Domestic Abuse (KCSIE 2026)

What Domestic Abuse Is

Domestic abuse is a **crime** and includes any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening or violent behaviour between people personally connected. It can be psychological, physical, sexual, economic or emotional. Children are recognised in law as **victims in their own right** if they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can be perpetrated by partners, ex-partners, family members or carers. It can happen inside or outside the home, in public, or entirely online.

Impact on Children

Children experiencing domestic abuse may show:

- fear, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression
- sudden changes in behaviour or attendance
- difficulty concentrating or emotional dysregulation
- hypervigilance or perfectionism
- distress linked to parental separation
- normalisation of violence or harmful behaviour

Domestic abuse increases vulnerability to:

- CSE / CCE
- online exploitation
- harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)
- child-on-child abuse
- mental health difficulties

Forms of Domestic Abuse

Includes but is not limited to:

- Coercive control (criminal offence)
- Threats, intimidation, humiliation
- Physical or sexual violence
- Financial control
- Harassment or stalking
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Online/digital abuse, including:
    - monitoring devices or accounts
    - location tracking
    - coercion via social media
    - forced access to devices
    - AI-generated threats or deepfake sexual imagery

“Apparent consent” in teenage relationships does **not** mean free consent.

Coercive Control

Coercive control involves patterns of behaviour designed to make a victim dependent. Examples include:

- isolating from friends/family
- regulating daily life (where they go, who they see, what they wear)
- depriving basic needs
- monitoring communications or movements
- manipulating the parent-child relationship
- controlling finances
- restricting access to services

Victims may feel trapped due to fear, shame, cultural pressure, economic dependence or lack of safe housing.

Operation Encompass

All BA-MAT schools are Operation Encompass Schools. When Police attend a domestic abuse incident and children are present, the school receives a notification before the child arrives the next day. Operation Encompass enables:

- immediate pastoral and safeguarding support
- contextual understanding of the child's lived experience
- adjustments to supervision, routines and safe adults

Notifications are uploaded to CPOMS and shared with relevant staff, including the voice of the child from the Police visit. Operation Encompass does **not** replace statutory safeguarding procedures.

Staff Actions — What You MUST Do

If you are concerned a child is experiencing domestic abuse:

1. **Speak to a DSL immediately** (in person wherever possible).
2. **Do not investigate** or ask leading questions.
3. **Record the concern on CPOMS**, using the child's exact words.
4. **Be factual** — avoid opinion.
5. **Reassure the child** they were right to tell you.
6. **Do not confront the alleged abuser**.
7. **Maintain confidentiality** — share only with DSL/deputy.

DSL Responsibilities

DSLs will:

- complete an immediate risk assessment (including siblings)
- consider contextual safeguarding and wider family factors
- assess links to other vulnerabilities (SEND, exploitation, mental health)
- consider post-separation escalation
- liaise with Police, health, Family Help and other agencies
- make referrals to the Front Door Service
- implement safety planning and pastoral support
- monitor patterns through caseload reviews
- ensure safe information sharing and transfer of records

Support for Families & Staff

FLOs, SENCos and DSLs support families through:

- phone calls
- meetings
- referrals to specialist agencies
- safety planning

Refuge addresses may be withheld from Arbor and stored securely.

Domestic abuse may also affect staff or volunteers.

- Under 18: child safeguarding procedures apply.
- Over 18: adult safeguarding procedures apply.

Policy document for: **Domestic abuse**

Updated: Summer 2026

This policy forms part of the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and reflects the latest KCSIE guidance. Keeping children safe in education 2026 (comes into force from 1 September 2026) See page 161 for full details. ***All staff read KCSIE 2026 Part 1 as a minimum***

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is a serious safeguarding concern. Children are recognised in law as **victims in their own right** if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can have a profound and long-term impact on children's health, wellbeing, development, behaviour, attendance and ability to learn. It is never acceptable and must always be responded to immediately.

Statutory Definition (Domestic Abuse Act 2021)

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced the first statutory definition of domestic abuse. It recognises children as victims and includes:

- Non-fatal strangulation (new criminal offence)
- Controlling or coercive behaviour, including post-separation abuse
- Threats to disclose intimate images, including AI-generated imagery
- Clarification that "rough sex gone wrong" cannot be used as a defence
- Special measures for victims in criminal, civil and family courts
- Duties on local authorities to provide support in refuges and safe accommodation
- Priority need for homelessness assistance
- Protection of secure tenancies when victims are rehoused
- Measures to prevent vexatious family proceedings
- Prohibition on charging victims for letters supporting legal aid
- Strengthened protections preventing perpetrators from contacting victims
- Polygraph testing for high-risk offenders
- Requirements for perpetrators to take positive steps to change behaviour

Domestic abuse refers to any incident or pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening or violent behaviour between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected. Abuse can be perpetrated by partners, ex-partners, family members or carers.
Domestic abuse is **not limited to one culture, community or background**. Anyone can be a victim.

Children as Victims

Children are victims of domestic abuse if they:

- see, hear or experience the effects of abuse
- live in an environment where domestic abuse occurs
- are used as tools of control
- experience domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse)

Domestic abuse is a **specific vulnerability group** in KCSIE 2026. Children experiencing domestic abuse are at increased risk of:

- CSE
- CCE

- online exploitation
- harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)
- child-on-child abuse
- mental health difficulties
- attendance decline
- emotional dysregulation
- withdrawal or aggression

Domestic abuse can escalate during separation. Post-separation coercive control is common and high-risk.

Forms of Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Threatening behaviour
- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Degrading or humiliating behaviour
- Harassment and stalking
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Online/digital abuse, including:
    - digital surveillance
    - location tracking
    - forced access to devices
    - monitoring of communications
    - coercion via social media
    - AI-generated threats or deepfake sexual imagery
    - online sexual extortion

Domestic abuse can take place inside or outside the home, in public, or entirely online.

Coercive Control

Coercive control is a criminal offence and a key feature of domestic abuse. It involves patterns of behaviour designed to make a victim dependent through:

- threats, intimidation and humiliation
- isolation from friends, family and support networks
- regulating everyday behaviour (where they go, who they see, what they wear, when they sleep)
- depriving victims of basic needs
- monitoring time, movements and communications
- using spyware, shared accounts or family-linked apps
- manipulating the parent-child relationship
- depriving access to services
- taking full control of finances

Coercive control creates fear, confusion and entrapment. Victims may feel unable to leave due to:

- lack of safe housing
- economic dependence
- emotional attachment
- guilt or shame
- religious or cultural pressure

Children living with coercive control may:

- normalise violence
- replicate harmful behaviours in peer relationships
- struggle with emotional regulation
- show sudden changes in behaviour
- experience fear of making mistakes
- have difficulty concentrating
- show hypervigilance or withdrawal

Teenage Relationship Abuse

Domestic abuse can occur within adolescent relationships. KCSIE 2026 emphasises:

- coercion may be subtle or disguised as affection
- "apparent consent" does **not** mean free consent
- digital coercion is common
- sexual violence may occur within teenage relationships
- victims may not recognise abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is child-on-child abuse and must be treated in line with KCSIE Part 5.

Operation Encompass

All BA-MAT schools are Operation Encompass Schools. We work in partnership with Kent Police to support children experiencing domestic abuse. When Police attend a domestic abuse incident and children are present, the school receives an Operation Encompass notification before the child arrives the next day. Operation Encompass enables:

- immediate pastoral and safeguarding support
- contextual understanding of the child's lived experience
- adjustments to supervision, routines and safe adults
- early identification of patterns of harm

Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, a referral to the Front Door Service will be made.

The Operation Encompass helpline (8am–1pm, Mon–Fri) can be contacted for advice: 0204 513 9990.

Notifications are uploaded to CPOMS and tagged as safeguarding. Relevant staff are informed, including the voice of the child from the Police visit.

Supporting Victims and Families

FLOs, SENCos and DSLs support families experiencing domestic abuse through:

- phone calls
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- face-to-face meetings
- referrals to external agencies
- safety planning
- pastoral support

Where adults are living in refuges, addresses may be withheld from Arbor and stored securely in the safeguarding folder with restricted access.

Domestic abuse may also affect staff or volunteers.

- Under 18: child safeguarding procedures apply.
- Over 18: adult safeguarding procedures apply.

Staff can contact the Forced Marriage Unit or domestic abuse services for support.

Staff Actions

If staff are concerned that a child may be experiencing domestic abuse:

1. **Speak to a DSL immediately** (in person wherever possible).
2. **Do not investigate** or ask leading questions.
3. **Record the concern on CPOMS**, using the child's exact words.
4. **Be factual** and avoid opinion.
5. **Reassure the child** that they were right to tell you.
6. **Do not confront the alleged abuser**.
7. **Maintain confidentiality** and share only with DSL/deputy.

DSL Responsibilities

DSLs will:

- complete an immediate risk assessment
- consider siblings and wider family context
- assess links to other vulnerabilities (SEND, exploitation, mental health)
- consider post-separation escalation
- liaise with Police, health, Family Help and other agencies
- make referrals to the Front Door Service
- contact Operation Encompass or the Forced Marriage Unit if needed
- implement safety planning and pastoral support
- monitor patterns through DSL caseload reviews
- ensure safe information sharing
- ensure risk information is transferred when a child moves school

Staff Training

All staff receive annual and ongoing training in:

- domestic abuse
- coercive control
- harmful sexual behaviour
- misogyny and gender-based abuse
- honour-based abuse
- mental health
- trauma-informed practice

Teaching Children About Safe Relationships

BA-MAT schools use PSHE and Relationships Education to teach:

- healthy relationships
- respect
- consent
- digital safety
- recognising coercion
- seeking help

Teaching is age-appropriate and aligned with statutory guidance. This is age and stage appropriate for children in Aspire school.

Further Support

Staff and families can access support from:

- Childline
- GOV.UK domestic abuse guidance
- Forced Marriage Unit

- Multi-agency domestic abuse resource packs

Supporting guidance

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://respectphoneline.org.uk/ offering advice to those who are perpetrators