

Child to Adult Violence (CAV)

Any harmful act by a child whether physical, psychological or financial which is intended to gain power and control over parent/care giver



You are **not** alone

A practical guide for all family members who are experiencing or have experienced violence or abuse from their child.



**NORTHUMBRIA
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

**violence
reduction
unit**

Improving lives to prevent crime

Parentline: 0808 800 2222

Childline: 0800 1111

Respect: 0808 802 4040

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Introduction

Bringing up a child is one of the most difficult responsibilities an adult can have, yet it is the job where there is no practical formal training.

As children grow they experience different stages of development which can present challenges to the adults caring for them. This can happen at any age, especially during adolescence.

The key purpose of adolescence is to achieve independence. An early adolescent will fluctuate between childlike and adult behaviour wanting independence one minute and support the next.

It may start to matter to them hugely what their mates think, while on the other hand, they increasingly challenge parent/carer authority.

However, some children and adolescents will start to display behaviour that is very different from the “healthy anger” described above. These behaviours will be abusive and violent and as a consequence make family members feel worried, upset and fearful for their safety.

This booklet is a practical guide for any family member who is experiencing abuse and/or violence from children/adolescents who are part of their family.

We hope it will help to increase the safety and wellbeing of all family members as well as providing support strategies that promote healthy, positive and respectful relationships. We would like to thank Impact Family Services, the South Tyneside Community Safety Partnership and the South Tyneside Safeguarding Partnership for their contributions to this booklet.

What is Child to Adult Violence?

Children and adolescents being abusive and violent towards parents and family members is a serious issue and evidence suggests it is increasing. The abuse and/or violence can be carried out by sons and daughters against mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings and carers.

It is easy for parents / care givers to feel guilty and ashamed when children are abusive and violent. However recent research shows that Child to Adult Violence is common - about 20% of teenagers are violent to their parents and about 10% seriously so.

Sometimes peer groups, wider society, media or a violent or absent parent will have been much more influential than you. Rather than focussing on and worrying how you are part of the problem, it is much more productive to think about how you can become part of the solution.

Sometimes there is no apparent reason why it happens.

It can be hard to find ways to keep everyone safe, including the child or adolescent whose behaviour is posing a risk to positive family relationships and safety. It can be difficult to know how to make things better.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

Children and adolescent violence and abuse can occur in any family and is not associated with economic class, ethnic background or sexual orientation. Mothers are the most frequent victims of parent abuse but fathers are also susceptible.

Elderly parents and parents with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their children.

Violence is not the same as anger. Anger is an emotion. Violence is about Power and Control

Violence and abuse is any behaviour used by the young person towards any family member, with the aim of controlling, dominating, threatening or coercing them (persuading someone to do something using force or threats).



How do I know if it is happening?

Listen to your own warning bells. You know when things are not right so go with your “gut” feelings and thoughts. You may have experienced child or adolescent violence:

- You feel afraid of upsetting your child and you change your behaviour to avoid it
- You over compensate because you want to protect them
- Your child threatens to hurt you, themselves or others (such as children, family, friends, pets) if you do not meet his or her demands
- Your child ridicules or tries to humiliate or embarrass you and your family or friends

DESPAIR & ISOLATION

HEALTH ISSUES
SHAME & HUMILIATION
FEAR
LOSS
LOSS OF TRUST
SIBLING CONCERN
WORK ISSUES
RELATIONSHIP STRESS

- You are ‘walking on egg shells’ trying to predict your child’s wants and needs
- Your child threatens you that he or she will leave home if you do not do what they want
- Your child punches, pushes hits, throws things, damages yours or other family members possessions or hurts you or their siblings
- Your child blames you for his or her behaviour

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
- Despair at not having a harmonious family life
- You cannot talk or think about anything else except 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 child is bigger and stronger than you
- 'Unsafe' in your own home

Shame and humiliation You may feel:

- Like a failure and experience a great deal 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 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 your child will leave home and sever the relationship entirely

Relationship stress You may feel:

- Child or adolescent 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 / care giver who may take your child's side (particularly if you are a sole parent)

Loss of trust You may feel:

- You may feel unable to trust your child, especially when you are not at home to supervise
- You may be worried your child may have damaged or stolen property and whether the other siblings are safe
- You may find it difficult to leave the home at all

Sibling concern You may feel:

- Other children may be affected by their sibling's violence. Many children or adolescents who are violent to 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 or young person
- Your child may also use drugs or alcohol or engage in illegal activities. This may mean that their siblings are unsafe or at risk of harm

Health issues You may feel:

- 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 You may feel:

- Your worries and anxieties may extend into your workplace where you 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

1. Family issues

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

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

2. Social issues

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

Some influences may include:

- Seeing violence in society (social media reality TV, gaming, TV which "glorifies" violence and abuse)
- Ideas about the role of women and sex role stereotyping
- Availability of pornography

3. Adolescent issues

Adolescents may be violent because they:

- have an over-developed sense of entitlement
- lack respect for women
- have been bullied at school
- have experienced trauma such as war or family violence
- are influenced by their peer group
- misuse alcohol or drugs
- have mental health issues
- have been abused themselves
- resent stepping into the role of an absent parent i.e. "man of the house" or becoming a carer for their parent

4. Parenting / Care Giving

Parenting is influenced by many different things including; where we live, our culture and our own upbringing. Children and adolescents do not always understand this and therefore it can lead to;

- 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 domineering and over strict
- Being unavailable to your child (either physically or emotionally – due to your own personal trauma)
- Conflict in parenting styles so that the child can manipulate his or her parents
- Parents/ care givers own psychological make up e.g. fear of conflict which prevents parents taking place

Adolescent violence is a complex issue, particularly when adolescents have experienced family violence themselves, have suffered grief or loss, or have an illness or disability. Grief or loss can include relationship breakdown in the family, moving away from their home, changing school, having to make new friends or a change that makes them feel less secure.

Things to remember about violent and abusive behaviour

- To ignore this behaviour will not help it go away. Violence generally worsens over time, however in some cases it may stop as the child grows up.
- There are no simple answers but often simple strategies of consistency do work.
- You don't have to know why things are happening to enable change to happen.
- The child or adolescent may not be able to stop their violent behaviour on their own. With support from others, you can help make the changes.
- All types of violence are inappropriate. Physical violence and property damage are criminal offences.
- Violence may not happen all the time or at all. It may occur in cycles or as isolated incidents.
- 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 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.

The child or adolescent may appear remorseful, shocked and shamed by their actions but may not have the ability to deal with it therefore fall into a cycle of repeated behaviour. Violence, threats of violence and assault are crimes that can be reported to the Police.

Whilst these issues mean children, adolescents and their families need support; it does not mean that the violence should be excused.

What can you do if your child or adolescent is being violent?

- Talk about the violence with someone you trust
- Contact services for help and advice. The list can be found at the back of this booklet
- Consider making a safety plan if you feel this will help you and your family feel safe
- If you are in fear for your own or another person's safety – call the Police
- You may feel that calling the police is totally unacceptable. No parent/ care giver likes to consider this possibility

Explaining to your child that you are considering calling the Police can indicate to them that you will not put up with their violence and abuse. While the police will ultimately make their decisions based on the risks, they should listen to you, support you, offer an authoritative response to your child and avoid criminalising them where possible.

Keeping safe

Sometimes a child's violence may mean safety is at risk for yourself or your family.

In the event of a crisis, **CALL 999**

It can be useful to think about putting things in place to keep you safe. Here are a few suggestions;

- How will you get out of the house if you need to?
- Where could you go and who could support you if an emergency arose?
- Choose a code word that is only shared with those you trust and would notify them if you are in danger
- 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
- Try to keep some money aside so that you can use a bus, taxi or train if needed
- Keep a spare set of house and car keys in a safe place
- Ensure children can use a phone and know where to find emergency numbers
- Keep notes or a diary with dates and brief details about the violence

Further help in developing a Safety Plan can be obtained from services whose contact details are listed at the back of this document.

Useful strategies

It is best to start making changes when you are feeling strong and if possible, supported by others. A good place to start is with actions, expectations and consequences.

ACTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

- Be clear in your own mind about what behaviour is reasonable and unreasonable. Write this down to remind yourself.
- Use 'I' statements – 'I expect' 'I need you to' 'I will/will not'
- Give clear boundaries and stick to them – be consistent
- Your child will try to negotiate on their terms and wear you down. Be aware that children know which of your buttons to push in order to get a reaction. Try to recognise when they are doing this and to avoid escalating arguments, move away from the situation
- Explain to your child that you love them but will not tolerate being abused.

CONSEQUENCES

- 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 and ensure you follow this through

EXAMPLES OF THE CONSEQUENCES

- Consequences will be very specific to each individual child or adolescent
- Consequences should be manageable and act as a deterrent to the child or adolescent so that over a period of time they stop their unreasonable behaviours
- Consequences should help build respect. They can include: repairing damage they have caused, withdrawing privileges, curfews, talking about their actions and the effect it has had upon others, requesting they take responsibility for their actions
- Ensure the consequences are appropriate to the behaviour (that they are neither too strict or too soft and that they are for an appropriate period of time)
- It is not advisable to give indefinite consequences
- Always let the child or adolescent know how they can build respect and trust

Remember

- It is often difficult to start using a different approach and it might take some time to implement
- Your child or adolescent may rebel against any new approach, so for a long 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
- Choose your battles – decide what behaviours you are willing to accept and stick to your decision

Moving forward

Breaking through the isolation and secrecy is the first step in restoring and healing the relationship with your child or adolescent. You can regain some control over the family situation.

Often the child or adolescent 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.

All children and adolescents need clear and consistent rules and expectations to feel safe and secure. By holding them 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 as well as effect changes in your child or adolescent'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 quicker you take action, the quicker things will start to improve.

MOVING

FORWARD

Supporting Friends and Family - How You Can Help

Child and adolescent violence can make parents / care givers feel isolated, guilty and ashamed. They may worry that their parenting skills will be questioned and that they will be blamed or disbelieved by those to whom they disclose the violence. Many parents / care givers worry that their victimisation will not be taken seriously or, if they are taken seriously, that they will be held to account and that their child may be taken away from them and/or criminalised.

There are programmes and parenting courses which could help families gain more skills and strategies to help them cope with this.

It takes courage to admit this is happening within a family.

When someone you know is experiencing (or you suspect they are experiencing) this type of violence and abuse, let them know you are concerned and offer them support.

LISTEN, BELIEVE AND SUPPORT.

DO

- Listen to them and believe in their experience without minimising, blaming or judgement
- Offer practical support by asking “How can I help you?” or “What can you do to make them and their family feel safer?”
- Be aware that this is a very difficult family situation to be in
- Respect their privacy. Keep the information confidential unless they give you permission to tell others or you feel someone is at risk of harm
- Encourage parents / care givers to care for themselves and to consider their own needs
- Encourage them to think about safety planning
- Help them find information they need (helplines, services, contact numbers)
- Offer to accompany them to any appointments or services
- Have a strong link with the school. Children may often use the threat of refusing to go to school or misbehaving at school to then be sent home.

DON'T

- Tell them what to do
- Confront the child or adolescent
- Excuse the violence and abuse
- Give solutions or make false promises
- Criticize the way they are dealing with the situation
- Expect to fix the situation. It is important not to be disappointed if they do not do what you think they should

SUPPORT the Parent / Care Giver to be **CONFIDENT** to make their own decisions

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.

Gateshead local contact numbers:

If you are worried about the safety or welfare of a child or young person contact Gateshead Council's Children's Services (in confidence) on: 0191 433 2653 (office hours: Monday - Friday, 8.30am to 5pm) or 0191 477 0844 (out of hours, at night, at weekends and bank holidays).

Early Help for families in Gateshead

0191 4333319/5019

Newcastle local contact numbers:

If you are concerned about a child or young person living in Newcastle call Children's Social Care on 0191 277 2500 (weekdays 8:45am to 5pm) If the issue cannot wait until the next working day, you can call our Emergency Duty Team on 0191 278 7878

Early Help for families in Newcastle - access point numbers

0191 211 5805 / 0779 1732 253

North Tyneside local contact numbers

If you are worried about a child you can report your concerns in confidence on 0345 2000 109 (office hours) or 0330 333 7475 (evenings and weekends). If you think a child is in immediate danger call 999. If you are concerned that an adult is at risk contact 0191 643 2777 (office hours) or 0330 333 7475 (evenings and weekends). Further information can be found at my.northtyneside.gov.uk

Northumberland local contact numbers

If you are worried about a child or adults welfare who lives in Northumberland contact Onecall 01670 536 400 (24/7) or email onecall@northumbria.nhs.uk

South Tyneside Council local contact numbers

If you are suspicious or have any concerns that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, then call Children and Families Social Care on 0191 424 5010 (Mon to Fri, 8.30am-5pm) or 0191 456 2093 (out of office hours)

Early Help for families in South Tyneside

0191 424 6210

Sunderland local contact numbers:

If you have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or young person contact Together for Children on 0191 561 7007 (available 8.30am to 5:15pm Monday - Thursday, 8.30am to 4.45pm Friday)

Early Help for families in Sunderland

0191 561 4084

NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

GALOP

Helpline: 0800 999 5428

help@galop.org.uk

10-5 Mon Tues Fri, 10-8 Wed and Thurs

1-5 Tues (trans specific)

Online Chat

5-8 Weds and Thursday

www.galop.org.uk

Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus)

A national charity offering help and support in aspects of family life.

Helpline: 0808 800 222

www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/email-support

Live online chat:

www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/online-chat

Family Rights Day

A national charity offering advice to families who need extra support.

Advice line: 0808 801 0366

www.frg.org.uk

Leap confronting conflict

Leap works nationally with young people and adults, helping them to understand and manage the everyday conflict in their lives and support them to become role models and leaders of positive change.

www.leapconfronting.conflict.org

Men's Advice Line

Advice and support for male victims of domestic abuse

Helpline: 0808 801 0327

www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Ministry of justice

www.justice.gov.uk/courts/mediation

National Domestic Violence

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 100 1234

www.parentingtroubledteenagers.relate.org

The site

An online guide to life for 16-25 year olds.

Advisers available 24hrs a day.

www.thesite.org.uk

Young minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Emergency numbers

Northumbria Police: 999

Non-emergency but report crime and other concerns: 101

Samaritans

Tel: 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org

www.holesinthewall.co.uk

