

Children & Domestic Violence



- Your children will naturally trust you—try not to break that trust by directly lying to them.

If you are worried that your child might be affected talk to them about what has happened. Seek support for yourself and your child from your support worker.

What will life in a Refuge be like? How will Foyle Women's Aid help my children?

Children are an important part of residential life and living in a refuge can be a positive experience for your children. They will have the opportunity to meet other children in a similar situation to their own.

Due to safety you may not have had time to prepare your children in advance for moving to the refuge. However, as soon as you can do so safely, tell them what is happening. The refuge has children and young peoples workers who will make your children feel safe and at home in the refuge. These staff are highly trained.

There is a playroom for the children and the child worker will organize activities for children and young people both in, and away from the refuge.

Support will be provided through provision of crèche, after school club and school holiday play schemes and outings.

Child workers will offer support to children and young people through specialist programmes. Further details of such programmes can be obtained from a member of childcare staff. We aim to provide a safe and stimulating environment for children and families to play, learn, develop and grow together

Some Facts About Domestic Violence

- Domestic violence can teach children to use violence and abuse.
- Domestic violence can affect children in a wide range of ways
- Children often blame themselves for what has happened.
- 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence at some stage in their lives.
- Children will feel more secure with one parent in a stable environment than with two parents when the Environment is unstable and violent.

Foyle Women's Aid

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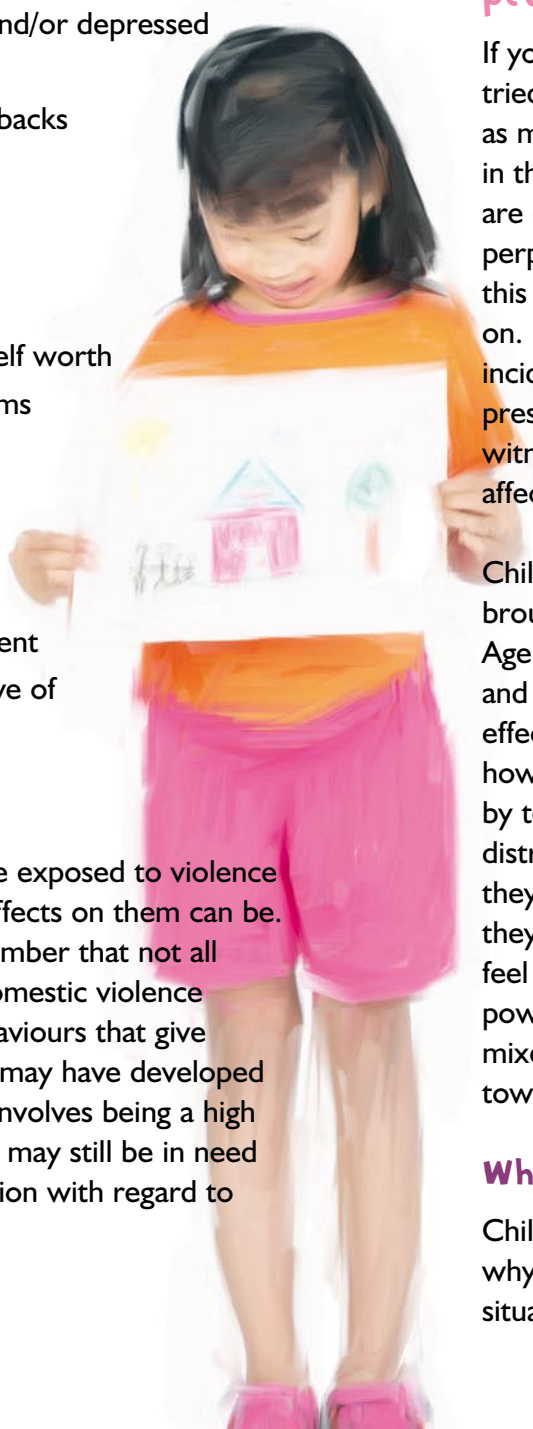
Children and Domestic Violence

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Effects of domestic violence can include:

- Becoming anxious and/or depressed
- Difficulty sleeping
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Wetting the bed
- Temper tantrums
- Problems at school
- Aggression
- Lowered sense of self worth
- Behavioural problems
- Poor concentration
- Emotional turmoil
- Confusion
- Lack of respect for the non abusing parent
- Being over protective of siblings
- Loss of childhood

The longer children are exposed to violence the more severe the effects on them can be. It is important to remember that not all children exposed to domestic violence necessarily display behaviours that give cause for concern and may have developed a coping strategy that involves being a high achiever. Such children may still be in need of support and protection with regard to domestic violence.



Domestic Violence - How does it affect children and young people?

If you have children, you have probably tried to shield them from domestic violence as much as you possibly could. However, in the majority of families where there are children and where abuse has been perpetrated, the children will be aware of this and will often see it or hear it going on. It is estimated that in 90% of reported incidents that children have either been present or in a nearby room. Children, who witness, intervene or hear incidents, can be affected in many ways.

Children will react in different ways to being brought up in a home with a violent person. Age, race, sex culture, stage of development, and individual personality will all have an effect on a child's responses. Most children however will be affected in some way by tension or by witnessing arguments, distressing behaviour or assaults—even if they do not always show this. They may feel they are to blame, or—like you—they may feel angry, guilty, insecure, alone, frightened, powerless and confused. They may have mixed feelings towards the abuser, and towards the non-abusing parent.

Why do mums stay?

Children often find it hard to understand why mums stay in or return to abusive situations. A combination of fear, love, the

risk of homelessness and financial issues can make it very difficult for women to leave. Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence and abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and this is not the way relationships should be

How can you help your children?

You may feel that you will be blamed for failing as a parent, or by asking for help, you may worry that your children will be taken away from you. You are never to blame for someone else's abuse and are acting responsibly if you seek help for your self and your children. It is important that you are supported so that in turn you can support your children and ensure that they are safe, and that the effects of witnessing and perhaps directly experiencing the violence are addressed.

Some mothers and children use silence or denial to try and cope with the abuse, but most children and young people appreciate an opportunity to acknowledge the violence and to talk about their feelings.

- Do talk to your children—and listen to them
- Try to be honest about the situation without frightening them
- Reassure them that the violence is not their fault

