



BLOG POST

Working With The Whole: Gendered responses for children and young people impacted by domestic abuse

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Those of us who work in organisations providing gendered services for survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse are unfortunately used to constantly justifying their existence, particularly women-only services for survivors and perpetrator interventions aimed at men. However, in a patriarchal society, institutional support for male dominance means the vast majority of domestic violence is inflicted by men on women. Over 1.2 million women in England and Wales are affected by domestic violence, 1 woman is killed by a man every 2.6 days, while 92% of defendants in domestic-abuse related cases are men.

But when discussion turns to the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people, the idea of gendered services is even less lightly to be considered. Children and young people are often grouped together as 'non-gendered' and 'witnesses'. Until recently, government statistics of domestic violence grouped by age and sex only started at 16 years old, despite an increasing number of children experiencing domestic abuse in their close relationships.

Why is it that we fail to acknowledge the impact of gender on children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse, and what impact does acknowledging it have on the development and provision of services?

We will explore this and other questions at our conference 'Working with the Whole', in which we will examine the de-gendering of children and young people and how a gendered analysis of children and young people's experiences and/or use of violent and abusive behaviour can help ensure services are more appropriate, effective and accessible.

We will also challenge the perception that there is only one female or one male experience. That is, how do the intersecting parts of an individual child or young person's identity impact on their experiences of domestic abuse and of accessing services.

At DVIP we want to not only increase the visibility of children and young people's experiences of domestic violence, but also improve our understanding of these experiences through a gendered analysis. We will therefore be asking -

Do all children and young people experience domestic abuse and gender in the same ways? What are the existing and emerging good practices in working with children and young people affected by domestic abuse? How does domestic abuse experienced by children and young people interact with other forms of violence and abuse? How can we ensure children and young people's voices are heard? How should we, as practitioners, talk about gender and why is that so important in the context of violence against women and girls?

To explore these ideas in more detail, we are pleased to welcome Dr Fiona Vera-Gray (Research Fellow in Violence Against Women, Durham University), Purple Drum and Women and Girls Network, who will be sharing their expertise and knowledge alongside DVIP's Yuva, Family Courts and Children's Therapy Teams.

In working with children and young people, it is vital that we acknowledge them as experts and provide them with a safe space to be heard and supported. I hope you will join us on 27th February to challenge, discuss and work together to improve services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse.