

Vision for services for children and young people affected by domestic violence - guidance to local commissioners of children's services

Summary

Children:

All children and young people should have healthy relationships education and prevention built in to their curriculum, or equivalent programme (tier 1).

Children and young people vulnerable as a result of domestic violence (tier 2) should be identified and supported wherever possible within the universal setting, eg in Children's Centres, or by peer mentors etc.

Vulnerable children and young people whose needs cannot be met within that setting should be able to be referred to specialist services including community-based domestic violence support, group work and advocacy services.

Children and young people with complex needs whose lives are (or have been) seriously disrupted by domestic violence (tier 3) and children with acute needs who are at risk of death or serious harm from an abusive parental partner (tier 4) should, dependent on need, have access to:

- individual support, advocacy and counselling with skilled practitioners knowledgeable about domestic violence; and
- a group work programme suited to their needs. Children in temporary accommodation should have access to appropriate children's activities as well as access to domestic violence support services in the community.

Children in tier 4 should have multi-agency child protection services linked to support/safety plans for the non-abusing parent and MAPPA, or equivalent responses to the perpetrator. Family court services should focus on the safety of the child and the non-abusive parent in all cases involving domestic violence.

Access to the most suitable service should be based on individual assessment and re-assessment of that child's needs – using the common assessment framework and identifying what services will best match those needs. Children in each tier should still have access to the services in the tier below.

Services:

All services across the tiers should have:

- trained staff knowledgeable about domestic violence;
- policies and procedures to identify and respond to domestic violence at the level appropriate to that service; and
- be able to make appropriate referrals to specialist domestic violence or child protection services.

Universal services should incorporate:

- domestic violence best practice, reflecting national service standards in to how they do their core tasks, eg introducing a child into a new school at short notice.

Vulnerable children's services should incorporate:

- domestic violence best practice built into their service design, eg common assessment, direct work with children;
- appropriate referral to community-based domestic violence support and advocacy services for the abused parent and child;
- access to refuge based support where this is appropriate; and
- domestic violence issues built into their parenting work.

Services for children with complex needs or at acute risk of death or serious harm should encompass:

- multi-agency risk assessment and safety planning for both the children and non-abusing parent, co-ordinated through child protection and/or multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) and multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA); these 3 processes need to be co-ordinated;
- specialist domestic violence services (individual support including refuge-based support and advocacy, counselling, group work and activities for children); and
- skilled responses within other specialist services, eg CAMHS and social services family support services.

Strategic planning:

Every Children's Services authority should have in place:

- joint planning and commissioning arrangements with other key partnerships with responsibilities for addressing domestic violence in conjunction with local domestic violence partnerships;
- individuals within each agency and partnership with a responsibility to develop the domestic violence agenda;
- the single plan for children's services should outline how the children's partnerships have identified the needs of children experiencing domestic violence and their plans to meet those needs; and
- an implementation plan that identifies the key priorities for improving outcomes for children affected by domestic violence in the context of improving outcomes for all children.

For full report see LGA website:

www.lga.gov.uk/Publication.asp?lsection=0&ccat=28&id=SXE2AA-A783A8D6