

Professional Curiosity: Links between child, animal and domestic abuse



Research shows links between the abuse of children, vulnerable adults and animals. Where serious animal abuse has occurred in a household there may be an increased likelihood that any children present may be at increased risk of abuse or the child may demonstrate abusive behaviour to animals or other children. It has also been found that victims of domestic abuse report the abuse of companion animals as a form of psychological control.

How can knowledge of the possible links be used in day to day practice?



Professional Curiosity - ask questions about the care and treatment of family pets and observe how children interact with pets, thinking about engagement when completing assessments.



Constructive Quality Conversations - ask about the behaviour of children or young people towards animals within assessments of children or young people who are harming others.



Safety planning with victims of domestic abuse should include planning for the safety of any children and animals in the household.



Collaborative Approach - seek advice from the appropriate authorities if animal abuse is apparent within a household.



Consider the potential therapeutic aspects of pet ownership/care for children who have experienced abuse or loss in their lives.

What should I do if I suspect abuse is happening to children or animals?

Professionals may have concerns that abuse is happening to children, vulnerable adults and/or animals. In such circumstances practitioners should discuss concerns with their manager or safeguarding lead so an appropriate referral can be made. Failure to do so may put a child and/or animal at risk of further harm.

Sharing Information

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and should not be a barrier to sharing concerns where there is a risk of harm to children. A key factor identified in many serious case reviews has been a failure by practitioners to record information, to share it, to understand its significance and then take appropriate action.

Target Audience:



Front line workers, managers, and supervisors working in children's services.



All health practitioners visiting families such as midwives, health visitors, community nursing.



Practitioners in other agency such as education, early years and emergency services.



"The relationship of a child and its family to its family pets will tell you a great deal and should be included in any assessment of need".



The DDSCP Procedures provides information and guidance on concerns about the welfare of children <https://derbyshirescbs.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

To register for training, please visit our online booking system at <https://ddscp.event-booking.org.uk> for available courses.

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