

Practice Guidance Teenage Partner Abuse

Background

Teenage relationship abuse consists of the same patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour as domestic abuse. These patterns might include some or all of the following: sexual abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse, emotional abuse and psychological abuse.

Terminology

Teenagers prefer the term “partner abuse” or “partner violence”

The attached link is to an NSPCC report, Teenage Partner Violence which provides information on aspects of Teenage Partner Violence and how young people view this issue including how they want professional to talk to them about it

[NSPCC report - teenage partner violence](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls/teenage-relationship-abuse/)

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Indicators

- *Witnessing DV in childhood*
- *Gang involvement*
- *Self-harm*
- *Changes in behaviour (eg becoming withdrawn or isolated; over-performance or under-performance in education)*
- *Changes in demeanour e.g. style of dress*
- *Unexplained Physical injuries*
- *Symptoms associated with Post traumatic stress disorder such as sleeplessness, anxiety, hyper-vigilance, depression, low self-esteem, fearfulness*
- *running away/being missing*
- *Inexplicable gifts, possessions*
- *Secrecy, withdrawal of trust from significant adults*
- *Controlling/stalking-type behaviour by boyfriend/girlfriend*
- *Disclosure to peers*
- *Disclosure to significant adult*
- *Bullying/being bullied*

(None of the above is in itself an indicator of partner abuse and each needs to be viewed in the context of what is “normal” for that young person – i.e. evidence of change can be significant)

Safeguarding and support

It is important to assist the young person experiencing abuse to understand that what is happening is in fact abusive and controlling behaviour that can escalate to extreme violence. In order to stay safe they also need to be able to identify behaviour that is coercive although the abuser may be calling it “love” or concern. For example: excessive or unwanted texting; comments on clothes; taste in music; friends, can all be used to undermine a person’s self-belief and confidence, particularly if that person is younger, vulnerable or susceptible to being influenced by another person.

We can use tools such as the **Teenage Power and Control Wheel** or the **This is Abuse website** to support young people to explore and understand this issue and how it may be effecting them. It is important that where possible we speak to the young person about how they can stay safe and assist them to draw up a personal safety plan

RESOURCES

- **The Hide Out** <http://www.thehideout.org.uk/default.aspa>
- **This Is Abuse** <http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>
- **Safe Choices (Nia) (supporting young women involved in Gang violence:**
<http://www.niaendingviolence.org.uk/young/index.php>
- **NSPCC** <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
- **Respect Not Fear** <http://www.respectnotfear.co.uk/keepingsafe/47-keeping-safe-in-an-unhealthy-relationship.html>