

West Berkshire's Children Affected by Domestic Abuse Group

Purpose of the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse Group

The purpose of the group programme is to provide children with the opportunity to process and understand the violence and abuse that they have witnessed. The children's group runs concurrently with a mothers group, enabling the mother to better understand the children's behaviour as they relate to the experience of being exposed to abuse.

West Berkshire's group is targeted at 5-7 and 8-11 year olds (decision as never enough referrals for the older age group to warrant putting a group on). The perpetrator of the abuse needs to have lived away from the family home for at least 6 months prior to the child commencing group.

Referrals are made through the Common Assessment Framework and there is no waiting list. A flier is sent out about the group three months before it is due to commence. Workers will be encouraged to have a telephone discussion about potential referrals with the co-ordinator. A spreadsheet recording all enquiries is kept to ensure that the group will be needs-led and for the age group with the most likely referrals.

In 2005/6 30 multi-agency professionals were trained to deliver the programme however there are now only 6 of those originally trained who are still able to facilitate. Therefore, the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse Group has ceased (from July 2008).

The current plan

Currently seeking funding to provide 20 multi agency staff with a two day interactive training opportunity that introduces participants to the concurrent group programme for children and mothers exposed to domestic abuse. The following will be covered over the two days:

- History and overview of the group programme
- Working with mothers: rationale and benefits of the concurrent model
- Children's group model; process, activities, resources and issues
- Safety issues when working with mothers and children
- Implementing the programme
- Looking after yourself and vicarious trauma

An additional one day training course on basic awareness of domestic abuse and the affects on children will be provided free of charge by staff trained by West Berkshire's Domestic Abuse Forum.

The Future

The Strategic Steering Group have rewritten Customer Feedback Procedures, Information for Managers and Terms of Reference for Workers and are looking at evaluation and making the facilitators pool sustainable long term.

We are consulting with children about what they think the group should be called. All marketing information is being redone.

It is hoped that the group will be running again by April 2009.