



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru  
Welsh Women's Aid

Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf  
Putting Women & Children First

# CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & DOMESTIC ABUSE



IMPROVING  
OUTCOMES  
FOR CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
WHO HAVE  
EXPERIENCED  
DOMESTIC  
ABUSE

[www.welshwomensaid.org](http://www.welshwomensaid.org)



## Children and Young People's Experiences of Domestic Abuse.

Adults often think that children and young people are not really affected by the abuse, if they don't actually witness it, but this isn't true. Even if a child or young person doesn't see the shouting or the hitting, they've probably heard it or seen their parent bruised or upset after an argument. Many children witness domestic abuse directly. In 90% of cases of domestic abuse the children or young people are in the same or next room (Hughes, 1992).

There is also a higher risk that some children and young people will be abused themselves. Many children intervene to try and help their mother, either by risking direct abuse themselves or by running for help to someone else.

Young women 16-25 make up over 35% of the adult residents of refuges in Wales, as victims fleeing domestic abuse.

Witnessing domestic violence is emotional abuse; children may be directly abused themselves, emotionally physically and/or sexually. Even after separation abusers can use contact with children to continue their intimidation and control.

Children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse tell us they feel 'sad, angry, guilty, heartbroken, confused and scared'.

## The Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People

Children and young people can experience both short and long term cognitive, behavioural and emotional effects. Each child/young person will respond differently to trauma, even from a very young age. Some may be resilient and not show signs of obvious negative effects; or they may have ambivalent feelings and blame the abuser and/or the non-abusing parent.

How they make sense of what is happening is influenced by many factors, including their particular experience of abuse, how they understand their mother's abuse, their age and, essentially, the support they receive.

Children and young people may also feel angry, guilty, insecure, alone, frightened, powerless or confused.

Children and young people need someone to talk to about their experiences and help them make sense of what has happened but they find it very difficult to talk to adults or friends because of the shame, guilt and isolation that they feel.

Children and young people living with domestic abuse are individuals with their own needs and rights. It is important that there is a much greater understanding of domestic abuse and its effects on women and children. Children need to know they are not to blame and to receive support to counteract the negative impact that domestic abuse has on the lives of children a young people.

In 90% of cases of domestic abuse, children were in the same or the next room.



## Women's Aid Work with Children and Young People.

We recognise the traumatic effects on children and young people of living with and leaving domestic abuse.

Every group in Women's Aid in Wales has a commitment to working with children and supporting them in what they're going through.

For many children and young people leaving abuse may bring a sense of relief but can also involve losing nearly all that is familiar to them. They may feel anxious and confused about what is going on.

Women's Aid supports children and young people living in refuge, after they have left refuge and through outreach work with those who have not lived in refuge.

Direct work includes play sessions, one-to-one work, trips, group work, etc, all to enable children to work through their feelings, help make sense of what's happened, gain peer support and feel happier. WA workers advocate for children to ensure their rights are taken into account and their voices heard.

38% of adult occupants of refuges in Wales are aged 16 to 25



## How can you help those who live with Domestic Abuse?

- Listen to children - so that their experiences can be recognised.
- Challenge the attitudes that condone violence against women and children.
- Blame the abuse on the abuser, not on the abused.
- Be aware that domestic abuse may be a root cause of other problems such as substance misuse, behavioural problems or school absences
- Contact us for help with training in your work with children and young people.
- Work with your local Women's Aid group.

## How can we help you?

With information, posters, leaflets, training, speakers, research and publications

Children are physically abused in 40-60% of domestic abuse cases.



## USEFUL CONTACTS:

To find your local Women's Aid Group visit

[www.welshwomensaid.org](http://www.welshwomensaid.org)

or call

02920 390874

### Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline

0808 8010 800

### NSPCC Helpline

0808 800 5000

## CONTACTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:

### Childline

0800 11 11

### Samaritans

08457 90 90 90

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

[www.notyourfault.org](http://www.notyourfault.org)

[www.u-wales.org](http://www.u-wales.org)

Children and young people make up over half of refuge occupants.

### CHILDREN MATTER

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