

# Domestic abuse

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Safeguarding and Children in our Care

# Children's social care

## Legal Framework

### 1. Legal Recognition of Children as Victims

Under Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are now legally recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right—not just witnesses—if they see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse between adults in their household 1.

### 2. Duties Under the Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. This includes:

Section 17: Duty to provide services to children in need, which includes those affected by domestic abuse.

Section 47: Duty to investigate if a child is suspected to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm due to domestic abuse.

Section 20: Duty to provide accommodation for children in need in specific circumstances. It is a voluntary arrangement and does not require a court order.

A Care Order is a legal order made by a family court under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989. It places a child under the care of a local authority, giving them shared parental responsibility with the child's parents.

# Working together framework

The **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (updated in 2020 and 2023)** guidance is statutory and sets out how organisations and agencies should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in England

## Key Principles:

**Child-Centred Approach:** The child's needs are paramount. Practitioners must listen to and involve children in decisions that affect them.

**Whole-Family Focus:** Recognises that supporting the family as a whole is essential to safeguarding children.

**Multi-Agency Collaboration:** Health, education, police, social care, and voluntary sectors must work together effectively.

**Domestic abuse:** the guidance was updated in 2020 and expands the list of potential threats to children and young people's safety to include domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour. It states that practitioners should continue to expand their understanding of domestic abuse and the impact it has on children.

# Information sharing to safeguard children

## Multi-agency work

Information sharing: the guidance clarifies that the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

All partners have a responsibility to have written safeguarding policies and staff should be trained to identify the signs of abuse and harm for children. Where there are concerns for children's wellbeing, a referral should be made to children's social care, through the CHUB.

Partners should attend multi-agency meetings to share information, participate in safeguarding planning, and contribute to assessments and support plans.

# Stockton Context


## Domestic Abuse referrals

Contacts to the CHUB 2024/25



**POLICE** are the biggest referrer, submitting 485 (49%) of all referrals relating to domestic abuse

**Stockton and Cleveland police have a daily PITSTOP meeting to triage DA referrals**

 Domestic Abuse	989	100.0%
Police	485	49.0%
Education-Primary School	64	6.5%
Relative	48	4.9%
PITSTOP	45	4.6%
Probation	41	4.1%
External LA Services	28	2.8%
Education-Secondary School	27	2.7%
Midwifery	27	2.7%
EDT	27	2.7%
Health Visitor	22	2.2%
A&E Department	20	2.0%
Voluntary Organisation/Charity	20	2.0%
Anonymous	19	1.9%
Social Worker (SBC)	17	1.7%
CHUB	15	1.5%
Service Provider	12	1.2%
Education-Nursery	12	1.2%
Adult Mental Health	10	1.0%
CAMHS	7	0.7%
Other Health Providers	7	0.7%
Adult Social Care	6	0.6%
Early Help	6	0.6%
Prison	5	0.5%
Neighbour/Friend	5	0.5%
Ambulance	4	0.4%
Education-College/Further Education	3	0.3%
Stockton BC Department	2	0.2%
Housing	2	0.2%
Other Section in Social Care	2	0.2%
School Nurse	1	0.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# Early help support



Family action – family outreach volunteers

4 Family Hubs – Billingham, Redhill, Stockton central, Thornaby. Hubs offer a range of parenting support services, group sessions, and programmes.

Family Solutions Teams – Senior Family workers



Project & Interventions Service – Family group conferencing and therapeutic support

# Social Work interventions

- Children & Families assessments completed with 45 days
- Child in Need Plans
- Child Protection Plans
- Pre-proceedings plans under public law outline (PLO)
- Child in our care (CIOC) planning



Interventions under the above would include referrals to harbour, direct work with the child, home visits, observations of child with parent(s), parenting work, assessments, referrals for other interventions such as substance misuse or mental health.





ANY QUESTIONS?