

Policy document for: **Domestic abuse**

Updated: Autumn 2025

This policy forms part of the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and gives specific school actions in relation to their context.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The Act introduces the first statutory definition of domestic abuse. Children are now recognised as victims if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.

Domestic abuse refers to any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. Whilst the majority of cases feature abuse by a partner or ex-partner, it can also be perpetrated by a family member or carer. Such abuse can be a pattern or incidents or a one-off incident. Domestic abuse can have a detrimental and long-term impact on children's health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

At our schools we recognise the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse).

The definition captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including but not limited to :

- Coercive and controlling behaviour;
- Threatening behaviour;
- Violent behaviour;
- Sexual violence;
- Degrading behaviour where the victim is made to feel worthless;
- Harassment;
- Stalking;
- Teenage relationship abuse, experiencing domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships;
- Financial or economic abuse;
- Online / digital abuse

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home.

If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of seeing, hearing, or experiencing the effects of any form of domestic abuse, or in their own intimate relationships, immediate action should be taken by speaking to the DSL or a deputy immediately.

Controlling and coercive behaviour

Coercive control is a key feature of domestic abuse. Whilst this may include assaults, the focus of such behaviour involves the perpetrator using threats, humiliation and intimidation to control, harm, punish or frighten their victim. This behaviour is carried out and maintained with the aim of making victims dependent on the perpetrator through actions such as isolating them from support, depriving them of independence, regulating / controlling their everyday behaviour and by exploiting them.

Coercively controlling behaviour creates a real sense of fear, where victims can feel trapped, confused and unable to take action to protect themselves and their dependents. Examples of such behaviour include

- Threatening and intimidating a victim;
- Repeatedly criticising victims creating a sense of worthlessness;
- Actions designed to humiliate, degrade and dehumanise victims;
- Isolating victims from their friends, family and social networks;
- Depriving victims of basic everyday needs e.g. food, bathing, sleep;
- Taking control over a victim's everyday life, e.g. who they can see, where they can go, what they may wear and even when they are allowed to sleep
- Monitoring how victims spend their time throughout each day, which can include the use of spyware to monitor mobile phones, social media and online communications;
- Manipulating the parent-child relationship e.g. threatening to harm the children in order to control;
- Depriving victims of access to services e.g. GP, dental and other medical services, support services and other networks;
- Taking full control of a victim's finances

Tackling reports of domestic abuse in our schools

BA MAT Schools recognise that:

- domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents.
- domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, psychological (including coercive control), physical, sexual, economic, or emotional abuse.
- children can be victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse).
- anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background, and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home.
- domestic abuse can take place within different types of relationships, including ex-partners and family members.
- there is always a potential for domestic abuse to take place when parents/families separate, or for existing domestic abuse to persist or escalate post separation.
- domestic abuse can have a detrimental and long-term impact on children's health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.
- domestic abuse concerns will not be looked at in isolation and our response will be considered as part of a holistic approach which takes into account children's lived experiences.
- it is important not to use victim blaming language and to adopt a trauma informed approach when responding to concerns relating to domestic abuse.

Our Schools are [Operation Encompass Schools](#). This means we work in partnership with Kent Police to provide support to children experiencing domestic abuse, which are logged on CPOMS so that follow-up actions can be taken. An Operation Encompass notification is sent to the school when the police are called to an incident of domestic abuse and there are children in the household; the police are expected to inform schools before the child(ren) arrive the following day.

- Operation Encompass notifications help ensure that we have up to date and relevant information about children's circumstances and enable us to put immediate support in place according to the child's needs.
- Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures and where appropriate, a referral to the Front Door Service will be made if there are any concerns about a child's welfare.

- Where the school is unsure of how to respond to a notification, advice may be sought from the Front Door Service, or the Operation Encompass helpline which is available 8AM to 1PM, Monday to Friday on 0204 513 9990.
- A DSL will receive these by email and they are then uploaded to CPOMS and tagged as Safeguarding

If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of seeing, hearing, or experiencing domestic abuse in their home or in their own intimate relationships, immediate action should be taken by speaking to the DSL or a deputy.

Remember

- Speak to a DSL and log the concern, using the words of the child
- Reassure the child that you are taking what they say seriously and that they were right to tell you
- Do not confront the alleged abuser

We use guidance from:

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/>
- <https://www.refuge.org.uk/>
- <https://mensadviceline.org.uk/> for male victims of domestic abuse
- <http://www.galop.org.uk/> for LGBT+
- <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/cover-your-tracks-online/> to remove evidence of visiting domestic abuse websites
- Hestia app or Bright Sky app which provide support and information
- <https://chayn.co/> for multi-language support
- <https://www.imkaan.org.uk/> for black and minority group abuse
- <https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/> for support for Asian and Afro-Caribbean women
- <http://staysafe-east.org.uk/> supporting deaf and disabled people dealing with crime, domestic and sexual abuse
- <https://signhealth.org.uk/> supporting deaf people
- <https://safelives.org.uk/>
- <https://respectphonenumber.org.uk/> offering advice to those who are perpetrators

How our schools support victims

The FLOs (and SENCo/DSLs) act supportively to help families who are victims of domestic abuse – through phone calls, face to face meetings and helping with referrals into agencies to get support. The Trust respects where adults feel unable to give the school their home address where this is a refuge. Sometimes address will be shared in person and not held on Arbor. These addresses will be held in the Safeguarding folder in a locked cupboard which has restricted access.