

Domestic Abuse & Coercion Policy

Littlehampton Child Contact Centre believes that everyone has the right to live safely and without the fear of violence and abuse. We recognise that domestic abuse is unacceptable and that it occurs throughout society, irrespective of class, culture, gender, income, race, religion or sexuality. Its effects are far-reaching and can impact on others, notably the children. We recognise that every child has the right to grow and develop in an environment free of domestic abuse, whether directly as a victim or as a witness of abuse in its own home or in the community.

Littlehampton Child Contact Centre accepts that some families using its Centre will have experienced varying levels of domestic abuse and we will ensure that they will receive sensitive and appropriate services. We also accept that the Centre needs to be organised and run in a way which allows these families, other Centre users and volunteers to be safe. In order to meet these requirements we will ensure that:

1. The Centre's referral form will ask if domestic abuse is a feature of the case, currently and/or historically.
2. No family will be accepted until a referral form has been completed in full and received by the Co-ordinator.
3. Any information concerning domestic abuse will be treated seriously.
4. Use of the Centre will be denied to individuals or families where the Co-ordinator feels their presence is likely to present a threat to the well-being of other Centre users and volunteers. We will use the NACCC Supervised v. Supported Checklist in helping us make decisions about which cases are acceptable in a supported centre.
5. Once a family has been accepted the Co-ordinator will consider their safety needs and develop a risk assessment by which these needs can be met. These will include:
 - Parents being invited to visit the Centre separately in advance of contact commencing.
 - Parents being given clear instructions in writing about which entrances to use and what times to arrive.
 - Where appropriate resident parents being asked to explore the possibility of someone other than themselves or their new partner bringing the child(ren) to the Centre.
 - The contact waiting room doors being kept closed and precautions taken to ensure parents do not visit the refreshment area or toilets at the same time.

- Asking one parent to wait at the end of contact until the other has left the Centre and the area immediately around it.
 - Ensuring that addresses, telephone numbers and other sensitive information always remain strictly confidential.
6. Any distress to children or adults brought about by bullying or pressure to disclose information will be dealt with promptly and firmly.
 7. If an individual or family's behaviour is threatening, causes distress or is disruptive they will be asked to leave.
 8. If an individual or family refuses to leave the police will be called.

Controlling or Coercive Behaviour

1. Controlling or coercive behaviour is dealt with as part of the Child Contact Centre's safeguarding and public protection procedures.
2. All volunteers will cover the topic in their induction and have regular training in this area.
3. The types of behaviour associated with coercion or control may or may not constitute a criminal offence in their own right. The perpetrator may limit space for action and exhibit a story of ownership and entitlement over the victim. Such behaviours might include:
 - a. isolating a person from their friends and family
 - b. depriving them of their basic needs
 - c. monitoring their time
 - d. monitoring a person via online communication tools or using spyware
 - e. taking control over aspects of their everyday life, such as where they can go, who they can see, what to wear and when they can sleep
 - f. depriving them of access to support services, such as specialist support or medical services
 - g. repeatedly putting them down, such as telling them they are worthless
 - h. enforcing rules and activity which humiliate, degrade or dehumanise the victim
 - i. forcing the victim to take part in criminal activity such as shoplifting, neglect or abuse of children, to encourage self-blame and prevent disclosure to authorities
 - j. financial abuse including control of finances, such as only allowing a person a punitive allowance
 - k. threats to hurt or kill
 - l. threats to a child
 - m. threats to reveal or publish private information (e.g. threatening to 'out' someone)
 - n. assault
 - o. criminal damage (such as destruction of household goods)
 - p. rape
 - q. preventing a person from having access to transport or from working

This is not an exhaustive list

Essential requirements for volunteers and staff in relation to managing domestic abuse and conflict

1. There will be a minimum of four volunteers on duty at all times and this number will increase depending upon the number of families using the Centre.
2. Volunteers will be made aware of the particular needs of each family attending the Centre.
3. All volunteers will receive training in the areas of domestic abuse, child protection and conflict management.
4. Volunteers will have immediate access to a telephone when the Centre is open.
5. The Centre will have an agreed procedure to follow in the event of an incident or an emergency. All volunteers will be made aware of this.
6. The Centre will have a recognised and easily accessible system for offering support to volunteers who have become involved in stressful or violent incidents.

Additional requirements

1. Referrers and families using the Centre will be made aware of its policy in relation to domestic abuse.
2. The Centre's policy in relation to domestic abuse will be reviewed and, if necessary, updated annually.

*Reviewed and approved: August 2026
Due for review on or before: August 2027*