

**Children & Young People's Services
Personalised Learning**

Domestic Abuse

Guidelines for Early Years Practitioners in North Somerset

**Jeannie Osmond
Education Family Support Team Manager**

**Diane Scarborough
Area SENCo**

CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 1
Domestic Abuse: The Facts 1	Page 2
Domestic Abuse: The Facts 2	Page 3
What is Domestic Abuse?	Page 4
Who suffers from Domestic Abuse?	Page 4
What the Children Say	Page 5
How does Domestic Abuse impact on children.. .. .	Page 6
How can we identify children and young people who are experiencing living with Domestic Abuse?	Page 6
Indicators:	
Diagram 1: Emotions	Page 7
Diagram 2: Behaviours	Page 8
Quote from “ <i>Stop Hitting Mum</i> ”	Page 10
Why is it difficult for children to disclose about the abuse?... .. .	Page 10
What should school practitioners do if they suspect a child or young person is living with Domestic Abuse?	Page 11
How do I manage a disclosure from a child or young person?	Page 11
How do I manage a disclosure by a parent/carer?	Page 11
What action can schools take to prevent Domestic Abuse?	Page 12
Diagram 4 : Curriculum Opportunities	Page 13
What information will schools receive about Domestic Abuse in families from the Police?	Page 14
Protocol – Domestic Violence.. .. .	Page 14
Domestic Abuse: Permission to Receive Information Form	Page 16
Agencies in North Somerset	Page 17
Appendix 1: Helplines.. .. .	Page 18
Appendix 2: What women have told us about abuse	Page 19
Appendix 3: Behaviours often displayed by abusers	Page 20
References	Page 23

Introduction

During the last few years there has been a considerable increase in reported incidents of Domestic Violence in North Somerset.

Analysis shows that these incidents occur in all areas of the Authority. This highlights the need for all early years providers to have clear procedures in place in order to safeguard children who may live in homes where abuse takes place.

This document is designed to support those working within the early years sector by raising awareness and detailing how known incidents should be managed.

Children who live in homes where domestic abuse occurs are at risk. We must ensure that we play a part in safeguarding them from harm.

These guidelines should be read alongside North Somerset's Procedures and Protocol documents:

Child Protection Procedure for Day Care Providers

*North Somerset – Early Years Development and Childcare
Partnership*

Further information can be found in:

Working Together to Safeguard Children

HM Government 2006

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00060

Domestic Abuse

The facts

- ◆ Domestic abuse is usually a hidden crime and is often not reported.
- ◆ Domestic abuse accounts for nearly one quarter of all recorded violent crime in the U.K.
- ◆ Domestic abuse may wreck the lives of those who suffer it, live with it or witness it.
- ◆ 81% of sufferers are women, 19% are men
- ◆ On average, a woman is assaulted thirty-five times before seeking help.
- ◆ One in ten women will be severely beaten by her partner.
- ◆ One in four women report the physical abuse began when they were pregnant.
- ◆ Forty-one percent of all female murder victims are killed by a partner or former partner.
- ◆ In nine out of ten cases children are in the home while abuse occurs.
- ◆ In about half the cases there is also direct abuse to the child.
- ◆ 10% of children living with domestic abuse have witnessed their mother being sexually assaulted
- ◆ There is an over-representation of children under five years of age growing up in homes where domestic abuse occurs and yet very few services in the UK currently exist to support this group.
- ◆ Abusers may involve children in the abuse in a range of ways, including making them be abusive towards their mothers.
- ◆ Exposure to violence or trauma, and the resultant persisting fear with which the young child lives, can alter the developing brain.
- ◆ There is a significant association between exposure to domestic abuse and behavioural difficulties in children.
- ◆ In 2004, the cost of domestic violence to the state, employers and victims was estimated at around £23 billion a year.

Domestic Abuse The Facts

8 out of 10 young people who have suffered serious physical abuse have also experienced domestic abuse.

In nearly all cases, the domestic violence was constant or frequent.

Almost 9 out of 10 of young people who said they have been neglected also report some domestic abuse.

78% of the young people researched who reported sexual abuse by their parents also reported domestic abuse.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is:

“any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, emotional, sexual or financial) between adults who are, or have been intimate partners or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”

www.endabuse.org.uk

- ◆ It may include:
 - Verbal abuse
 - Sexual abuse or rape
 - Undermining of self-confidence
 - Destruction of spouse/partner’s property
 - Enforced isolation from friends, family and support
 - Use of weapons
 - Physical assaults
 - Disablement
 - Harassment
 - Control over money, food, transport, and telephone
 - Stalking
 - Threats towards others and children
 - Murder - two cases each week in UK!
- ◆ Sons, daughters or any other person who is a blood relative or who has a close relationship may perpetrate abuse.
- ◆ Domestic abuse is **not a one off** – it is frequent and persistent.
- ◆ All forms of domestic abuse come from the abuser’s desire for power and control over others.

Who suffers Domestic Abuse?

- ◆ Domestic abuse occurs in **all** race, class, religions and age groups.
- ◆ Those with disabilities are particularly vulnerable.
- ◆ Although the majority of cases are common to women, men can also be victims.
- ◆ Women and men can be victims within heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender relationships.

What the Children Say

It felt scary and sad.

She got big hurt, but not as bad as I thought.

He hit her from behind and punched her.

You're not allowed to do it at all, especially to a woman.

I'd like him to go to prison.

He says he's going to kill her. I want to stop him. I'd like to kill him.

The world is too loud. It makes my head bang. I want to run.

I just think and think.

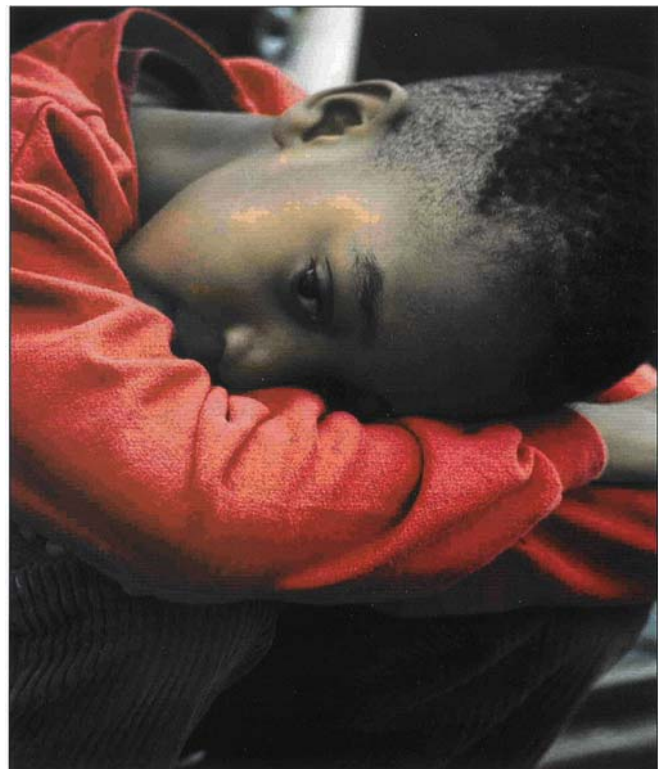
I want to help them. I don't know how.

I wake up in the night. I'm afraid of the morning.

I get scared sometimes. I don't know why.

How does Domestic Abuse impact upon children?

- ◆ Thousands of children live with domestic abuse. It has a huge impact on their lives. They are likely to be affected by the secrecy, fear, disruption and distress in their lives.
- ◆ Children who witness domestic abuse may be vulnerable to developing behavioural issues, attendance problems, ill health, anti-social behaviour (including bullying), self harm, drug and alcohol misuse.
- ◆ They live with a distorted reality.
- ◆ In most cases they witness and hear the abuse taking place. They see the results of violence.
- ◆ Living in a home where abuse takes place means that the child or young person is at risk of harm.
- ◆ 50% of under 5s researched met the criteria for post-traumatic stress. The most frequently reported symptoms included: trouble paying attention, regression in behaviour such as toileting and language, separation anxiety, show more anger and aggression than their peers and appears jumpy or nervous. Infants may have poor sleeping habits and excessive screaming or exceptionally passive. These children often find changes, for instance in routine, very difficult; to play and have fun can also be difficult.
- ◆ The under 5s assessed were also having hearing and speech difficulties. Living in a violent home, in an atmosphere of unpredictability, fear, shouting and verbal abuse is unlikely to be conducive to imitating and trying out new sounds and words.
- ◆ The abuser may have behaved in ways that have prevented the child's mother interacting and attuning appropriately with the child as a baby, affecting brain development associated with the regulation of feelings and emotional intelligence.



How can we identify children and young people who are experiencing living with Domestic Abuse?

Living in an environment where physical or emotional force is used is likely to have a long-term effect upon a child's learning and development.

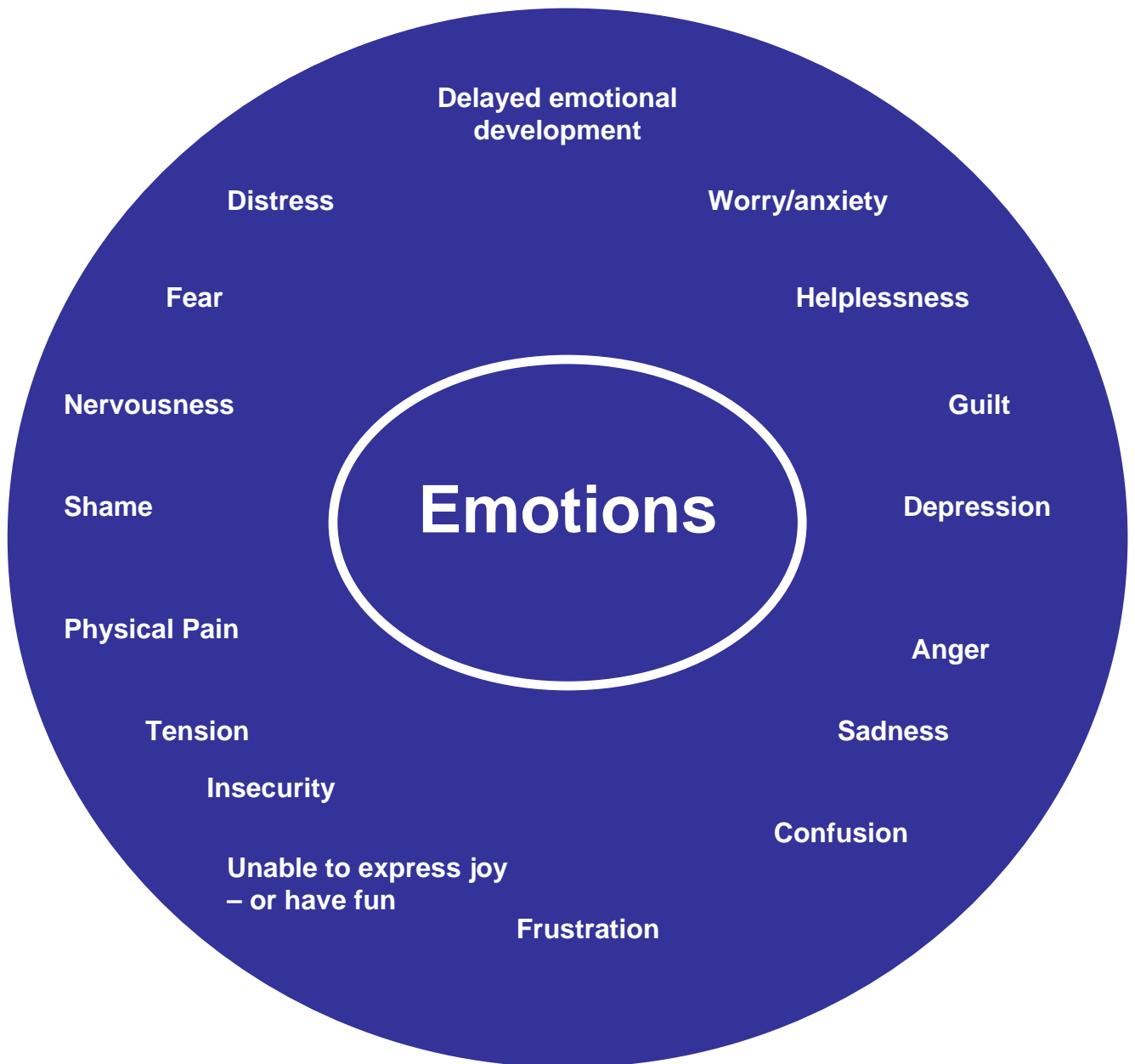
[Diagram 1](#), and [diagram 2](#) show a range of indicators which **may** illustrate that a child is experiencing domestic abuse at home.

(Do treat these indicators with some care, as they could also be symptoms of other unrelated problems which a child is experiencing).



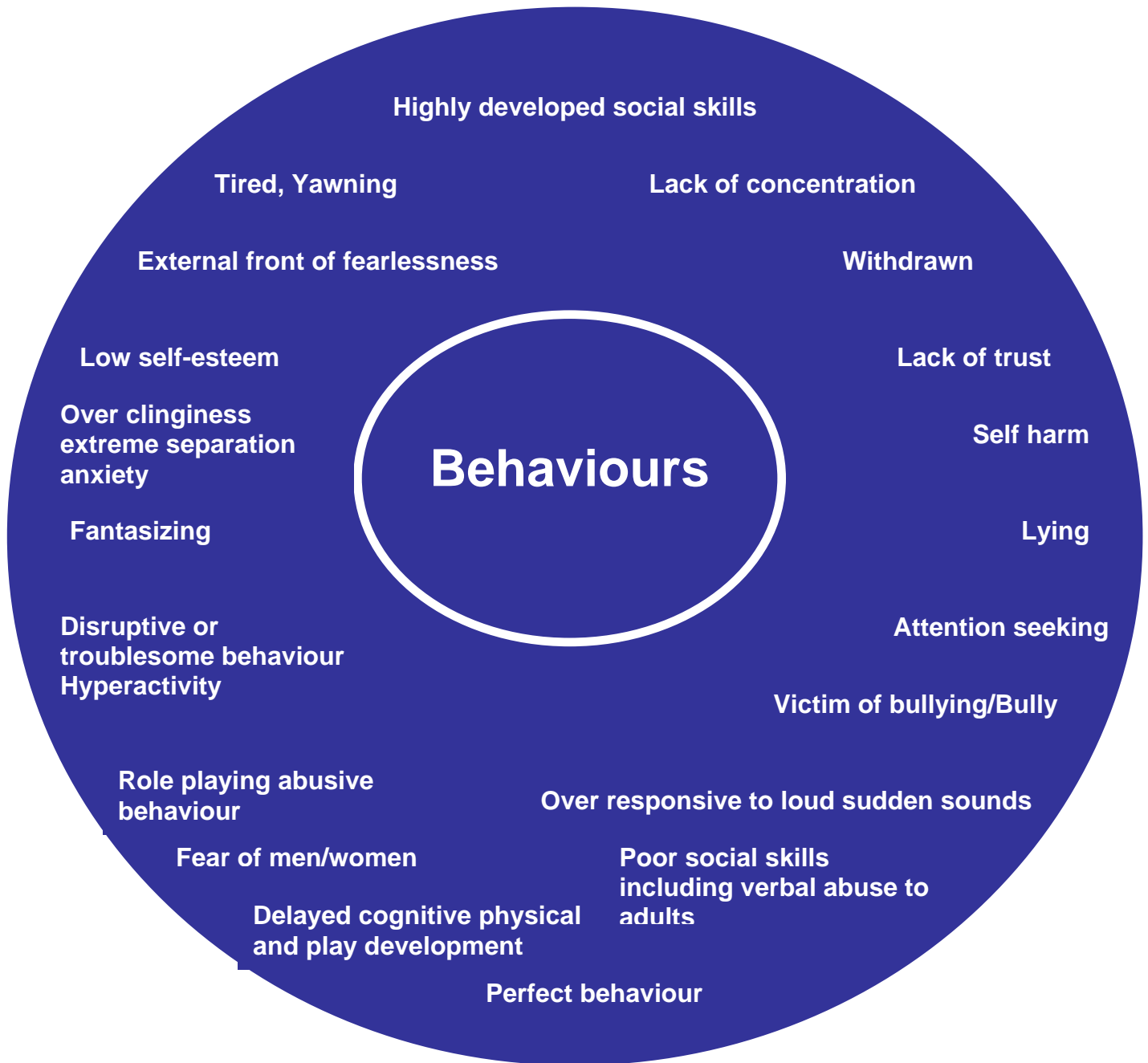
Indicators

Diagram 1



Indicators

Diagram 2



“You know how it made me feel? It affected me a lot. It gets me all muddled and weird. I feel it’s all pressing outwards inside my head. Pressing outwards like this (demonstrate with his hands something bursting out of his head). I think it has frozen me up a bit inside”

*Errol (8 years) from Mullender et al. 2003
“Stop Hitting Mum”*

Why is it difficult for children to disclose the abuse?

- ◆ Child may feel responsible. May have been told they and their behaviour are responsible.
- ◆ They do not know any different. They believe all families are like theirs.
- ◆ Some will have agreed with the abused family member to keep the abuse a secret. This could be because of threats from the abuser.
- ◆ Their environment at home is probably constructed around lies and secrets.
- ◆ The violent adult may be a respected member of the community.
- ◆ Within small communities, the professionals may live nearby, be family friends. The children will believe they know about, and condone the abuse.
- ◆ The community may see domestic abuse as:
 - A domestic tiff
 - It can’t be that bad or she/he would leave
- ◆ May feel the danger would increase if they tell.
- ◆ Fear of family break-up – being removed from the family, have been told this will happen if they tell.
- ◆ May excuse the abuser. May have been led to believe that the abused family member is insignificant and deserves the abuse.
- ◆ Cultural upbringing may make disclosure difficult. Children from some communities are more likely to tell a relative rather than those they regard as ‘official figures’.
- ◆ Those living in tight knit, relatively closed ethnic or cultural communities are less likely to tell anyone of their problems.

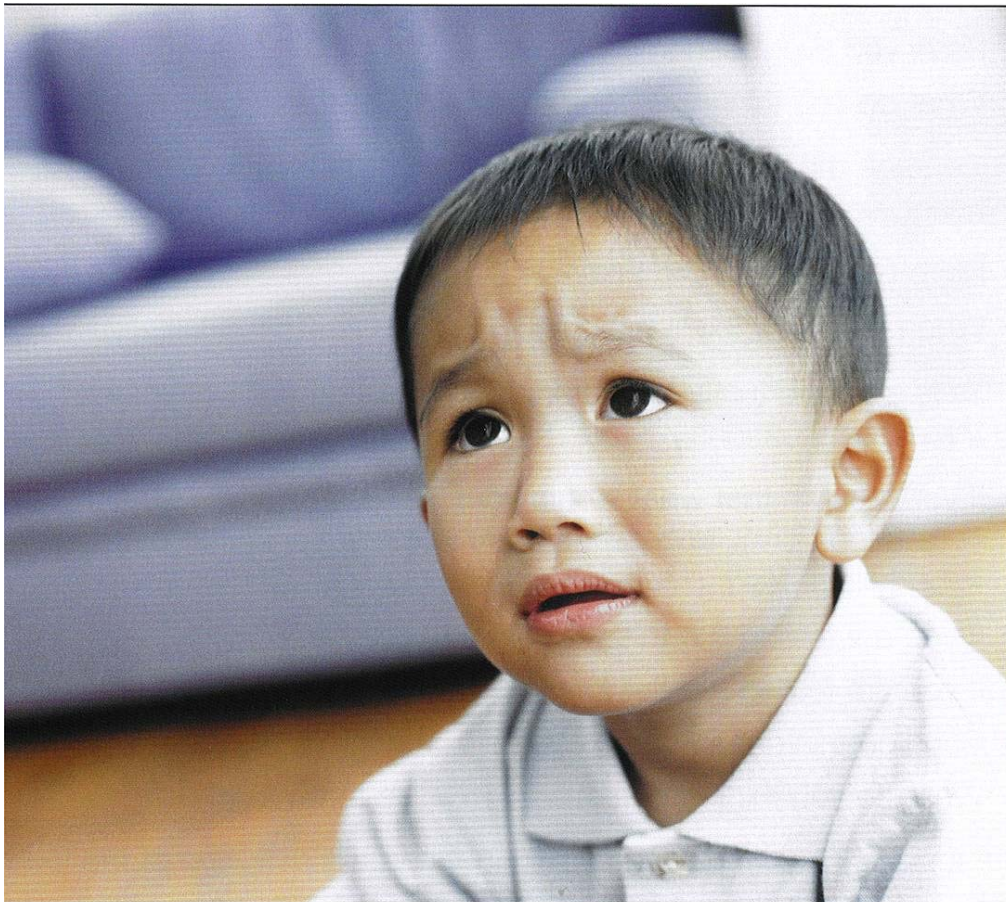
What should practitioners do if they suspect a child is living with Domestic Abuse?

- ◆ Recognise violence/abuse at home as one of the common reasons for problems in children's lives.
- ◆ All settings have designated practitioners for child protection. All practitioners should be aware of who this is and be familiar with the Child Protection Policy and procedure documents.
- ◆ Practitioners must never doubt their opinions, they must report all concerns. These must be managed in the same way as any other child protection issue, e.g. discussion or formal referral to Social Work Intake Team (*see North Somerset's child protection procedures and Information Sharing book and chart*).
- ◆ Remember you have a responsibility to keep children safe.



How do I manage a disclosure from a child?

- ◆ Provide a safe, calm environment for the child to talk to you
- ◆ Never promise to keep what a child is telling you a secret. It is vital that you make it very clear that you will have to tell about their disclosures, but only those who really need to know about it.
- ◆ Believe what they say.
- ◆ Do not interrupt as significant details are disclosed.
- ◆ Listen, but do not ask the child to repeat any of what they are telling you.
- ◆ **Avoid asking questions and turning the process into an interview.**
- ◆ Record all information accurately with details, times and use the child's own words in your account of events. Only write the facts, not your interpretations or assumptions.
- ◆ Child Protection procedures should then be followed.



How do I manage a disclosure by a Parent/Carer?

- ◆ Remember, by the time someone tells you about the abuse, it will have happened to him or her on many previous occasions. Take the disclosure seriously.
- ◆ You need to tell them early into the conversation your position with regards to safeguarding children and the fact that their children are at risk of harm from the abuse.
- ◆ You must then refer to the latest information sharing procedures and explain that you have to share this information.
- ◆ Your only reason for not saying you intend to share information is if you consider the child could be in danger if you tell the abused of your intentions (see document "[Information Sharing](#)" by North Somerset Council's Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership).
- ◆ Recognise the need to give a positive response and your support to the abused person.
- ◆ Name the experience as "Domestic Abuse". The abused person may have been told that it is their own mental health problem. Dispel this notion.
- ◆ Be sensitive and discuss the fears experienced by the abused person.
- ◆ Reassure her/him that it is not their fault and that she/he is not alone in being abused.
- ◆ Offer information about the advice/support/help available from the agencies listed at the end of this document and stress she/he does not need to leave home before talking to them.
- ◆ Help the abused person to consider how to maximise their safety, whether they leave the home or not.
- ◆ Offer to keep in contact and say you will be there to listen and help.
- ◆ Remember that domestic abuse disempowers. Help to empower the abused person.
- ◆ Use your own supports to help you manage what you have heard.

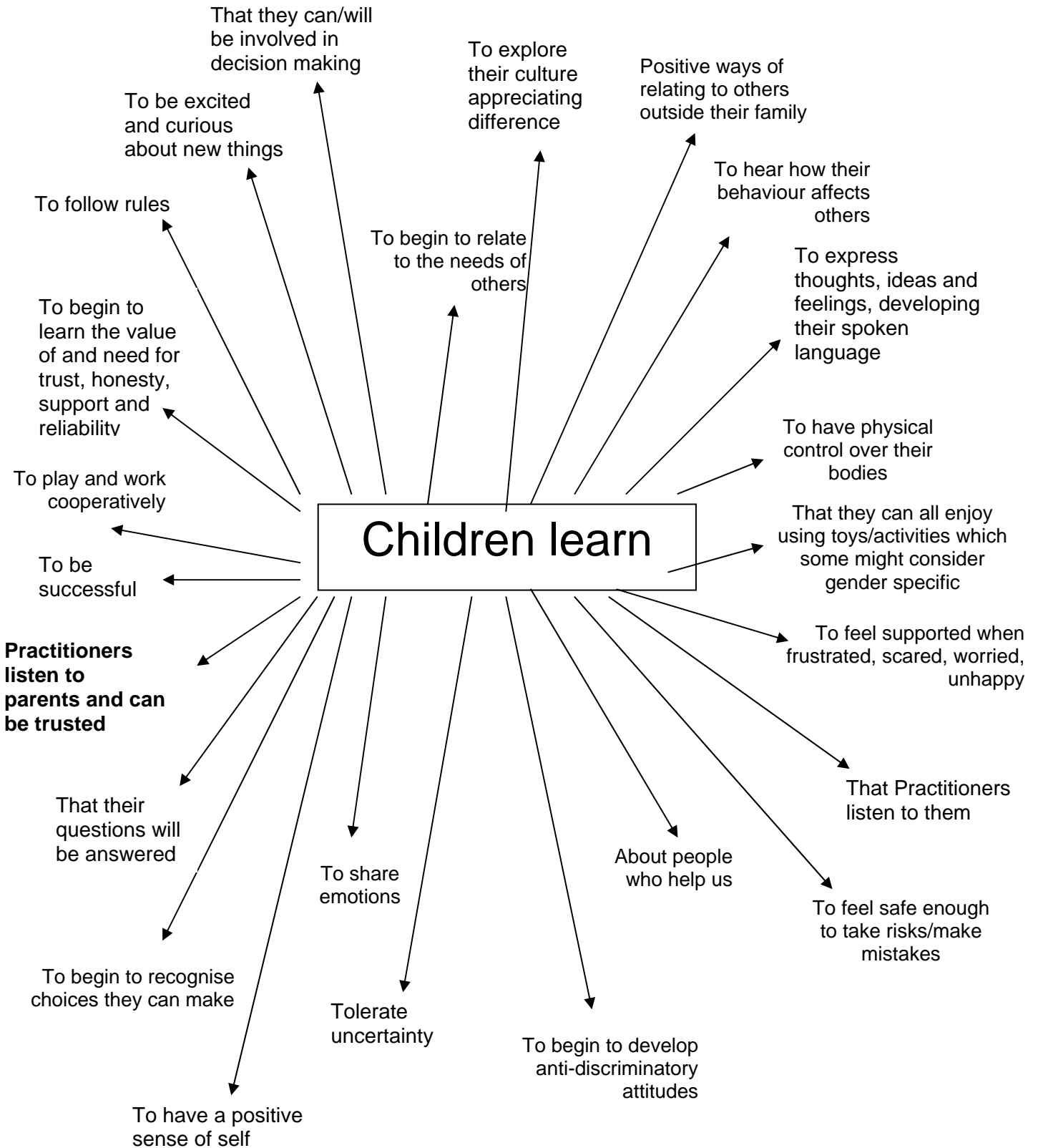
What action can Early Years practitioners take to prevent Domestic Abuse?

- ◆ Continue to promote a positive ethos where children feel safe and where they feel comfortable to voice their opinions, talk in confidence and share their concerns with others.
- ◆ Using the Foundation Stage curriculum to access preventative work can challenge attitudes, particularly issues of power and gender stereotyping, and influence future behaviour. It also promotes emotional well-being through the acquisition of confidence, skills and knowledge.
- ◆ The chart on the following page shows how the children's learning in the early years underpins prevention of domestic abuse happening to them, or their perpetrating domestic abuse in the later life.



FOUNDATION STAGE

From: Curriculum Guidance of the Foundation Stage



What information do the Police share with other agencies about incidents of Domestic Abuse?

- When Police attend incidents, explain to the adults involved that other agencies will be informed.
- Where there are Under Fives in the family the Police have a protocol to inform a designated Health Professional who will let the Health Visitor know.
- All incidents where there are children or young people in the family are reported by the Police to Social Care (Social Workers).
- Where there are school aged children in the family the Police will inform the Town Hall (Education Welfare), who will then inform an authorised member of school staff.

AGENCIES IN NORTH SOMERSET

There are a number of different agencies in North Somerset working to assist those affected by Domestic Violence. Further information can be found on www.endabuse.org.uk. In no order, the main ones are:

North Somerset Domestic Abuse Forum (NSDAF)

www.endabuse.org.uk tel: 0800 6949999

This is a multi-agency group that acts as a 'think tank' or 'sounding board' for providers of services to those affected by domestic abuse in our area. It's members come from a whole range of voluntary and statutory service providers.

Co-ordinator: 01275 888355

North Somerset Against Domestic Violence (NADA) 01934 627841

North Somerset Against Domestic Abuse (NADA) provides information, practical and emotional support for women at risk of domestic abuse. There are Support Workers who can travel to women throughout North Somerset and NADA offer one-off or on-going support. They can provide practical help, such as sponsoring grant applications, going to appointments/court with women experiencing domestic abuse, as appropriate.

The Gemini Project 08700 664233

Provides safe, emergency accommodation and support to anyone who is escaping an abusive relationship.

The Women's Project 01934 429811 (answer phone)

www.womensproject.co.uk

The Women's Project is a charity promoting the needs of women affected by Domestic Abuse in North Somerset. It is managed by volunteers, although has one paid practitioners member who runs support groups for women. The project also runs a subsidised counselling service and grant schemes for women and children affected by domestic violence.

The STAR Project c/o Victim Support 01934 638179

This scheme is managed by Victim Support. STAR volunteers have to do Victim Support training to enable them to provide practical assistance and emotional support to men and women who have been victims of abuse in the home.

The Mankind Initiative 01823 334 244

Opening Hours: 10am to 4pm, 7pm to 9pm Monday – Friday

The ManKind Initiative is a charity providing help and information to male victims of domestic abuse or domestic violence.

Domestic Abuse Helplines

NADA North Somerset Against Domestic Abuse	01934 627841 info.nada@novas.org
The Gemini Project	08700 664233
DAFFS Domestic Abuse Free Fone Support Line	0800 69 49 999
Local Police: Domestic Violence	01934 638110
Alcohol Advisory Centre	0117 926 5520 and 0117 929 3028
Alcoholics Anonymous	0171 352 3001
Bristol Crisis Service for Women	0117 925 1119
Careline – counselling line	020 8514 1177
Childline	0800 1111
Citizens Advice Bureau	WSM 01934 621908 Taunton 01823 282235 Bridgewater 01278 455236
Lone Parent Helpline	0800 018 5026
Freecall Message Home	0500 700740
Police	999
Refuge 24hr National Crisis Line	0990 995 443
Samaritans	0345 909090 Bristol 0117 983 1000 WSM 01934 632555
Shelterline	0808 800 4444
Social Services North Somerset	01934 888888
Victim Support	0845 30 30 900 Local 01934 638179
Women's Aid Federation National Helpline	08457 023 468
Women's Aid National Domestic Violence Helpline	0345 023 468 Website: www.womensaid.org.uk
Broken Rainbow (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people)	08452 604 460
BAWSO (Black Association of Women Step Out) Women's Aid	02920 437 390
MANKIND	01823 334 244
Fathers Direct	020 7740 8999
Men's Advice Line & Enquiries	020 8644 9914
Newpin	020 7703 6326
Jewish Women's Aid	0800 591 203
Kiran-Asian Women's Aid	020 8558 1986
Muslim Women's Helpline	020 8908 6715
For children: The Hideout	www.thehideout.org.uk

What women have told us about abuse

Evidence from disclosures from women shows that domestic abuse follows a pattern.

In the beginning the abuser will place many pressures or demands upon the victim in the form of minor verbal and emotional abuse. This is often constant criticism about not doing things correctly and 'breaking rules'. If discussed, the abuser will find a reason for doing this such as stress or intense love for the abused. Control takes over and the abused will often agree to living together, getting pregnant, or giving up work and social life with friends. The abuser will probably take control of all finances, control credit card use and take out loans etc. This phase can last for days, weeks or years.

When there are no controls left tension and rage become a predominant feature. This will lead to a serious abuse incident, which will be intense and extremely destructive. The abused will sense the build up to this and fear and/or depression are experienced. The woman may try to trigger the event to get it over with. However, this behaviour is not caused by any trigger, but by the abuser making the choice to be violent.

Afterwards the abuser will try to blame the abused for 'winding him up', deny the severity of the incident, or even deny it happened. It is often the stage at which the police are called.

In the time following the acute incident the abuser will be very kind, loving and caring. He will promise not to do it again (even though he says she triggered his behaviour). He will usually promise to get help. He will give back what he took away, allowing her to have her original life style. Often at this stage men also promise to change their life styles and often talk about problems they had in childhood. The abuser returns to the person the woman fell in love with and all can seem well.

However, slowly the abuser begins to take control again and the pattern of behaviour repeats itself.

Behaviour often displayed by abusers:

Any of the four behaviours below are almost always present in those who perpetrate acute physical abuse.

1. Past battering:
 - ◆ Hit previous partners
 - ◆ Will harm any new partner
 - ◆ Situations and circumstances have no influence

2. Breaking or striking objects:
 - ◆ Punishment
 - ◆ Breaking possessions of abused
 - ◆ Terrorising into submission by breaking/throwing close to victim

3. Threats of violence:
 - ◆ "I will kill you"
 - ◆ "I'll get the children"
 - ◆ "I'll break your neck"

4. Force during argument:
 - ◆ Holding down and restraining
 - ◆ Pushing and shoving

If a person displays several of the following forms of behaviour or any of the behaviours are extreme, this is likely to identify a potential abuser.

1. Jealousy:
 - ◆ Insecurity used as an excuse for jealousy
 - ◆ Continuing questioning about where been - who with etc
 - ◆ Accused of flirting
 - ◆ Turns up unexpectedly
2. Quick involvement:
 - ◆ Whirlwind romance
 - ◆ Pressure to commit to them
3. Unrealistic expectations:
 - ◆ Expects partner to provide for all their needs and to be perfect
4. Controlling behaviour:
 - ◆ Excuse for making sure partner is safe. Develops into control of personal decisions about house, social life, friendships, cars, etc
5. Isolation:
 - ◆ Friends called interfering or troublemakers
 - ◆ Family interfering – need to stand on own two feet
6. Blames others for problems and feelings:
 - ◆ Unemployed – not their fault
 - ◆ Blame the abused for their own mistakes
 - ◆ Blames for making the abuser angry, hurting their feelings etc
7. Very sensitive:
 - ◆ Easily insulted
 - ◆ Claim hurt when actually angry
 - ◆ Always see injustice in life
8. Cruel to children and animals:
 - ◆ Punishes children inappropriately
 - ◆ Brutal to animals
 - ◆ Teases children until they cry
 - ◆ Want children out of the way in own rooms

9. Force during sex:
 - ◆ Fantasises – victim held down helpless
 - ◆ Thought of rape may excite them
 - ◆ No regard for partners health or whether tired when demanding sex
 - ◆ Sulks, gets angry or manipulates into submission
10. Verbal abuse:
 - ◆ Cruel, hurtful
 - ◆ Degrades, puts her down
 - ◆ Denies sleep by waking during night to verbally assault or interrogate
11. Rigid sex roles:
 - ◆ Make demands
 - ◆ Obedience
 - ◆ Inferior, stupid
12. Split personality:
 - ◆ Mood swings
 - ◆ Explosive behaviour

References

- **Welsh Assembly Government 2004 'Good Practice on Domestic Abuse'**
- **Carroll J 1994** The Protection of Children Exposed to Marital Violence
..... *Child Abuse Review vol. 3 6-14*
- **Hester M, Pearson C & Harwin N 1998 Making an Impact – children and domestic violence**
..... *Department of Health, Bristol University*
- **Saunders A 1995** "It Hurts Me Too" Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence & Refuge Life
..... *WAFE London*
- **Mullender A & Morley R 1994 Children Living with Domestic Violence**
..... *Whiting & Birch, London*
- **Mullender A 2000** Children's Needs, Coping Strategies & Understanding of Women's Abuse
..... *University of Warwick*
- **Mullender A Tackling Domestic Violence 2004**
..... *Home Office*
- **Madge N 1997** Abuse & Survival
..... *The Prince's Trust, London*
- **O'Hagan K 1993** Emotional and Psychological Abuse of Children
..... *OU Press, Buckingham*
- **Iwaniec D 1995** The Emotionally Abused & Neglected Child
..... *Wiley, Chichester*
- **Refuge Assessment and Intervention for Pre-school Children Exposed to Domestic Violence**
..... *Refuge, August 2005*
- **The Women's Unit 1999** Living Without Fear
..... *Central Office for Information*
- **British Crime Survey 2001/2002**
- **NUT 2005** Silence is not always Golden. Tackling Domestic Violence.
- **Child Protection Procedure for Day Care Providers**
North Somerset – Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children**
..... *HM Government 2006*
- **Home Office Development and Practice Report 2004.**
- **NCH Report 2002**
- **NSPCC Child Maltreatment in the Family**
..... *February 2002*