



Advice Pack for Parents

This pack has been put together for parents who have experienced Domestic Abuse and who have contacted us to support their children.

If you have been given this pack it may be that we are unable to support you immediately, but there are steps that you can take to support your child.

Domestic Abuse does not stop for women who have left the relationship, particularly if you have children. Ex-partners will continue the abuse through The Family Court process and will endeavour to retain their power and control through child contact.

If you need advice about The Family Court and its processes, you can find out more information on this website <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-information/family-law/family-court-proceedings-can-get-advice-support/>

If you have a Court Order in place, you would be in breach of that order if you do not send your children to contact visits. However, safeguarding your children would always override this, but you would need substantial evidence and documentation of this for the Courts. You should speak to your solicitor or barrister before you take any actions that could jeopardise your position in The Family Court.

You should always report any concerns of physical or emotional abuse to Nottingham Children's Social Care:

<https://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/>

Tel: 0300 500 8090.

The safety of your child/children is always a priority, so if you have any concerns about your child/children on contact visits, you must speak to Children's Social

Care to report your concerns and to ask for advice; it is wise to keep a log yourself too, including dates, times and the names of those you have spoken with.

How to support your child

Separating and post separation can be difficult time for children, especially when there has been domestic abuse. Children pick up on the negative emotions of the adults involved, and often blame themselves for the break-up, particularly if they perceive that their parents are arguing over contact. This leaves children feeling confused, sad, angry, guilty and worried; so, they absorb the responsibility believing that they MUST be the reason that their parents are splitting up.

To support children during separation, and help them with their feelings the following will help you:

- Do not make negative comments in front of the child/children about the other parent, even if this is not practiced by your ex-partner.
- Reassure your child/children that both parents still love them and that it is okay for them to love each parent. (This might be difficult for you, but a child will often feel in the middle, and have feelings of guilt for loving the absent parent).
- Try and explain in age-appropriate terms what is happening, without overwhelming the child or apportioning blame.
- Try and maintain consistency with routines.
- Set aside time to talk about feelings with your child/children. Reassure them that it's okay to feel uncomfortable feelings such as sad, worried, and confused.
- If your child presents with aggressive behaviour after a contact visit, this could be for several reasons. A child's behaviour is a form of communication, so try not to interrogate your child as soon as they return. Find a time when they are calm and ready to talk, then unpick their feelings with them; give them permission to feel how they feel but help them talk it through to a stable and/or positive conclusion. It is tempting to put words in their mouths, and assume that they are unhappy about contact, but it may be that they are overwhelmed, tired, or adjusting to the change. They may feel guilty for having a nice time away from you or for leaving their father on his own. In support sessions, children have reported all of these reasons/feelings. Make it clear though that it is not okay for a child to hurt you when they are feeling that way,

that whatever their feelings you are there for them, but it's never ok to hurt others.

Support in school

If you feel that you can, ask what pastoral or safeguarding support programmes are in place within the school for your child/children. It is advisable to be as open and honest with the school as possible because it will help them to create supportive structures moving forward, and they can advocate for you and your child/children, and will facilitate the necessary support, whether that is within the school or with supporting services.

All schools offer confidential, established programmes of Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) support.

Counselling

Children's Counselling is not yet offered at BWP; however, you could try these organisations:

Casey - <https://www.casy.org.uk/>

Base 51 - <https://www.base51.org/counselling>

The National Association for Therapeutic Parents - helps to learn about your child's behaviours and how to respond to them with blogs and weekly podcasts.
<https://www.naotp.com/>

Beacon House – Trauma support resources <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

CAHMS (child and adolescent mental health service) Self-referral
<https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/camhs-self-referral>

<https://www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/camhs-parents-and-carers>

Legal Matters

We advise women to seek legal advice if they are unsure of their rights regarding their children for contact matters, injunctions and finances. You might be able to access legal aid which means a solicitor can represent you in court, see below for more details:

<https://www.gov.uk/legal-aid>

Do be aware that if you access a solicitor through legal aid, they only have so many hours to give you each month so for support and non-legal advice use an outreach worker instead.

The report below may be useful to help see the many issues involved with the family courts and domestic abuse. Significant concerns about the treatment and experiences of most women and children were found. The Family Court is often a vehicle of post separation abuse and results in a Court Order that requires women to regularly hand over their children to an abusive partner in what they know to be an unsafe or emotionally harmful environment.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895173/assessing-risk-harm-children-parents-pl-childrens-cases-report .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895173/assessing-risk-harm-children-parents-pl-childrens-cases-report.pdf)

Useful websites

<https://thehideout.org.uk/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/domestic-abuse/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/impact-on-children-and-young-people/>

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/campaign-with-us/domestic-abuse/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-domestic-violence/#where-can-i-find-help?>

<https://www.wellwithinreach.co.uk/about-1>

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/>