

RAG/LAG Stakeholder Engagement Event

Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon

Mid Ulster

Omagh & Fermanagh

The Impact of Domestic Abuse

26 November 2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a participative process with key stakeholders, including young people on the impact of Domestic Abuse.

Due to Covid-19, the event was hosted within 8 youth centres across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & Omagh, with one virtual event for participants who were unable to travel. The event engaged with a total of 176 participants.

Throughout the event, stakeholders identified emerging issues and associated challenges for children and young people. Stakeholders also identified approaches that they believe should be considered by Youth Service to support children and young people impacted by domestic abuse.

Many young people who attended the event stated that domestic abuse was a key issue that presents many challenges. Children and young people can experience domestic abuse in a multitude of ways. They can witness domestic abuse in the family home and may be directly victimised by the perpetrator of that abuse. They can also experience domestic abuse in their own intimate partner relationships and they may demonstrate harmful behaviours themselves, towards partners or family members. The impact of domestic abuse presents itself differently with each child and young person.

The event highlighted the need for more educational awareness and training on the issue of domestic abuse, a review of curriculum and programmes on offer to support young people impacted and affected, accessibility to specialist support and provision for children and young people and collaborative working with specialist services.

1.1 The needs of Children and Young People Impacted by Domestic Abuse

- 1.1.1 LAG members including young people have led, supported and engaged with youth service stakeholders for this participation event.

1.2 Aims

- 1.2.1 To identify and inform the Education Authority (EA) and the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) on the impact of Domestic Abuse.
- 1.2.2 To support the development of key themes for the Regional assessment of Need and the Regional Youth Development Plan 2020-2023.
- 1.2.1 To increase participation of young people and other key stakeholders at a local level to identify key themes and issues in relation to the impact of Domestic Abuse.

1.3 Objectives

- 1.3.1 To host a local event to increase the participation of young people and key stakeholders.
- 1.3.2 To provide opportunities for RAG members, LAG members and key stakeholders to network and to discuss and explore the impact of Domestic Abuse.
- 1.3.3 To develop recommendations on how youth services could best support children and young people to address the impact of Domestic Abuse.

2.1 Methodology

- 2.1.1 LAG members including young people designed, supported and engaged in the delivery of this regional event across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & Omagh.
- 2.1.2 A variety of methodologies were used to capture findings and evidence throughout the event.
- 2.1.3 There was a PowerPoint input provided which also included video inputs from 'Behind Closed Doors' and the PSNI.
- 2.1.4 Mentimeter is a cloud-based tool that was used to encourage engagement and interaction with participants; questions were set and participants gave their input using their mobile phone or through the supply of iPads provided.
- 2.1.5 Round table café culture discussion workshops were facilitated with participants to provide an interactive supportive format to enable young people and stakeholders to identify and discuss needs.
- 2.1.6 Guest speakers also helped set the context, with inputs were provided by PSNI and Women's Aid.

3 ATTENDANCE

3.1 Attendance

- 3.1.1 A total of 176 people attended the event.
- 2.1.7 Participants in attendance included young people aged 14–25, Youth Workers from Local EA and Voluntary Youth Service across Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & Omagh.
- 3.1.2 Other key stakeholders included representatives from local council PCSP's, PSNI, Women's Aid, Barnardos and local Trust staff.
- 3.1.3 Representation from RAG included the Department of Education and Youth Work Alliance.

3.2 Attendance Figures

Attendance Group	Number
Young People	103
Local Advisory Members	20
Regional Advisory Members	3
Youth Work Staff	36
Other (Community and Voluntary Sector Representatives)	14

3.3 Satisfaction

- 3.3.1 96% of evaluations stated that the event was very satisfactory or satisfactory.
- 3.3.2 95% of young people and key stakeholders felt the aims of the event were very well met.

4.1 Key Findings

4.1.1 The engagement event aimed to capture information on the impact of domestic abuse and the challenges associated with this. A summary of those identified are outlined below:

- Young people can experience domestic abuse in a multitude of ways. They can witness domestic abuse in the family home and may be directly victimised by the perpetrator of that abuse.
- Young people experience domestic abuse in their own intimate partner relationships and they may demonstrate harmful behaviours themselves, towards partners or family members.
- The impact of domestic abuse presents itself differently with each young person.
- Domestic Abuse impacts on self-esteem and confidence and future relationships.
- Immediate or hidden effects of domestic abuse in adults and young people, can lead to short and long term mental health issues.
- Older children and young people can act out and often do not know how to deal with their emotions. This can lead to alcohol / substance abuse, which can result in them becoming engaged in the wider criminal justice system.
- Associated shame and guilt relating to the abuse can prevent children and young people speaking out or seeking help and support.
- There is a lack of connectivity between health, education, PSNI and specialist support services in dealing with domestic abuse.

Young people who harm family members

4.1.2 For some young people, the experience of domestic abuse includes causing harm to those closest to them, including parents, siblings and other family members. It is important to acknowledge that young people who harm are often victims themselves.

Online intimate abuse and coercive control

4.1.3 Findings from the event demonstrated that young people experience levels of harassment and stalking, jealousy, controlling behaviours and emotional abuse within a wide variety of social settings. When communicating with peers, friends and family, abuse frequently takes place online.

There can often be a lack of awareness surrounding the topic and a lack of understanding relating to boundaries in relationships was prevalent within the feedback, across all nine events. The need for more educational programmes and stronger links with key partners with a more proactive approach and stronger connectivity between health and education authorities are some of the key areas to address.

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Additional Vulnerability

4.1.4 Regardless of whether they can access adult support, the evidence suggests that young people need a different response to adults. Young people experience a complex transition from childhood to adulthood, which impacts on behaviour and decision making. It may impact on the way that they respond to the abuse as well as the way that they engage with services. Additionally, they may be unequipped to deal with the practical problems such as moving home or finances. As a result, young people who experience domestic abuse do so at a particularly vulnerable point in their lives. The abuse that young people experience may also look different to the abuse that adults experience. Young people commonly experience abuse through new technologies and social media, which can be used as a monitoring or harassment tool by the perpetrator.

4.1.5 Youth Services are in a key position to raise the issue of domestic abuse in a safe, structured, learning environment. This should allow for the following key elements:

- Support for individual children and young people who live or have lived with domestic abuse
- Support for the prevention of domestic abuse by enabling children and young people to examine and challenge their attitudes to abuse and to choose healthy ways of conducting their own relationships
- Challenging the myths that perpetuate domestic abuse
- Supporting children to seek help and safety
- Promoting healthy, non-violent relationships
- Promote a Youth Service wide philosophy that domestic abuse is unacceptable
- Immediately respond to disclosures and potential child protection concerns
- Provide emotional support where possible but understand that the child or young person may need referral to a more specialist service for additional support
- Facilitation of a peer support network as children and young people can become isolated but often welcome talking to friends about their problems and concerns
- Improve the self-esteem and confidence of children and young people by offering them opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities, offering tasks which are achievable and giving praise and encouragement, helping them to feel a sense of control in their lives and involving them in decision making.

5.1 Recommendations

- 5.1.1 There is an important role for youth services in improving the quality of young people's lives who are impacted and or effected by domestic abuse. There is a need to acknowledge the importance of youth work and what it can achieve and therefore should be resourced adequately.
- 5.1.2 Youth Services should provide positive, engaging activities and continue to create opportunities for exploring, addressing and tackling issues which affect young people and create safe spaces that young people want to go to.
- 5.1.3 There should be increased effective multi-agency working across statutory and voluntary sector organisations.
- 5.1.4 Youth Services should develop age appropriate youth work resources to support children and young people impacted by domestic abuse in partnership with domestic abuse experts.
- 5.1.5 Programmes relating to domestic abuse need to be educational and young people must be involved in the planning of these.
- 5.1.6 Educational programmes which focus on healthy relationships, challenging gender inequality, sexual stereotyping, and domestic abuse, should be integrated with work on anti-bullying and conflict resolution, as part of the Youth Service curriculum in all youth settings. These will act as important preventive measures.
- 5.1.7 One to one mentoring opportunities should be provided for young people to talk openly in a safe environment, to include the provision of EA FLARE support services.
- 5.1.8 Further research should be undertaken to explore how youth service can provide additional support to young people impacted or affected by domestic abuse.
- 5.1.9 Training should be provided for youth service staff on working with children and young people who are impacted or affected by domestic abuse. Youth Workers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and respond to children living with domestic abuse, in a respectful and appropriate way that considers the impact of coercive control.
- 5.1.10 Opportunities to share best practice across the statutory, voluntary and community sector would help develop youth work responses.

5.2 Future considerations

It is important to acknowledge that Youth Workers themselves may be affected by domestic abuse, which should be considered in taking this work forward and support provided where required.

The key themes identified through the stakeholder event should be considered further by the EA Information and Planning team, Senior Youth Officers and the Regional Advisory Group as they consider how best to respond to the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

