

DAWFA Report 2023



An overview

Domestic Abuse Whole Family Approach



Evie Duarte, Regional Manager

The Domestic Abuse, Whole Family Approach is an innovative intervention that works holistically, both with the family and agency partners to deliver the most effective support, keeping families safe and breaking the cycle of abuse.

The model focuses on all family members and the families extended support network, with an understanding that their challenges and successes are interdependent. Practitioners work collaboratively with adult and child services and other agencies to support families, children, and young people, with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention. The model also recognises and builds on families' strengths and supportive networks to help increase their resilience and capabilities.

In July 2021, IDAS were commissioned to deliver a pilot 'whole family' approach in York. In addition to the work with children, young people and their families, IDAS conducted research to understand what families experiences of domestic abuse support was and how the model of delivery could be developed based on the evidence gathered and an analysis of models of working.

Following a successful few months delivering the service in York, the support was rolled out to the whole county of North Yorkshire in April 2022. Since then, the service has gone from strength to strength, building on the learning from the early pilot and adapting delivery to ensure we met the needs of the families we were working with. The delivery has not been without challenges, throughout we have looked for opportunities to strengthen local partnerships and understand how best to meet the needs of families. We are proud to highlight some of the achievements in this report, as well as our ambitions for the future.

Evie Duarte, Regional Manager

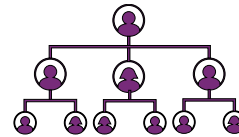
Key features of the 'whole family' approach



Direct support for children aged 10-18 (25) 1:1 and group work. Working with parents of younger children.



Detailed referral and assessment



Strength based approach to working with the whole family



Collaboration with agency partners



Training and upskilling agency partners



Research and development



Facilitated support groups and peer support for parents



1:1 support, information and guidance for parents

Our impact

July 2021 - March 2023



Supported 163
children



35 parent support
groups



6 groups for
young people



Supported
254 parents



Resources for
professionals



Online training for 300
professionals

Referral and assessment



The 'whole family' approach required a revised referral and assessment pathway to ensure all family members were identified and agencies already working with the family were engaged in the support planning going forward.

Referrals are received into the IDAS existing hub and triaged by an IDAS Lead Professional. The assessment process involves detailed discussions and information gathering with agencies and the family to establish the approach.

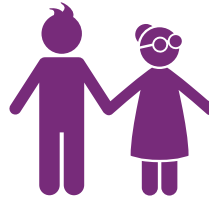
In addition to direct work with children, young people and their families, there are opportunities for IDAS to work alongside partners already working with the family, providing resources and expertise where appropriate.

If the family are referred into support, this may involve internal referrals into our adult domestic abuse support services for parents, our ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) services or RESPECT service which works with young people showing controlling or aggressive behaviours towards their family members.

If a statutory plan is not in place, IDAS work as the lead professional coordinating the agency response and supporting the family to co-produce their support plan.



Support for children and young people



The support provided to young people is tailored to their needs which they are able to discuss with their worker. Meetings can be arranged in an environment that is most likely to support engagement and will focus on the young person's goals.

Workers identify young people's strengths and the strategies they already use to effectively manage the impact of domestic abuse. This builds resilience and self-belief alongside work towards achieving the goals identified by the young person.

The DAWFA children's workers have developed a wide range of resources which can be shared with other agencies or schools to support the young person's development.

Themes of the work include, anger management, anxiety, understanding domestic abuse, emotional regulation, grounding strategies, and much more.

In addition to working with the young people, workers also identify key family members who can offer support and work with them using a strengths based approach to build whole family resilience. Parents are able to attend workshops to reinforce the work with children and to assist in the delivery of support where children are of a younger age (-10).



Parent voice



"Both boys are speaking very highly of the sessions I am very grateful indeed to you. Thankyou."
-Parent

"I would definitely recommend the service, I even told a friend to take her kids to IDAS because they were struggling with similar things."
-Parent

"I have seen a big change in my child since working with you. She is more confident and opens up about her emotions more. Even school have mentioned they have noticed a change and her being more confident. She is now able to stand up for herself and has even stood up to her dad. It's a really really great service, the work you are doing is fantastic."
-Parent

"The books, videos and resources were so helpful. They've made a positive impact for us. My child asks for one of the videos every night and it helps her feel safe and get to sleep."
-Parent

"I have seen a big change in Sarah*. She is more confident and opens up about her emotions more. Even school have mentioned they have noticed a change and her being more confident. Sarah* is now able to stand up for herself and has even stood up to her dad. It's a really really great service, the work you are doing is fantastic. I think it's great that it was in school as well so it's separate from the parents as well"
-Parent

"We are so grateful of your input. She is opening up more and reflecting here at home. We think the one to one work is priceless"
-Parent

Children and young people's voices



"The sessions helped me to cope with what I am feeling in positive ways and it was nice to have someone to talk to."

-Young Person

"I've really enjoyed our sessions and the crafting activities that we have done"

-Young Person

"I've never learnt about why I had anxiety before or why I did what I did until you explained it to me"

-Young Person

"It would have been better if I had these sessions when everything first happened before things got so bad."

-Child



"The sessions were helpful
and have supported me to
slowly get the bond back
with my daughter"
-Parent

Case Study: Carrie and Anna

Carrie* wanted support as her relationship with her daughter had broken down following the abuse they had been subjected to. Carrie said she was at a crisis point. Her daughter Anna* was refusing to attend school and was displaying negative behaviours, such as shouting and throwing food, that were escalating at home.

Carrie received 1:1 parenting support to help her with setting boundaries. Support was also provided for Anna and an action plan co-produced that could be shared with Carrie and Anna's wider support network to help improve the consistency of the response to Anna's behaviour.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Carrie's partner and her friends were involved with the family and the action plan helped them to have an agreed way of working, rather than reacting in different ways.

Anna expressed feelings of not belonging within the family and concerns that her relationship with her mum could never be rebuilt.

However, using the action plan allows Carrie and her support network to have consistent and clearly defined boundaries and actions for each escalation. Carrie said that this has helped both with managing Anna's behaviours and maintaining healthy relationships.

Case Study: Jane and Harry

Jane* and her son Harry*, aged 12, both received 1:1 support exploring the impact the abuse has had on the family and where support would be best placed. Harry was provided with support sessions in school where he played games of chess with his support worker, which was something he really enjoyed and helped to build his self-esteem and the therapeutic connection with his worker.

Following a few sessions talking about feelings and Harry's ADHD diagnosis, Harry felt able to open about his experiences with his abusive father. Harry and his mum both needed more information about ADHD and the impact of trauma from the abuse they were subjected to.

Jane was feeling overwhelmed and was operating in a state of hypersensitivity from the trauma. Jane felt unable to implement any boundaries and felt judged by professionals who had attempted to provide parenting support. The support worker was able to explore the impact the trauma had had on Jane and how this impacted on her parenting. The abuse had made it challenging for her to set any safe boundaries for the children, even though Jane put her children first and was very focused on the children's needs.

Following support, Jane had implemented timetables that established clear boundaries around the use of technology and helped to share the responsibilities within the household, taking a bit of pressure from her and supporting the family to come together for dinner for mealtimes. Jane had also grown in confidence asking for support from friends and family, and reconnecting with them following the isolation resulting from the abuse. Jane's parents supported her and her children in going on holiday together.

Harry is now receiving ongoing support from CAMHS which has helped him to increase his school attendance and understand more about the abuse. During this work the worker has supported mum to engage with other agencies to assist with the financial issues she is experiencing due to financial abuse and Early Help to continue work with the family. Identifying the support network around the family and encouraging Jane to reconnect with friends and family who are keen to support has enabled the family to feel less isolated and reduce the feelings of overwhelm that Jane was experiencing.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Case Study: Jack and Meghan

Jack* and his mum, Meghan* were referred because Meghan was struggling to manage Jack's anger and was unsure how to discuss domestic abuse with her children. Meghan was supported with talking to children about the impact of domestic abuse, which helped her to feel more confident to address the topic. IDAS also supported Meghan with managing challenging behaviours and emotional regulation, this allowed her to adapt her responses to Jack's behaviour and recognise that she needed to work on her own regulation to help diffuse situations.

Work was completed with Jack which allowed him to open up about his worries and explore ways to manage his anger.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Following conversations with Meghan and Jack it was agreed that IDAS would refer Jack to CAMHS for an autism and ADHD assessment. The referral was accepted and support has begun.

Jack and his mum received joint sessions to assist them with sharing their feelings and improving communication, this involved co-creating plans for how Meghan could help Jack when he faced challenges.

Jack and Meghan continue to receive support and further sessions are planned with Jack's Grandad where a family agreement will be created to help resolve the conflict at home and allow space to address the impact of domestic abuse. Meghan is now more confident in her parenting and Jack is able to recognise unhealthy behaviours in relationships.

Groups for young people



Groups for young people are delivered in person in community venues in school holidays. Groups are therapeutic in nature with arts, crafts and activities to promote discussion and build self-esteem.

Peer support groups offer young people the opportunity to explore their thoughts and feelings facilitated by an experienced domestic abuse children's worker.

In addition to providing a safe space to talk about the impact of the abuse, the groups allow young people to connect with their peers.

"Brilliant workers, not judgemental at all. If it was a tripadvisor review I would give it six out of five! I think healthy relationships was the most helpful for me"

-Young Person

Groups are delivered in an age-appropriate way with young people of similar ages grouped together to encourage peer support. In the groups, the facilitator will cover topics including, understanding domestic abuse, healthy relationships, setting boundaries, assertiveness and techniques for managing emotions.

Parents and carers are provided with information and resources to support their children following the sessions.





“The sessions have helped me feel less hopeless”

"I received one to one text, email and telephone consultation, and joined several group sessions relating to parenting and recovery from domestic abuse. Having the opportunity to attend the groups helped me over a rocky period of time and helped to provide structure to my life through a period of difficulty.

Support groups for parents



Since July 2021 we have run 30 online support groups for parents. The groups have offered parents the opportunity to discuss issues they are experiencing with other parents, facilitated by an experienced domestic abuse practitioner. The groups have been able to flex to the needs of the parents and have included topics such as:

- Co-parenting after domestic abuse
- Domestic abuse and Family Court
- Talking to your child about domestic abuse
- Managing challenging behaviours

Going forward, we will run regular parent support drop in groups, supported by volunteers, in addition to the online programme. Work is ongoing to create a parent and child workbook to help chart the journey towards reconnecting following abuse.

Inside track

"During the group sessions, we created safety plans for the young people that look at all the different areas that could possibly cause an issue, concern or danger for the young people.

For example, we talked about what to do if they get angry, and they came up with their own plan that included ideas such as taking time out on their own, using their coping box, or emotional tools they have been working on in the group sessions. We also discussed what to do if the adults in their lives are fighting and arguing, what responsibilities they have, who they can call if they become scared, where can they hide and how to call the police.

We have also added in online safety, mobile phone safety, personal care, and emotional safety, such as if they are feeling suicidal or want to hurt themselves. We also provided a list of services they can contact for extra support and they added a list of their safe numbers. The young people are going to share their plans with their safe parent so that they can support them with their plans."

Practitioner, DAWFA

"A big piece of work that we have carried out includes detailed discussion around how the family speak about the domestic abuse and the impact of this. Often it is not discussed, they call it 'when Daddy / Mummy are angry'. This may link into why young people, and adults who experienced domestic abuse as children struggle with anger.

Oftentimes the non-abusive parent never speaks about it all and so we spend a lot of time with the parent asking how they discussed it at the time, what language they used to explain it and how they can go about introducing the worker to the young person and the support that is being offered so that the work is transparent, age appropriate and delivered using language that is familiar to the child. This work aims to prevent a worker going into the child's schools for an appointment but the child not really understanding why the worker is there.

We have developed an agreement for parents as well as a letter for parents to give to their child from the worker to introduce ourselves before the meeting. We also remind the parent the importance of being open and honest with the young people and the wider family about our work. Parents can also attend parenting groups, as part of the DAWFA programme, to support them talking to their child about the abuse."

Practitioner, DAWFA

Case Study: June and her carer

June* was referred to our service after she had already attended one of our young person's groups. Her carer felt that the group had been a really positive experience for June; notably allowing her to see that other young people had had a similar experience to her and that she was not alone. June's carer said she wanted June to 'come out of her shell' and feel more confident about herself. The group allowed her to experiment with this in a safe setting, getting to know other young people, learning new skills and having fun. The group was a nurturing space for June, with a number of activities focusing on her strengths and allowing her to show others and support them with tasks. This included baking, creating a poster around safety, and creating worry monsters with clay.

June's carer also joined our parent/carers workshop where she not only learnt about different strategies to support June at home, but she shared her expertise with other parents and carers attending the group; supporting them with practical advice around managing challenging behaviours in their young person.

June went on to have 8 one to one support sessions, where we explored co regulation, supporting June to identify feelings in her body and then learn strategies to manage these, sharing ideas around what makes a good friend and a healthy friendship and then looking at trusting and supportive people in her life.

June's carer shared that June had begun to open up at home about her childhood and how it had made her feel. June and her carer developed a nurturing routine, including nail painting, hand massages and self-care nights. This built their relationship and solidified feelings of trust and respect between them. June also began to feel more confident joining out of school groups, including scouts and gymnastics. She began to build her support network further and be a part of the community.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Multi-agency approach



Practitioners work collaboratively with adult and child services and other agencies to support families, children, and young people, with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

The approach to multi-agency working has been multi-faceted, using strategic and case based approaches to develop strong partnerships in the interests of the families we support.



Information about the service and the ways of working are shared with key partners through online information sessions and reciprocal team meeting inputs. In addition, key stakeholders have been identified to ensure that information about the service and any issues or concerns can be addressed and worked through together. IDAS workers regularly attend partner meetings.



Referrals into the service are assessed carefully and agencies already involved with the family engaged to ensure the support around the family is cohesive and addresses the support needs identified by the family. Referral pathways are clear and straight forward.



Where multiple agencies are involved and there is no statutory plan, IDAS workers take the lead in coordinating support for the family. Case conferences and reflective practice are carried out with partner agencies offering opportunities for further development and improved partnership working.



Training is provided to professionals to upskill partners in domestic abuse and supporting families impacted by abuse. Supporting the development of a shared understanding, language and approach that ensures consistency for families.



Resources have been developed to assist partner agencies with carrying out domestic abuse work with families where they are best placed to provide the support. Collaborative working with agencies, often working alongside them, prevents families from feeling overwhelmed by multiple contacts with a variety of professionals and allows strong relationships to build with input from specialist workers.

“Fab presentation and all those who attended have come back to me to ask you to thank you for such a clear, concise, and succinct overview”
-Professional

Case Study: Carly and Amelia

Carly* and her daughter Amelia* were referred by children's services. Through the parenting support that was provided to Carly, she was able to implement boundaries and have a better understanding of how her behaviours escalated the children's behaviours.

Carly was supported to utilise the services around her for support, particularly school as Carly avoided making contact with school which allowed Amelia to create her own narrative with school about her home life, illness and relationship breakdowns.

During the support, IDAS created a space for other family members and agencies to be able to come together to create a community of support, a circle of family supplemented by a circle of agencies including school, early help and Amelia's mental health worker.

The support sessions enabled Carly to feel confident engaging with the school, improving communication about Amelia's health and wellbeing and ultimately supporting the family to cope and recover following abuse. At the time of writing, support continued for this family.

"Since your sessions, Carly has been reaching out to school a lot more"
-School teacher

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Inside track

"A high number of Young People accessing DAWFA support also identify mental health as an additional area of support need. Some young people are presenting with self-harm and suicidal ideation from the impact of trauma.

Early on in the project, IDAS provided a talk to CAMHS, discussing IDAS' services, providing a detailed overview of the DAWFA service.

A reciprocal presentation was provided to the IDAS Children's team to help improve the understanding of CAMHS support and the limitations.

CAMHS explained that their support mainly focuses on providing CBT and for this reason CAMHS are unable to work with children if their main presenting issue is trauma, and they ask that children who have suffered trauma access other services first.

The reciprocal team inputs enabled staff to explore how this impacts the young people we support at IDAS and the limitations of the work IDAS are able to do with young people experiencing mental ill health.

Discussing referrals and how to best support young people has strengthened working relationships and confidence in referral pathways, whilst also identifying some gaps in service provision.

CAMHS have extended an invitation to attend their daily meetings weekly to continue to build on the partnership working.

Further meetings are planned to discuss thresholds for referrals, waiting times and referral criteria.

This work has meant that IDAS workers have a better understanding of what support CAMHS can provide and feel more confident advocating for clients when they need CAMHS support. It has also improved the understanding of the DAWFA project amongst CAMHS teams and how IDAS can best support young people impacted by domestic abuse. The impact is that more IDAS referrals for young people requiring CAMHS support are being accepted."

Martina Dunn - Lead Practitioner, DAWFA

Training for professionals



Over 300 professionals have attended the bitesize training sessions delivered to improve understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on families and children.

"The fact that it went back to basics around trauma and it just made so much sense! There was a 'party bag' of ideas and suggestions for me to take away and use in my work straight away." -Professional

To bring about long-term change and sustainable outcomes for families, experienced Domestic Abuse Practitioners delivered training to our professional partners. The training was regularly oversubscribed.

Topics included:

- Safety planning for a young person living with domestic abuse.
- Healthy relationships, boundary setting and the power triangle for young people.
- Supporting parents and carers with regulation and co-regulation.
- Supporting autistic young people who have been impacted by domestic abuse.
- Supporting young people in education who have been impacted by domestic abuse.
- Supporting parents to support their children after domestic abuse.
- Supporting young people who display risky behaviours following the impact of domestic abuse.

Inside track

"I have supported a primary school with some sessions for refugee children who have come to the school. I have provided them with some support sessions that they can do in school to support the young children. The school expressed concern that the children were showing signs of trauma, after witnessing war and living in destitution. They also spoke about some of the mothers of the children coming into school and talking about how they had been in abusive relationships. We focused the sessions on building trust with the school staff, offering a safe space for the children and helping them to settle into their new life. We then looked at feelings and emotions and healthy relationships through games and crafts that the staff could do with the children. We also suggested some sessions around emotional literacy, learning about the different feelings, what they feel like, where they might feel them in their body and how to manage them. We spoke about creating a safe place in school where the children could go to help with managing emotions, this could space could have sensory regulation toys, snacks and drinks and a friendly face. The school are using the sessions and will feedback when they have completed them."

Practitioner, DAWFA

"I have been working with an Early Help worker in the Ryedale area, looking at what support IDAS, and especially the DAWFA service, can offer. We looked at joint cases, and cases that the Early Help worker has, and discussed strategies, interventions and support work that could support the young people and their families. Due to the locality of Ryedale, we have been focusing on community support and looking at ways we can support the families in rural locations to find and create stronger support networks. We share ideas, send information and links to useful support agencies and we share our expertise and knowledge."

Practitioner, DAWFA

Resources for partner agencies



Supporting agencies to work with families impacted by domestic abuse has resulted in the development of a suite of resources and tools, specifically designed for the domestic abuse whole family approach.

Resources are regularly shared with professionals and complement the training as well as being used as part of collaborative support planning.

Where other agencies are already working effectively with families, IDAS act as the lead domestic abuse expert, supporting partners with their domestic abuse knowledge and experience working with children impacted by domestic abuse.



Inside track

"We have created a range of resources and activities to support professionals working with children impacted by domestic abuse.

An early help worker contacted the team for some ideas to help them work with a 10 year old who didn't want to be referred to the DAWFA programme for support. The young person was displaying a lot of anger and the early help worker felt they would benefit from support to consider the impact of domestic abuse on their behaviour.

The team and I were able to respond quickly, selecting from a range of resources and activities that we have created to support families. Within an hour we compiled a professionals resource pack with a list of activities, how to use them and discussion prompts to help the family open up about domestic abuse. We also included feelings cards and information to support the young person with their feelings of anger and ideas to help discuss it and work through it safely."

Practitioner, DAWFA

"I have been working closely with the Youth Justice Service as we have a shared client. In addition to the Youth Justice Officer, there is a social worker supporting the family, and a CAMHS practitioner supporting the young person with their mental health, as well as a clinical psychologist who is overseeing the support and creating reports and suggestions for interventions.

I worked with the psychologist to consider the impact of domestic abuse on the family and how this could be impacting their parent. We identified that the parent had little confidence in their parenting skills, which could be related to being in foster care themselves as a child. Working together, we agreed several interventions that we can provide to support the parent and child together."

Practitioner, DAWFA

Our research

July 2021 - July 2022



62 parents
responded to the
survey

92%

More support needed
for the whole family

25%

Scared most of the
time

24%

Nervous or worried
about how partner
would react.

35%

Abuse occurring for
10+ years

33%

The abuse started
before children were
born,

29%

Abuse occurred
during pregnancy

My children witnessed violent
behaviour and one child and myself
had violence directed towards us.

We all had psychological and
emotional abuse and experienced
coercive control, financial abuse
and harassment and online abuse.

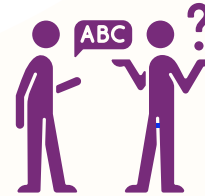
What families want



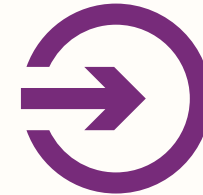
Mental health support for children and young people



Trauma work for children and young people



Improved understanding of domestic abuse and coercive control among professionals



Support services for young people that are accessible, readily available, structured and long term



Support for perpetrators.



Support around family court and court ordered contact



Support for younger children and play therapies



Healthy relationships education

What the research tells us:



Domestic abuse needs to be identified sooner.



Language needs to be Domestic abuse informed.



Children impacted by domestic abuse need tailored mental health support .



Families need to be supported consistently rather than passed between agencies.



Agencies need to work together around the family.



Support for families needs to be well coordinated.



Perpetrators must be held to account.

If I did something to upset him he would hurt my daughter. He said he would kill us if I left... He would hit me whilst I slept. I asked for help from social services but despite him assaulting my daughter they were happy for him to have unsupervised contact with her so I decided that it was safer for my daughter if I stayed. I believe if I'd left her with him unsupervised he would have killed her.

Challenges and next steps



Gaps in mental health support for children and young people impacted by domestic abuse present significant issues.

Develop domestic abuse informed mental health services that work on the trauma children and young people have experienced. Engage local assemblies and develop methods of delivering, place-based, integrated support.



Working with the whole family presents a significant shift in ways of working that take time to adapt to.

Continue to work with partners to develop tools to identify key family members and resources that build on a strengths-based approach.



Agencies are often overwhelmed and there is a tendency to refer on to decrease caseloads. This is counter to having a multi-disciplinary team working together around the family.

Develop more robust frameworks for bringing agencies together, integrating with the Family Hub models being rolled out across the country.



The voice of young people is vital if we are to continue to improve the support available to young people and their families. Challenges were encountered establishing a young people's advisory board, however consultations were held with the North Yorkshire Youth Commission and relationships established with a sixth form to seek young people's views. In addition, young people are invited to feedback into the service. **IDAS has appointed a survivor engagement coordinator. We will draw on their experience to improve engagement with children and young people. Going forward we will strengthen and build on the partnership with North Yorkshire Youth Commission, local sixth forms and seek to engage young people who have received DAWFA support by holding focus groups.**

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