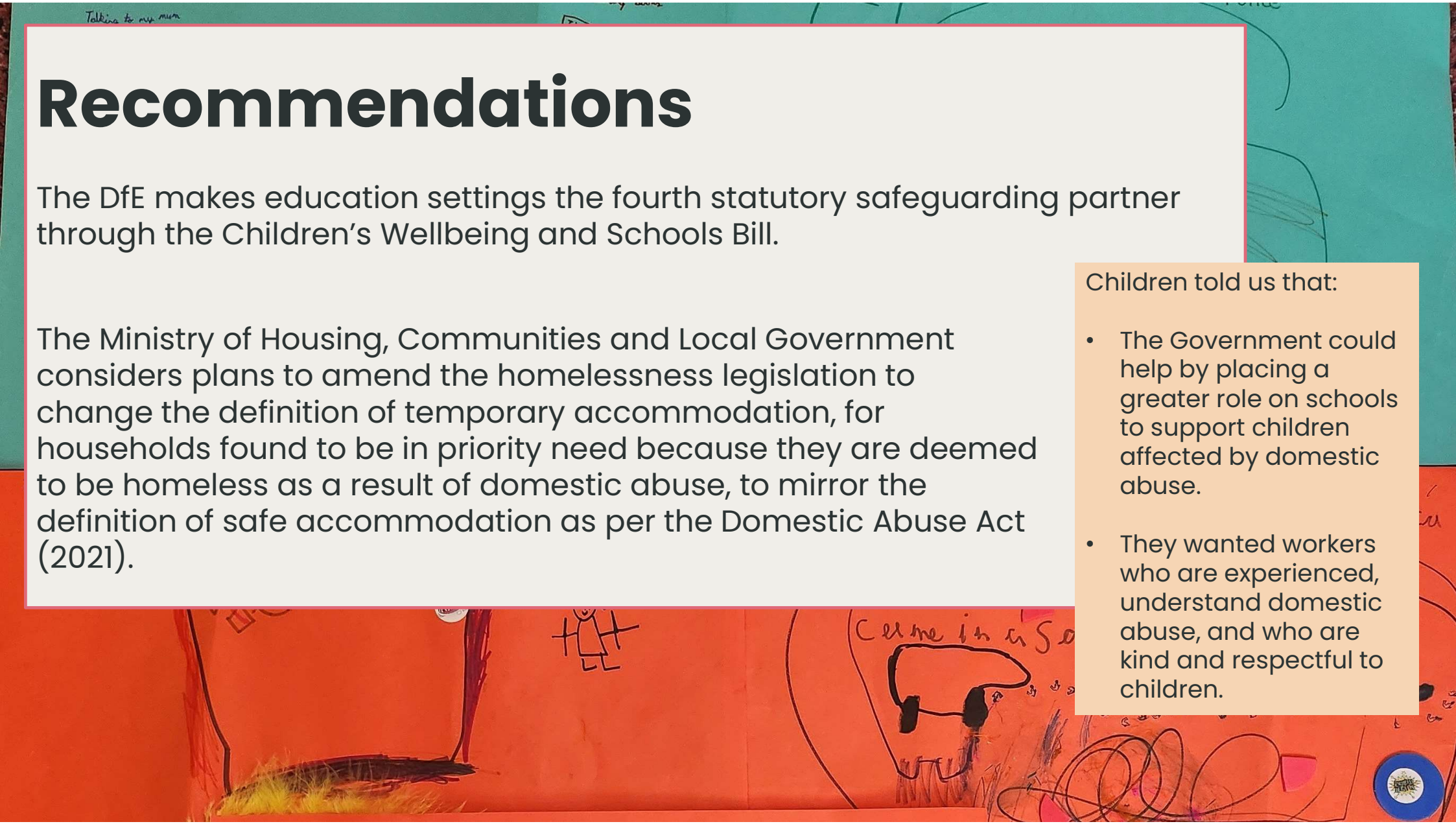
What this means for you

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



Recommendations

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

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government considers plans to amend the homelessness legislation to change the definition of temporary accommodation, for households found to be in priority need because they are deemed to be homeless as a result of domestic abuse, to mirror the definition of safe accommodation as per the Domestic Abuse Act (2021).

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.

Local authorities must ensure that their websites contain information on domestic abuse that is accessible and user friendly for children who have experienced domestic abuse, including helpline advice and support services in the local area, with access to online chat capabilities and mobile interfaces on all sites. Sites should also have quick exit functions**.**

Local areas must develop policies and procedures to minimise escalating risk to children and adults subject to abuse. Areas must ensure that their staff understand the risks associated with sharing information about a child to a parent that has been identified as abusive and know when to and how to withhold information.

What this means for you



Local authorities should ensure that school places are prioritised for children residing in safe accommodation settings, where they have had to move area due to fears for their safety.

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



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.

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 **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.**

Local authorities should ensure that all safe accommodation settings have a specific independent specialist support offer for child victims of domestic abuse, considering their individual needs, gender, age and other factors.

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

Go to Menti.com and type code: 1539 2621

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.

Go to Menti.com and type code: 1539 2621

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