

Communicating with a child / Young person

When talking with and listening to a child about domestic abuse professionals should:

- Never promise complete confidentiality – explain your responsibilities;
- Do promise to keep the child informed of what is happening;
- Give the child time to talk and yourself time to understand the situation from the child's perspective;
- Create opportunities for the child to disclose whether in addition to the domestic abuse abused by the abusive partner;
- Be straightforward and clear, use age appropriate language;
- Encourage the child to talk to their mother about his/her experience – as appropriate;
- Emphasise that the violence is not the child's fault;
- Let the child know that s/he is not the only children experiencing this;
- Make sure that the child understands it is not his/her responsibility to protect his/her mother, whilst validating the child's concern and any action s/he may have taken to protect their mother;
- Do not assume that the child will hate the abuser, it is likely that s/he may simply hate the behaviour;
- Allow the child to express their feelings about what s/he has experienced;
- Check with the child whether they know what to do to keep themselves safe and have a network of adults who they trust. If not, work on this with them or ensure that any work done with the child by other practitioners includes safety planning. (See the section on [Safety Planning](#));
- Recognise that children will have developed their own coping strategies to deal with the impact of violence and abuse. Some of these may be negative in the longer term for the child, but where they are positive they should be drawn on to develop safety strategies for the future;
- Do not assume that the child will consider themselves as being abused
- Do not minimise the violence;
- Offer the child support with any difficulties in school or ensure that any work done with the child by other practitioners includes support in school;
- Give the child information about sources of advice and support s/he may want to use; and
- Give the message that the child can come back to you again.
- Clarification questions for a child /

Clarification questions for a child

In order to obtain accurate and reliable information from a child regarding a domestic abuse situation, it is critical that the language and questions are appropriate for the child's age and developmental stage.

1. Types and frequency of exposure to domestic abuse

- What kinds of things do mum and dad (or their girlfriend or boyfriend) fight about?
- What happens when they argue?
- Do they shout at each other or call each other bad names?
- Does anyone break or smash things when they get angry? Who?
- Do they hit one another? What do they hit with?
- How does the hitting usually start?
- How often do your mum and dad argue or hit?
- Have the police ever come to your home? Why?
- Have you ever seen your mum or dad get hurt? What happened?

2. Risks posed by the domestic abuse

- Have you ever been hit or hurt when mum and dad (or their girlfriend or boyfriend) are fighting?
- Has your brother or sister ever been hit or hurt during a fight?
- What do you do when they start arguing or when someone starts hitting?
- Has either your mum or dad hurt your pet?

3. Impact of exposure to domestic violence

- Do you think about mum and dad (or their girlfriend or boyfriend) fighting a lot?
- Do you think about it when you are at school, while you're playing, when you're by yourself?
- How does the fighting make you feel?
- Do you ever have trouble sleeping at night? Why? Do you have nightmares? If so, what are they about?
- Why do you think they fight?
- What would you like them to do to make it better?
- Are you afraid to be at home? To leave home?
- What or who makes you afraid?
- Do you think its okay to hit when you're angry? When is it okay to hit someone?
- How would you describe your mum? How would you describe your dad? (or their girlfriend or boyfriend).