

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND CHILDREN



Witnessing or hearing domestic abuse is very distressing for a child and causes serious harm. Children living in a home where domestic abuse is happening are at risk of other types of abuse too. Children can experience domestic abuse in different ways. They might:

- see the abuse
- hear the abuse from another room
- see a parent's injuries or distress afterwards
- be hurt by being nearby or trying to stop the abuse

Exposure to violence, parental conflict and the distress of a caregiver is extremely **anxiety-provoking** for children.

Prolonged and/or regular exposure to domestic violence can have a serious damaging impact on **children's physical safety and emotional well-being** and constitutes emotional abuse.

Children may also suffer because domestic violence has an effect on **parents' capacity to provide care** for their children.

There is a close link between parental violence and violence to children. Between 50% and 70% of children living with domestic violence are directly physically or sexually abused themselves. Nine out of ten young people who report neglect also report living with domestic violence. Children may suffer directly or indirectly if they live in households where there is domestic violence.

Possible indicators for children who might witness domestic abuse:



- physical and emotional neglect may result in basic needs i.e. food/warmth not being met
- under-stimulation leading to cognitive delay
- difficulty in communicating distress
- signs of anxiety, fear and worry
- school behaviour and attainment impaired
- poor school attendance due to absence to protect parent or younger children
- self-blame for parental behaviour
- unplanned separations causing distress and disruption to friendship networks
- embarrassment about unpredictable parental behaviour
- taking on caring responsibilities for themselves and their parents
- isolation caused by reluctance to talk about family issues
- denying own needs and feelings
- stress-related illnesses
- confused and torn loyalties

Your Parish
Safeguarding Officer is: