



There are an estimated 6,350 victims of domestic abuse in Cheshire West and Chester. Not all will be visible to services, around 400- 440 high risk victims and 360-400 medium risk will be at, or near, the point of help seeking. In 2013/14, there were 1,141 recorded incidents of domestic violence. Cheshire Police report that around 40% of incidents arise as a result of alcohol abuse and that domestic abuse accounts for around a third (38%) of all assaults with injury in Cheshire and eight percent of all recorded crime.

Around two thirds of adult victims have approximately two children each implying there are over 1,000 children living in high and medium risk households. Half of these children and young people will be visible to services.

Cheshire West and Chester’s Early Support Access Team (ESAT) is a resource for practitioners who are dealing with families with children and vulnerable adults where there is domestic abuse. In 2013/14, there were 526 contacts to ESAT where domestic abuse was the main reason for contact. If risk assessments indicate that any children within the home is at risk of significant harm, as a result of domestic abuse then a referral is made to Children’s Social Care. The number of children in need in Cheshire West and Chester’s Children’s Social Care services (at March 2013) was 1,944 and an estimated 40% had domestic abuse as a primary factor. The average percent of Child Protection Conferences where domestic abuse was identified as a parental factor was 40% (victim) and 33% (perpetrators). Of those in care, two thirds have a category of abuse or neglect.

Young people discussed at MARAC during October 2013 – June 2014	West Cheshire	National figure
Victims aged 16 to 17	16	946
Cases where victims aged 16 to 17	5%	2%
Number harming others aged 17 or below	4	472

High risk domestic abuse cases are discussed at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs). There were 458 cases discussed at MARAC in Cheshire West and Chester (July 2013-14) relating to 349 individuals. Approximately five percent of MARAC cases are for victims aged 16 to 17.

The Cheshire West Domestic Abuse Family Support Unit (DAFSU) works with victims of abuse, aged 16 and over, who are considered high risk cases. In 2013/14 there were 443 high risks cases referred to the DAFSU. Data for victims aged 16-17 was collected for five months during 2013/14 this showed that 3.7% of cases referred were in this age group.

In 2013/14, the DAFSU worked with the parents of 562 children affected by domestic abuse; the majority aged 0 to five years. National research indicates that around 62% of young people exposed to domestic abuse are directly harmed.

The DAFSU in 2013/14 collected data for five months on the number of children and young people aged 17 and under who caused harm. Of all perpetrators, three percent were aged 17 and under.

Evidence of what works

- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) - multi-agency meetings focused on increasing the safety of high risk victims and their children by sharing information and developing a risk management plan. Promoted nationally as a best practice response to domestic abuse.
- Use of the Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) Stalking and Harassment Risk Identification Checklist (DASH RIC) assessment – ensures a consistent approach is applied in identifying and assessing risk.
- Taking a holistic approach – tackling not only the effects of domestic abuse but also its causes.
- Agencies working together to engage, support and work with victims and perpetrators are more likely to achieve positive results.

Recommended actions

- Publicity - promotional and educational information must be more widely available and publicity materials should be made accessible including Braille, different language and easy-read versions.
- Domestic abuse training should be undertaken on a regular basis to inform and support professionals and front line workers across the borough.
- Peoples needs, perceptions and circumstances differ among ethnic minority communities, older people, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and people with a disability. This must be taken into account.
- A pilot prevention programme for young perpetrators focusing on learned behaviours and working to change them.
- All organisations work together to increase formal and informal networking opportunities for practitioners to improve working relationships.

Rationale: Domestic abuse is an underreported crime with significant impact on the lives of victims, children and the wider community. The impacts are significant and longstanding. Domestic abuse presents a number of overlapping issues including links to mental health, physical and learning disabilities, housing, crime, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse and safeguarding (Cheshire West Domestic Abuse Strategy)