

Talking to your child about healthy relationships

Even if your child is not in an abusive relationship, it's never too early to talk to your child about healthy relationships and relationship abuse.

Starting conversations, even if you don't think your child is in a relationship, is one of the most important steps you can take to help prevent teenage relationship abuse. You could consider watching a TV show or film involving relationship abuse to begin a discussion, or here are some sample questions you could use to start a conversation:

- What does a happy relationship look like?
- Are any of your friends dating? What are their relationships like? What would you want in a partner?
- Have you ever been worried about a friend's relationship or seen dating abuse at school? What was happening? How did it make you feel?
- Do you know what you would do if you witnessed or experienced abuse?
- Has anyone you know posted anything bad about a friend online? What happened afterwards?
- Would it be weird if someone you were going out with texted you all day to ask you what you're doing?



Get help

Getting Help - services providing advice will also help with recognising the warning signs of Domestic abuse and how to work with available services to intervene.

You can raise any issues you have with your child's school./college. Also available to help are:

Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit -

0300 123 7047 (Option 2) / 01606 351375

National 24 hour Domestic Violence Helpline -

0808 2000 247

National Centre for Domestic Violence -

0800 970 2070 - (help with injunctions etc.)

NSPCC - 0808 800 5000

Victim Support Cheshire Cares - 01606 366336

National Victim Support - 0300 303 1979

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre -

01244 907710

Children's Safeguarding - 0300 123 7047

(Option 1)

M.A.L.E. Men's Advice Line - 0808 801 0327

Broken Rainbow - 0300 999 5428 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans* (LGBT) DV Helpline

Police - 101 (24 hour) In an emergency 999

Websites

nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk - 24/7

thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk - For young people

actonitnow.co.uk - Advice for young people

digital-trust.org - Managing online digital abuse

Cheshire West and Chester Council
HQ

Nicholas Street, Chester CH1 2NP
www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Teenage Relationship Abuse?

Advice
for Parents
Guardians



 Cheshire West
and Chester

Teenage Relationship Abuse

Abuse and violence can happen in teenage relationships, so make sure you know the signs and can help your child.

Do you know if your teenager is in an abusive relationship? The answer may surprise you.

While we may think that our children could never be affected, the truth is that abuse occurs surprisingly frequently in teenage relationships. Even though your child's relationship might not seem serious to you, teenage relationships can be very intense for those involved in them and abuse suffered can be harmful, sometimes even fatal. Teenage Relationship Abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender or family situation. It can happen to boys as well as teenagers in same sex relationships.

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse can include hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, pushing, and pressuring or forcing someone into sexual activity.

Emotional and verbal abuse involves a person:

- Saying things that make their partner feel small or stupid
- Checking up on their partner – for instance, by text – all the time to find out where they are and who they're with
- Threatening to hurt their partner or someone close to their partner, including pets
- Pressuring their partner to do things they don't want to do, including sexual things

**1/4
13-18 year
old girls report
experiencing
physical abuse in
their relationships,
1/3 report sexual
abuse**

Warning Signs

Signs of abuse can include your child:

- No longer hanging out with their circle of friends
- Not doing as well at school, or skipping school altogether
- Constantly checking their phone and/or receiving excessive texts from their boyfriend/girlfriend
- Being withdrawn and quieter than usual
- Being angry and becoming irritable when asked how they're doing
- Dressing differently
- Making excuses for their boyfriend or girlfriend
- Having unexplained scratches or bruises
- Showing changes in mood or personality
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Having a boyfriend/girlfriend who is very possessive and/or jealous
- Your child tells you their boyfriend/girlfriend monitors their calls and emails
- You notice their boyfriend/girlfriend believes in rigid sex roles



Tips for having the conversation

- Before you start the conversation with your teenager, think through what your concerns are.
- Consider talking about it confidentially with someone like your GP, a helpline, or a friend. This will help you understand your own feelings so you won't be too emotional when you talk to your child.
- Try not to talk to your teenager in a confrontational way. Say you're worried about them and ask if everything's OK.
- Don't force them to talk to you right then, they might go away and think about things, and talk to you later.
- Believe what your child tells you—Victims of abuse can often fear seeking help because they don't think they will be believed.
- Consider giving your child helpline numbers so they can access professional support (see the back of this leaflet)
- Don't judge. Victims of abuse often wrongly believe that the abuse is their fault. Make it clear that being abused is never your child's fault, and you will help them if they come to you.
- Don't give ultimatums (for example, "If you don't break up with them right away, you're grounded.") You want your child to truly be ready to walk away from the relationship and by forcing the decision, they may be tempted to return to their abusive partner because of unresolved feelings.
- Leaving is the most dangerous time for victims. Trust that your child knows their situation better than you do and will leave when they're ready.