

# Child to Parent Violence



A resource booklet for parents and carers

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- Cheshire East Family Service
- Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Partnership
- Adelaide School
- Church Lawton School
- St Alban's School

# INTRODUCTION

This booklet provides a resource for parents who experience extreme behaviour from their children. We hope it will help to increase the safety and wellbeing of children, parents and carers, and provide strategies to support them to parent their children in ways that promote caring and responsibility .

Having read this booklet if you feel that you are experiencing Child to Parent violence then it is important to seek help. A guide to sources of support is available at the end of the booklet.

If your child has additional needs it may be useful to consult specialist organisations for more specific information for example:

[www.autism.org.uk/challengingbehaviour](http://www.autism.org.uk/challengingbehaviour)

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/local-offer-for-children-with-sen-and-disabilities/education/supporting-send-in-education/pupils-with-asc/autism.aspx>

# Child to Parent Violence

Parents struggling with their children's violence are often confused and isolated. It can be hard to find ways to keep everyone safe including the child whose behaviour is posing the risk to positive family relationships and safety. It can be difficult to know how to make things better.

## *You are not alone!*

- 77% of all parent victims were female
- 87% of all perpetrators were male
- 66% of cases involved son to mother (APV key findings for Youth Justice Service, September 2013)
- Child violence is not just against parents. Many children are also violent to their siblings.
- Child violence exists across all sections of society irrespective of gender, race, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class, or educational level.

# Types of violence

Violence is not the same as anger. Anger is an emotion and we can help children find safe outlets for that; violence is a sign that things are more serious and can lead to parents feeling controlled by their children. Child violence is any behaviour used by a child in the family which results in a parent – or sibling – feeling controlled, threatened or coerced.

## **Physical**

- spitting, shoving, hitting, kicking
- throwing things, breaking things and punching holes in walls or doors
- bullying or physical violence to siblings
- cruelty to pets
- any action or behaviour that threatens a person's sense of well-being and safety.

## **Emotional, Psychological and Verbal**

- verbal abuse, yelling, screaming, swearing, 'put downs' and humiliation
- verbal intimidation
- whispering campaigns
- emotional and psychological intimidation
- playing mind games
- making threats to hurt or kill themselves or run away, in order to get their own way or to control you and the family.
- social media threats
- e-violence

## **Financial**

- demanding money or things you cannot afford
- stealing money or possessions from you, your family or friends
- incurring debts

## Is your child demonstrating violent behaviour?

Listen to your own warning bells. You know when things are not right so go with your own feelings and thoughts.

**Examples of Green behaviour** – impulsive behaviour which is normal, but which needs dealing with:

- Tantrums at home or a public place
- Child throwing something at you in temper
- Child refusing to follow simple requests.

**Examples of Amber behavior** – behavior where children are not responding to sanctions and where parents may need additional support in developing strategies

- Negative responses to parents attempts to control behaviour
- Child pushes, hits, punches or hurts you or their siblings, throws things or damages your possessions or those of other family members
- You feel afraid of upsetting your child and you change your behaviour to avoid it

**Examples of Red Behaviour** – behaviour which is extreme and where intensive support for your family and child may be required

- Physical behaviour which may be frequent or intense
- You are walking on 'eggshells' trying to predict your child's wants and needs
- Your child ridicules or tries to humiliate or embarrass you, your family or friends
- Your child blames you for his or her behaviour
- Your child threatens to hurt you, themselves or others (such as children, family, friends pets) if you do not meet their demands.
- They use or threaten to use an object as a weapon to hurt someone.

Although most people know about domestic abuse and its effects, less attention is given to child violence and its impact on the family. This makes it very hard for parents to recognize their children's behaviour as violence and to seek out services that can support them.

Violence from children is not a normal part of growing up. Most children will 'act out' at some time during their childhood. When this behaviour is controlling, threatening, or intimidating, it stops being normal.

# What you may be feeling

## Denial

- Most parents have difficulty accepting that their child is violent towards them. You may think your child's behaviour is part of growing up or dealing with stress. You may think that the behaviour is just normal mood swings.

## Despair and isolation

You may feel:

- totally alone and isolated.
- unsupported and solely responsible for your situation.
- you have 'hit the wall' and that nothing can help.
- hopeless and helpless because you cannot bring the situation under control.
- totally unsupported by a lack of services or information available to help you.
- despair at not having a harmonious family life.
- you cannot talk or think about anything else but your child.
- your child's behaviour seems to be a replica of your abusive partner's (current or former) violence towards you.

## Fear

You may feel:

- like you are living in fear, both in the present and of what might happen in future when your son or daughter is bigger and stronger than you.
- 'unsafe' in your own home.

## Shame and humiliation

You may feel:

- like a failure and experience a great sense of shame.
- confused about where you went wrong and questioning your parenting abilities.
- you are entirely responsible for your child's violent behaviour.
- you are to blame and you are a 'bad' parent.

## Loss

You may feel:

- heartbroken and a huge sense of loss because the child you used to know, love and enjoy, seems to be driving a wedge in the relationship.
- grief if your child has had to leave home.
- the loss of friends and family who do not want or know how to assist you.
- worried the young person will leave home and sever the relationship entirely.

## Relationship stress

- Child to Parent violence often leads to arguments between adults in the home, as to how the behaviour should be dealt with. You may have different ideas on what helps or on what caused the violence. This can place enormous stress on family and partner relationships.

- You may hate it when people give you solutions, as they do not know what you are going through.
- You may feel undermined by your child's other parent who may take your child's side (particularly if you are a sole parent).

### **Sibling concern**

- Other children may be affected by their sibling's violence. Many children who are violent to their parents are also violent to their siblings. Siblings may be unsafe because of the violence.
- You may not have the time or energy to give to other siblings because you are dealing with the violent child.

### **Health issues**

- You may be depressed or anxious and this may impact on your health and well-being. You may experience insomnia, physical illness and fatigue.

### **Work issues**

- Your worries and anxieties may extend into your workplace where you may find it hard to concentrate.
- You may find that you need to take time off from work to seek support.
- You may experience the additional cost of counselling, legal fees and fixing damage to property caused by your child. This can increase financial pressures.

# Possible explanations

It may be difficult to understand why your child is being violent.

Some explanations include:

## Family violence

Children who witness or experience domestic violence or abuse to a parent may behave in a similar way to the abusive parent or family member. This may still happen if the child was a baby or young child when the violence occurred.

## Social issues

Children may be influenced by the society and culture in which they live.

Some influences may include:

- societal exposure to violence
- ideas about the role of women and sex role stereotyping
- images on social media.

## Parenting

Parents may be influenced by their culture or the society in which they live.

Parenting practices that can sometimes result in childhood violence include:

- feeling you should sacrifice everything, including your own happiness and well-being to make your child happy
- feeling guilty for breaking up the family (if you are a sole parent) and compensating by giving everything to your child
- parenting that gives a child too much freedom
- parenting that is authoritarian
- being unavailable to your child (either physically or emotionally)
- conflict in parenting styles so that the child can manipulate his or her parents
- parents' own psychological makeup e.g. fear of conflict which prevents parents taking action

# Things to remember about violent behaviour

- It won't go away! Violence generally worsens over time.
- There are no simple answers.
- You don't have to know why things are happening to enable change to happen. Even a small change may feel like an improvement in the situation.
- The child will not be able to stop their violent behaviour on their own. With support from others, you can help to facilitate the change.
- All types of violence are inappropriate and physical violence and property damage are criminal offences for children over 10yrs.
- Violence may not happen all the time. It may occur in cycles or as isolated incidents. Children may apologise after the violence, giving you a false sense of hope that things may improve. They usually need more help to change.
- Children need to be helped to understand the harm they are causing and to change. The violence is never an acceptable or healthy way for the child to solve difficulties in their life, their family or community.
- You may not want to report violent behaviour to the police because you are concerned for your child's future. You may not want to compromise his or her life chances and opportunities.
- You may feel you may not be believed, you may be blamed or may lose family and friends' support if you bring the child to the attention of the Police or other services.
- Remember that it is better for your child, your family and you if the violence stops. If nothing else works, reporting it to the police may be the only way to stop the violence.
- Children often blame their parents for provoking them or not giving in to their demands. Remember the child being violent will need support to change their behaviour.
- You have probably tried to talk to your child about their behaviour. Give yourself credit for all the things you have tried.
- We all experience stress and anger, from time to time. However, the child may use these feelings to excuse violent behaviour. It is important to separate your child's feelings from their behaviour. All feelings are acceptable; violence is not!

# What can you do if your child is being violent to you?

- Talk about the violence with someone you trust, such as a friend, family member or counsellor.
- Use the contact list at the back of this booklet to identify services.
- If you are at any time in fear for your own or another's safety, call the police. Violence, threats of violence and assault are crimes that can be reported to the police.
- You may feel that calling the police is totally unacceptable. No parent likes to consider this possibility but the readiness to do so, clearly explained to the child, may indicate you will not tolerate the violence.
- A call to Cheshire East Consultation Team may provide you with some support. Contact numbers can be found at the back of this guide.
- Develop a safety plan for you and your family should you need it.

## Preparing a Safety Plan

Sometimes a child's violence may mean family members' safety is at risk.

In the event of a crisis, it can be useful to have a safety plan in place. Here are a few suggestions for preparing a safety plan.

- Think about who could support you if an emergency arose.
- Always carry a list of numbers you would need to call e.g. police, family members, support services.
- Ensure you have access to a phone or mobile.
- Ensure other children can use a phone and know emergency numbers.
- Keep notes or a diary with dates and brief details about the violence. These may be useful for professionals offering support and to identify patterns / triggers.
- Call the services listed at the end of this booklet for more information and to discuss your options.

# How can friends or relatives help?

## Emotional Support

If a parent experiencing child to parent violence tells you about it or you suspect they are experiencing difficulties, there are a number of things you can do to support them.

These include:

- Don't be afraid to express your concern to them and offer support.
- Be there to listen to them and believe in their experience without minimising, blaming or judging it.
- Listen to, believe and offer practical support to a parent who confides in you about childhood violence. Ask: "How can I help you?" or "Are there any steps you can take to increase your safety and the safety of family members?"
- Don't criticise their management or lack of management of the situation and don't excuse the violence.
- Be aware that it is a very difficult family situation to be in and reinforce to them that you will be there should they need support.
- Respect their privacy and keep the information confidential unless they give you permission to tell others or you feel someone is at risk of harm.
- Encourage parents to care for themselves and to consider their own needs.
- Stay in regular contact with them to show your ongoing support.
- Support the parent to be confident to make their own decisions and don't tell them what to do.

## Practical Support

Providing someone with practical support can help them feel more in control of their situation and better able to make the necessary decisions to start taking control of the family situation.

Practical ways to assist include:

- Encourage them to think about safety planning in the event of a crisis.
- Help the parent find helpful resources or information they may need.
- Accompany them to counsellors or other services.

## What NOT to do

If you are supporting a friend or family member experiencing child to parent violence there are a number of things you should avoid:

- Don't tell them what to do.
- Don't confront the child– this can lead to further complications and may increase family conflict.
- Don't give solutions or lecture to parents, as you do not know what they are going through – 'you are not living through it'.
- Getting involved does not mean you have to solve the situation. If someone turns to you for help and support, it means helping them find their own answers. It is important not to be disappointed if they do not do what you think they should.

# Useful Strategies

It is best to start making changes when you are feeling strong and if possible, supported by others. Firstly, think about what you expect from your child:

- Be clear in your own mind about what behaviour is reasonable & unreasonable. Write this down to remind yourself.
- You may decide that it is reasonable for your child to wash the dishes two nights a week. You may decide that it is unreasonable for your child to swear at you when s/he wants something.
- Use 'I' statements - 'I will be very upset if you don't put down the games controller when you agreed you would stop playing'.
- Clearly state the expectations to your child - "I need you to speak respectfully to me if you want me to drive you to your football. If you swear at me, I will not be taking you" or "I will not tolerate you breaking possessions. In the future your pocket money will be used to replace broken things".
- Your child may try and negotiate you down – don't feel bullied into changing your expectations. Stand firm!
- Don't start with too many expectations. Two or three related to stopping their violence and behaving responsibly is a good start.
- Explain to your child that you love them but will not tolerate being abused.
- Try to keep a sense of humour!!!

Secondly, think about what consequences you can put in place to support your child meeting your expectations.

- Consequences must be relevant and important to your child.
- Decide how and when you can use these consequences.
- Explain to your child that if they do not meet your expectations you will put the stated consequences into action.

## Some examples of consequences

- Withdrawal of privileges such as internet access, television, iPod or mobile phone use for a certain number of days.
- 'Grounding' in general or stopping your child doing something they want to do like staying the night at a friend's house.
- Cutting back or stopping pocket money or mobile phone use.
- Undertaking a compulsory activity such as extra household chores.

## Remember

- It is often difficult to start using a different approach and it might take some time to implement. Your child may rebel against any new approach, so for a time things may become worse before an improvement becomes evident.
- Your words lose all impact if the child does not believe you will follow through. If you have been in the habit of making threats that never happen (or only half happen) then your child knows not to take you seriously.
- Ignore the behaviours you can live with. Choose your battles.

## Changing your own behaviour

Finally it is important to think about your own behaviour. You cannot expect your child to change his or her behaviour if your behaviour is inappropriate. It is hard to tell a child not to swear when a parent does! Similarly if you use violence yourself it is highly likely that despite what you say, your child will feel justified to also behave this way.

- Think about how you respond to your child's behaviour – does it make them angrier or calm them down?
- Understand what your child says or does to make you angry – know your own triggers.

- Be quiet and calm – not angry. (This can be hard to do!)
- Don't think about 'winners' and 'losers' – think about building more harmonious family relationships.
- Always treat your child with respect no matter how angry, disappointed or frustrated you are.
- Try to remain verbally and physically affectionate.
- Recognise when you are stressed. Think about how stress affects how you parent and communicate with your child.

### **If you or your family members' safety is threatened**

If you try to make changes and your child's behaviour worsens and you or family members feel unsafe, you need to put safety before using consequences or other strategies. If you are unsafe walk away and leave the home if necessary.

If your child's behaviour escalates it is your right to ask for help from Children's Services or call the police. You could also speak to school to ask for support. Everyone, including parents, have the right to feel safe. Your other children have the right to feel safe too. Calling the police is one of the strongest consequences but it is often one that works. The police will respond in a positive and helpful manner.

## **Regaining control and moving forward...**

Child to Parent violence is still a taboo subject in the community. Breaking through the isolation and secrecy is the first step in restoring and healing the relationship with your child. You can regain some control over the family situation.

Often the child will blame you or others for their behaviour and refuse to take responsibility for their actions. They see it as 'your' problem and usually refuse counselling or other help.

Children need clear and consistent rules and expectations to feel safe and secure. By holding the child accountable for their actions, you are teaching them how to behave and respond appropriately.

By caring for yourself and seeking help you can regain your confidence, work on your own behaviour and responses and effect changes in your child's behaviour.

It may be useful to participate in a group programme or individual, couple or family counselling to explore ways to keep you and your family safe, look after yourself and stop the violence.

The sooner you take action the sooner things will improve.

# Useful services to contact

If you have any concerns about what is happening in your family, the following services will treat you with respect, ensure confidentiality and provide advice and support to talk things through with you.

## **Family Information Service**

A one stop service for young people, parents and carers to tell you about all services that are available to you locally, regionally and nationally.

Tel: **0300 123 5033**

[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/FIS](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/FIS)

## **Cheshire East Consultation Service**

(ChECS) is the 'front door' for access to services, support and advice for children and their families, from early help and support through to safeguarding and child protection.

Tel: **0300 123 5012 (option 3)**

If you need to contact someone out of hours and you believe it to be an emergency that can't wait, please call our Emergency Duty Team on:

Tel: **0300 123 5022**

## **Cheshire East Domestic Abuse**

**Hub (CEDAH)** is a single point of contact, for families affected by domestic abuse and those who support them - formally or informally

Tel: **0300 123 5101**

[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/domesticabuse)

## **Cheshire East Support for Families**

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/care-and-support-for-children.aspx>

**Cheshire Without Abuse** From crisis accommodation, practical support and a 24-hour helpline, to counselling, recovery programmes and behavioural change therapy, CWA offer a whole family service to adults, children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

[www.mycwa.org.uk](http://www.mycwa.org.uk)

**Family Action** – A national charity offering family support.

Tel: **0808 802 6660**

[www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk)

**Family Lives (formerly known as Parentline Plus)** – A national charity offering help and support in all aspects of family life.

Tel: **0808 800 2222** (helpline)

[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

**Men's Advice Line** – Advice and support for male victims of domestic abuse.

Tel: **0808 8010327** (helpline)

[www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

## **National Domestic Violence Helpline**

24hr service offering advice and support to anyone experiencing domestic violence and abuse. Tel: **0808 2000 247**

**Relate** – Information leaflets and support for parents of teenagers  
Tel: **0300 1001234** (helpline)  
**[www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/parenting-teenagers](http://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/parenting-teenagers)**

## SERVICES FOR OLDER CHILDREN

### **Cheshire East Youth Support Service**

YSS is for young people aged 13-19 years (25 with a learning difficulty). The YSS Participation Team offers opportunities for young people to have a voice on issues that affect them and on services they access. To be part of these groups or Cheshire East Youth Council then **contact 01625 384320**

#### **Youth Hub numbers:**

Crewe 01270 686923

Macclesfield 01625 384320

#### **Find us on Facebook:**

Crewe Hub

Macc Congleton Handforth Yss

Participation Yss

DofE Cheshire East

**Kooth** is free, safe and anonymous online support for young people.

**[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)**

### **Visyon**

If you are a child or young person, Visyon can help you improve your mental health so that you feel better about yourself and the things that happen in your day-to-day life. If you are a parent, grandparent or carer, you can come to us to gain the skills to give your child the support they need

**[www.visyon.org.uk](http://www.visyon.org.uk)**

**YoungMinds** is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

**[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)**

**YouinMind** is an online platform helping you find mental health and wellbeing services in Cheshire.

**[www.youinmind.org](http://www.youinmind.org)**

**Just Drop In** is a free, friendly, walk-in support service for 12 – 25 year olds, no referral or appointment necessary  
Phone: **01625 665079**

Text: **07718425405**

Email: **[hello@justdropin.co.uk](mailto:hello@justdropin.co.uk)**

Visit: **14 Duke St. Macclesfield SK11**

**6UR**

## Emergency Services

### **Police / Fire / Ambulance**

**Tel: 999**

### **Samaritans**

Crisis intervention & counselling, support & information for those experiencing feelings of distress or despair

**Tel: 08457 909 090**

### **Childline**

Telephone counselling for children & young people

**Tel: 0800 1111**

**NSPCC** (National Child Protection Helpline) Child Protection

**Tel: 0808 800 5000**