



Services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Newcastle

About Healthwatch Newcastle

Healthwatch Newcastle is an independent not-for-profit organisation. We help children, young people and adults to have a say about social care and health services in Newcastle upon Tyne. This includes every part of the community, including people who sometimes struggle to be heard. We work to make sure that those who plan and run social care and health services listen to the people using their services and use this information to make services better.

Healthwatch Newcastle would like to thank the parents, professionals and commissioners who generously gave their time and expertise to assist with this report.

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Introduction

As communities emerged from the COVID-19 related lockdowns of 2020–21, among the many pressing concerns about the impact of that period was a recognition that restrictions had made life particularly difficult for families experiencing domestic abuse.

In the spring of 2021 Healthwatch Newcastle had a series of informal conversations with local agencies to identify emerging issues of concern. Those working with women and families affected by domestic abuse told us they welcomed the content of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Act recognises that children living with domestic abuse should be treated as victims in their own right and provided with specialist services. However, they were concerned about the availability and accessibility of such services for children and young people living in Newcastle upon Tyne, specifically whether there was sufficient provision to meet demand.

This study was undertaken to help inform future commissioning decisions for services for children and young children affected by domestic abuse in Newcastle.

This report focusses on identifying:

- What is currently provided across the city.
- How that provision is resourced and how secure that funding is.
- How easy it is for families to find and access that support; what (if any) are the gaps in current provision.

We did not focus on whether there is a need for specialist support for children and young people affected by domestic abuse as the case has already been made in numerous studies.

Summary

1. Provision for children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Newcastle is mainly delivered by seven charities. It includes one-to-one therapy, group work and advocacy, alongside education and awareness work in schools.
2. Some provision is commissioned or funded by statutory agencies (including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the local authority), other services are funded through charitable grants.
3. Whilst each organisation brings significant expertise, the number of providers is itself a problem. Parents are often unsure what support is available and where to seek help. There is no single point of access.
4. Most referring agencies are equally unsure where to direct families for help.
5. Specialist services are under-resourced to meet the potential level of need in the city. Most have waiting lists for their services and are reluctant to advertise services too widely because of a lack of capacity to meet demand.

6. Several services are dependent on short-term funding which inhibits their outreach work, ability to recruit and retain skilled staff and to plan and develop services. It adds to the confusion among other professionals about what is, and isn't, available.
7. Some gaps in provision are confirmed, including: access to play therapy for younger children; more support for young people in their own abusive intimate partner relationships; support for children and young people still living with an abusive parent; interventions for families experiencing adolescent or child to parent violence or abuse; work in schools to raise awareness with boys and young men.
8. Parents from minoritised communities value culturally competent, specialist provision that recognises the intersectional issues they have to deal with.
9. Both parents and agencies identified a lack of understanding about the longer-term impacts of domestic abuse-related trauma on children and young people among professionals such as school staff.

Recommendations

1. There is scope to increase awareness in professionals and parents of the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people and how trauma affects them.
2. As local statutory agencies reflect on their new responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, there is a great deal of positive provision already in place in Newcastle. Future focus could usefully be placed on joint working between commissioners to maximise the resources available for this work over the long term, to ensure services have both the stability and the capacity to meet demand.
3. Commissioners might also want to work with providers to promote the availability of services, with coherent messaging and simple referral pathways that work for both professionals and the wider community.

Terminology

We talk about 'specialist services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse' or 'specialist services' to describe services that are targeted at that age group and are set up to specifically address the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

All the specialist services in Newcastle are delivered by voluntary organisations¹ (details are provided in appendix 1) and sit within organisations with a focus either on children and young people or on addressing domestic abuse.

Of course, any statutory or voluntary organisation working with children, young people and families will be working with issues around domestic abuse as it is so prevalent in our communities. However, this report is concerned with the provision of specialist services where the intervention required goes beyond the expertise of more generalist provision.

¹ With the exception of the Newcastle Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) which is delivered by a partnership of a housing association (Thirteen Group) and a charity (Changing Lives).

We are primarily concerned, in this report, with children and young people aged under 18. However, some of the providers, particularly of services for young people, are also working with young people over the age of 18.

Methodology

The conversations which form the basis for this report took place between June and August 2021. Conversations took place in person, by conference call and by telephone. We spoke to three main groups:

- (Non-abusive) parents whose children had been living with domestic abuse -
 - Four parents had children who had accessed at least some specialist support (at Barnardo's and Angelou Centre).
 - Seven parents had accessed support for themselves (at Building Futures East, Newcastle Women's Aid and West End Women and Girls Centre) but hadn't accessed specialist support for their children.

We asked parents:

- Where they would go to get help for their child in relation to the impact of domestic abuse.
- How easy it was to find support (if they had tried).
- What made it easier to find and access support.
- What made it harder; what else their child needed.
- Staff working with families and/or survivors of abuse who refer to specialist services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, but don't provide those services themselves, i.e. Building Futures East, CAFCASS, Early Help (Barnardo's) at Byker Sands Family Centre and Newcastle Women's Aid.

We asked staff:

- What support they thought children needed to help them recover from the impact of domestic abuse.
- What services they referred families to on this issue.
- How easy it was to find and refer to services.
- What, if any, barriers got in the way of referrals.
- What helped families access the support they needed.
- What gaps in provision did they see?
- Providers of specialist services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

We spoke to this group about:

- The detail of what they provide.
- The level of need and gaps in provision they see.
- What families tell them about what else they need.

Additionally, Action for Children was carrying out a survey of parents using its service and helpfully added some questions about access, barriers and suggestions for improvements. Eight parents responded to these questions.

We thought it was important to hear from services as well as parents. Services can reflect the experiences of a broader group of families, not all of whom might feel comfortable talking to a researcher. We tried to talk to young people directly but this was not possible in the timeframe.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act defines domestic abuse as consisting of abusive behaviour perpetrated by one person aged 16 and over against another person aged 16 and over with whom they are personally connected, for example, a partner, ex-partner, or family member. Abusive behaviour can include: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; psychological, emotional or other abuse.

The Act recognises children as victims of domestic abuse if they ‘see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse.’

The Act places a duty on local authorities to support all victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation, such as refuges, and to provide support to children² affected by domestic abuse.

The inclusion of a provision for children in the Act is the result of campaigning by local and national charities, including Action for Children, NSPCC and Women’s Aid Federation England. These organisations were concerned that in many local authority areas there was little specialist provision for children affected by domestic abuse. Indeed, in many areas children could be categorised as ‘hidden’ victims and have often only been included in commissioned services as an afterthought.

How many children and young people need specialist services in Newcastle?

Numerous studies have detailed the huge effect that domestic abuse has on children’s lives. Children’s time with family and friends can be curtailed, they may develop personality and behavioural problems, and struggle with bedwetting, depression and suicidal tendencies. They can also show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, having nightmares, flashbacks, headaches and physical pains.

We know the high prevalence of this issue. Domestic abuse is the most common risk factor in situations where children could be seriously harmed in England³. Action for Children’s excellent report, ‘Patchy, piecemeal and precarious’⁴ includes a comprehensive round-up of evidence on the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.

²Domestic Abuse Act 2021 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/section/57/enacted

³ Local authorities (in England) identified 389,260 children as being in need in 2019–20; the most common cause was parental domestic violence (169,860). Department for Education, Characteristics of children in need: 2019 to 2020.

⁴ Action for Children (2019). Patchy, piecemeal and precarious. <https://tinyurl.com/3xx6x9h5>

The good news is that research also tells us that appropriate, targeted interventions have a positive effect on children's outcomes following domestic abuse⁵. However, both domestic abuse and children and young people's services have been subject to widespread cuts over the last decade and the provision of specialist services is insufficient to meet the need across England.

Newcastle has 58,922 children aged 0–17⁶. The Office for the Children's Commissioner (England) estimates that 4,600 children and young people (aged 0–17) were living in households where a parent was suffering domestic abuse in Newcastle during 2019–20. This translated to a prevalence rate of 78.48 per 1,000 0–17 year olds; the rate across England was significantly lower at 65.59 for the same period.⁷ This data is based on the children and young people identified by statutory agencies as being 'at risk'. Not all households where domestic abuse is a factor are known to statutory agencies and, therefore, these prevalence rates are likely to be underestimated.

Taking a broader view of how many children and young people might need specialist support, research⁸ from 2011 suggests as many as one in five children and young people under the age of 18 have been exposed to domestic abuse in the UK. This includes families that are not known to statutory services. By this measure, there are around 11,800 children and young people who are potentially at risk of being affected by domestic abuse in Newcastle.

Of course, not all children affected by domestic abuse will need specialist support, nor will every child in the same family have the same support needs. Unfortunately, we were not able to identify any established estimates of the proportion of children and young people affected by domestic abuse who would need specialist support.

⁵ Callaghan, J. et al (2018). Promoting Resilience and Agency; Fellin, L. et al (2018). Empowering young people; MacMillan et al (2016). Improving Outcomes for children exposed to domestic Violence (IMPROVE).

⁶ Office for National Statistics Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland <https://tinyurl.com/4buyxp8>

⁷ Children's Commissioner for England Childhood Local Data on Risks and Needs - Local and national data on childhood vulnerability www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/chldr

⁸Radford, L. et al (2011). Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. <https://tinyurl.com/jcv822zy>

Comparing demand in a neighbouring area to assess likely demand for specialist support

When thinking about levels of need in Newcastle it may be helpful to consider the experience of a neighbouring authority with a long-established and well-known specialist service.

Acorns in North Tyneside supports children and young people affected by domestic abuse and receives referrals from a wide range of agencies, including children's social care, schools and primary care, as well as self-referrals. In 2021 Acorns expects to support 360⁹ individual children and young people from North Tyneside (this number is based on current rates of referral and staffing levels).

North Tyneside has 42,017 children aged 0–17.¹⁰ The Office for the Children's Commissioner (England) estimates that 2,800 children and young people (aged 0–17) were living in North Tyneside households where a parent was suffering domestic abuse in 2019–20. This translates to a prevalence rate of 66.88 per 1,000 0–17 year olds.

If we think about those 360 children and young people attending Acorns as an indicator of the level of need for specialist support in that area, we can see that an established, easy to access, adequately funded specialist service/s in Newcastle is likely to attract over 590 referrals each year (in addition to children supported while living in the refuge).

⁹ This is in addition to children in refuge accommodation who receive support from the refuge provider, Harbour.

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland <https://tinyurl.com/4buyxp8>

Current provision of specialist services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Newcastle

See appendix 1 for detailed information about each service

Organisation and service	Provision	Annual capacity	Area covered	Funding
Action for Children Breaking the Cycle	Therapeutic sessions for 4–16 year olds	55	Newcastle	National Lottery Community Fund until March 2022 and one year funding from OPCC
Angelou Centre Ma Simba project	Therapeutic sessions and group work for 0–18	100	Northumbria wide	NLCF until March 2022 and one year funding from OPCC
Barnardo's Wellness Recovery Project	Therapeutic sessions for 4–18 year olds	75	Northumbria wide	One year funding from OPCC
Children North East ¹¹ DARE Ways to Happiness	Therapeutic programme for non-abusive parent and children One-to-one counselling	100 children (50 parents) 60–70	Tyne & Wear, but mainly Newcastle referrals, Northumbria wide	Single year funding from OPCC and local charity
Newcastle Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) Children's service	Support for children in refuge	100 in refuge	Newcastle mainly, but refuge takes women from outside the area	Most CYP provision in NIDAS contract; CYP outreach post one year only from MHCLG ¹²
	CYP recovery toolkit or drawing and talking therapy through outreach service	50 in outreach		
Streetwise Victims of Crime	Counselling trauma and group work for victims of crime (11–25)	45 ¹³	Northumbria wide	One year funding from the OPCC
West End Women and Girls Centre	Support and advocacy for 11–25 affected by domestic abuse in their families and own relationships.	65 for support and advocacy	Northumbria wide	Single year funding from OPCC
	New Safe for Life recovery course for 14–18 year olds ¹⁴	75 for course		

¹¹ Also provide a counselling service for children and young people over 9; 36 young people accessed this service around domestic abuse last year; funded by Newcastle and Gateshead CCGs, CNTW and the OPCC.

¹² Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, via the local authority (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities).

¹³ The whole Victims of Crime service has capacity to support approximately 75 young people, 60% of whom present with issues relating to domestic abuse. Streetwise also has a generic counselling service which sees some young people presenting with issues around domestic abuse.

¹⁴ WEWGC also provide peer educators who deliver groups and training in schools, colleges and universities around domestic abuse awareness and recruit Domestic Abuse Champions. #Iwill Virgin Money Foundation funds one FTE school post.

N.B. The table above details the main providers of specialist services in Newcastle. See appendix 2 for further details. Other work (recently funded by the OPCC for one year) includes:

- Community Counselling Co-operative – one-to-one therapeutic support including play therapy and group work with space for 30 children and young people in Newcastle.
- Innovating Minds – training for professionals across Northumbria who work with children aged 6-16 years in educational settings, early help teams, and specialist DA services etc. to enable them to deliver one-to-one and group support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse.
- Someone Cares – mainly working in North Tyneside but providing counselling in one Newcastle school.

How much provision is there currently in Newcastle?

It is difficult to establish an accurate figure for current provision in Newcastle because so many of the specialist services work across Northumbria. From the figures above we can see there is provision for:

- 55 spaces for counselling specifically for Newcastle residents (Action for Children).
- 150 spaces (100 in refuge; 50 through outreach) through NIDAS - which takes families mainly but not only from Newcastle.
- 100 spaces on the DARE programme, which takes families mainly from Newcastle
- 360 spaces in various other interventions that are available to families across Northumbria.

We weren't able to establish the percentage of Newcastle residents supported by individual 'Northumbria-wide' services. However, it appears unlikely that provision currently reaches the level of 590 spaces, plus support to children in refuges, that the comparison with North Tyneside indicates might be needed.

What did parents tell us?

We spoke to 11 parents (in 11 separate households), four of whom were already in touch with specialist children's services and seven who had just accessed support services for themselves. Six lived in west Newcastle and five in the east of the city; they had children in both primary and secondary schools.

We identified five parents via current children's service providers (Angelou Centre, Barnardo's, West End Women and Girls Centre) and six via services working with adult women around domestic abuse (Building Futures East and Newcastle Women's Aid). In each case, staff approached parents in touch with their service and asked if they would be

prepared to have a conversation with the researcher. In most instances, conversations took place on a one-to-one basis on the telephone or in person. Three parents in touch with the Angelou Centre took part in a small, online focus group. All interviews took place on a confidential basis and no identifying details are used in this report. All respondents were already in touch with services providing them with support around domestic abuse and the interviews did not focus on the participants' experience of domestic abuse in any way.

The five respondents who were in touch with specialist children's services were very positive about the service their child/children had received but had concerns about:

- The length of time their child had to wait to be seen. "You need help when you need it".
- How to identify which service would/could see their child. "Different services have different criteria – it's confusing". One parent described being "passed from pillar to post". Another said, "It's a full-time job going to all the different agencies." Another reflected, "You go through everything again every time you make a referral, I need someone to work with us all the way through."
- Two parents appreciated the support their child/children had received but wanted more, for example, additional counselling sessions or follow-on support.

On the subject of accessibility, four parents were happy to travel to take their children to services, the rest valued the option of children being seen at their school. However, it was noted by three parents that this latter option didn't work for some children. "It makes him feel different to be taken out of his class." Having a choice about where to access support was seen as important to all.

Those six parents who had just accessed support services for themselves all had strikingly similar views when asked about specialist support for their children, saying:

- The impact of domestic abuse on their child/children hadn't been mentioned to them or they hadn't known about the impact until they attended the Freedom programme, and/or;
- They weren't aware of services for children and didn't know where to look for them. "You don't see services for children advertised."

One parent had tried to seek help for her child. "She was put on a list for CAHMS two years ago but I haven't heard anything". Another said, "He was made a child of concern but I haven't heard anything since."

Two parents spoke positively about the practical support they had received from the Early Help team. Three found their child's school to be very supportive, at least in the initial stages, although a theme emerged around the need for schools to have a better understanding of the potential longer-term impact of domestic abuse on a child's behaviour (see page 11 for more on this.)

One parent spoke about the difficulties of trying to rebuild family life as a single parent while at the same time trying to cope with their child's problematic behaviour, saying the pressure can "push you back into the abusive relationship."

Those parents who were or had lived in a refuge (three respondents) talked about the value of having activities provided for their child to take their minds off their situation. Overall, activities for the whole family were valued by all respondents. "It helps us create new, happier memories."

The three parents accessing support at the Angelou Centre specifically highlighted the importance of specialist services being culturally competent and understanding the additional issues that their children and young people face, for example, bullying.

What did referral agencies tell us?

We spoke several voluntary and statutory agencies (Building Futures East, CAFCASS, Early Help (Barnardo's) at Byker Sands Family Centre and Newcastle Women's Aid) who work with families and adult survivors and refer to specialist children's services. Some of them work across local authority boundaries and were therefore able to bring that broader perspective. Overwhelmingly, referral agencies said:

- Waiting lists for services are a significant problem – being able to provide an intervention at the right time was important, especially when traumatised families are trying to rebuild relationships between the non-abusive parent and the child/children.
- The fragmented nature of specialist provision in Newcastle is a problem for agencies themselves. "It's all too bitty". Agencies wanted a single place to go to find help or an up-to-date directory of services.
- Service provision appeared unstable and subject to too many (funding-led) changes
 - "To be honest, I don't know what's out there for children, it keeps changing."
 - "One minute they are offering a service and then it changes, I can't keep up with it."
 - "In the good old days we had good connections and knew where to refer but because of funding changes we have lost connections."
- Staff wanted "accessible services with clear protocols and referral pathways that are widely advertised" and noted that it was also important for families to be able to go back to services for further support if problems emerged in the future.

Some staff reflected on the difference between the provision in Newcastle and neighbouring authorities. "I used to work in North Tyneside and had a better idea where to refer to." "If we can, we prefer to refer to Acorns."¹⁵

¹⁵ In cases where a child lived in Newcastle, but went to school in North Tyneside, or vice versa.

When thinking about accessibility issues, one worker said, “It’s travel, cost and confidence – it can be hard just going somewhere new.” suggesting that schools were a good location where specialist services could see children. There were mixed views about what schools could offer. One agency said that pastoral support in schools “Could be a good resource” and another said, “Support in schools is a bit random” and depended upon whether the school “knew the history of abuse.”

Parental understanding and confidence were highlighted as key issues. “Mums notice (their children’s) behavioural problems but don’t connect it with the domestic abuse until they do the Freedom Programme.”

Staff spoke about the challenges non-abusive parents faced when deciding to seek help for their child/children. “Mums blame themselves.” They noted that when parents felt let down by services (for example, following a dispute about child contact). “It can be scary for parents to let children access services.”

One agency noted the need for support for families where there was adolescent to parent abuse. Another for support for children and young people still living with an abusive parent.

Others noted the number of children and young people affected by domestic abuse who also had other needs and called for specialist services to “have time to develop services for children with complex needs (because) one-size-fits-all isn’t what’s needed.”

Agencies noted the good work being done in schools to educate young people around healthy relationships but thought there was still “a massive gap for boys and young men”. Some suggested there was a need for male youth workers with a specific remit to instigate discussions about healthy relationships, both in schools and in the community.

What did specialist services tell us?

Specialist services are acutely aware that waiting lists can be a barrier for families and try very hard to keep them down. However, all the services we spoke to were over-subscribed and one explained “we don’t feel we can advertise the availability of the service beyond our existing (limited) referral pathways because we just couldn’t meet the demand.”

Services stressed the importance of building the confidence of non-abusive parents to enable them to access support. “Mums worry about being judged on their parenting skills so it’s harder for them to seek help for their child.” “They lose trust and see all services as the same.”

Another barrier services noted was the attitude of the abusive parent, especially if child contact was at issue. “Mums worry about seeking help because it’s seen as (the child having) a mental health issue and that can be used against them.”

Several services emphasised the importance of a whole family approach, working with the non-abusive parent as well as the child/children, giving the parent a better understanding of what was going on for the child and enabling them to support the therapeutic work done when at home.

In addition to the need for more of the interventions that are already provided, services identified specific gaps in current provision, including:

- Play therapy – this is seen as the most suitable intervention for younger children and is not currently available.
- Support for young people whose own intimate partner relationships are abusive - while there is already some provision it was felt there was a need to do much more for this group.
- Independent advocacy for children, particularly in relation to contact arrangements.
- Support for children and young people still living with an abusive parent
- Education and prevention work in schools and other youth settings that specifically targets boys and young men, delivered by male youth workers who can act as role models.

Unsurprisingly, specialist services found the short-term nature of much of their funding to be problematic. They highlighted several specific concerns and consequences, especially where funding was for one year only:

- Not being able to guarantee continuity of provision for children and young people, especially for those who may need to return to a service for further support in years to come.
- Difficulties in planning and maintaining a stable workforce (with recent issues around retention and recruitment of qualified and experienced staff).
- Challenges in establishing the profile of a service with both referral agencies and the wider community – the latter being especially important in attracting self-referrals.
- Additional management time is required to make annual bids.

Some services were also concerned that being over-subscribed, and trying to keep waiting lists as short as possible, meant they could only be responsive to the referrals they received. They didn't have capacity to engage in community outreach to reach children and families that might find it harder to engage with services.

Like their colleagues in the referral agencies, the specialist services find the current network of provision for children and young people in Newcastle to be “disjointed, with no consistent approach.”

What are commissioners doing?

The local authority commissions Newcastle Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS), the contract for which includes specific work with children and young people whose parent is either in refuge or being supported by the outreach service. The NIDAS service is an integrated one therefore the children's elements aren't funded separately. The service has an annual contract value of £577,778. One year of additional funding (£30,000) from MHCLG was used in 2020–21 to employ an additional children's outreach worker. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria, Kim McGuinness, has prioritised children and young people affected by crime when allocating community funds. Her Office (the OPCC) is responsible for allocating specific funding from the government, including three rounds (for 2019–20, 2020–21 and 2021–22) of the Home Office' Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA) Fund. The amount of CADA funding for Northumbria OPCC for 2021–22 was £435,867; the OPCC also allocated resources from the Supporting Victims Fund to services supporting children affected by domestic abuse in that period.

While pleased to have this resource, the OPCC is frustrated by the short-term nature of the CADA Fund which only supports one-year grants. Looking to the future, OPCC staff hope the CADA Fund will continue and that a three-year funding package may be announced following the comprehensive spending review in autumn 2021. The OPCC is also responsible for allocating the Ministry of Justice' Supporting Victims Fund, some of which supports specialist services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse across Northumbria.

The OPCC has undertaken a mapping exercise of specialist service provision for children and young people affected by domestic abuse across the six local authorities of Northumbria. This notes in most areas (including Newcastle) that:

- There is very little play therapy (for younger children).
- One-to-one therapeutic support for children and young people is generally insufficient to meet demand.
- Support for young people experiencing abuse in their intimate relationships also requires further resourcing.
- Provision of child and parent group work remains patchy.

The OPCC has begun to address some of these gaps – see appendix 2 for details. OPCC staff emphasised the importance of the non-abusive parent (usually the mother) being able to trust services to work with their child. It is important that the non-abusive parent sees services as wanting to partner with them. Staff highlighted the Safe and Together¹⁶ model as good practice.

¹⁶ Safe & Together Institute. The Safe & Together Model <https://safeandtogetherinstitute.com/about-us/about-the-model>

What about charitable funding?

Work with children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Newcastle is supported by charitable funding in several ways, including:

- Large grants for direct service provision from the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) – two key services are almost entirely funded through grants from the fund, grants which end in March 2022.
- Smaller grants from local funders including Virgin Money Foundation and the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland.
- Several specialist services described supplementing the true cost of provision with resources from their central, charitable funds.

Funders such as NLCF will be aware of the Domestic Abuse Act and the new duties it places on local statutory agencies and may adjust their funding priorities accordingly in the future – it has a policy of not supporting work which is a statutory duty.

Other areas of concern

Two other areas of concern emerged strongly across the conversations with all groups. Whilst they do not have a direct bearing on the provision of specialist services, they are worth reflecting on here.

Misdiagnosis/misunderstanding about the impact of trauma

Parents, referral agencies and specialist services all raised concerns about children and young people who have been exposed to domestic abuse in the past, being seen as ‘disruptive’ or exhibiting ‘problematic behaviour’ rather than being identified as recovering from trauma. Numerous instances were cited where it was felt the child or young person was at risk of not getting the right support because of a lack of understanding about their family history and the impact of trauma. Several professionals expressed concerns about individual children being ‘diagnosed with ADHD’ when their symptoms were those of a child affected by trauma.

Both parents and professionals called for increased awareness and understanding among other professionals, especially schools, about the impact of trauma on children and young people. It was noted that when schools were aware of domestic abuse in a child’s life¹⁷ they could be very supportive both of the child and the non-abusive parent. However, as time went on, or if the child moved schools, schools’ understanding was not always what it could be. Children ran the risk of being seen as badly behaved, rather than dealing with underlying trauma. “When the crisis is over mum and the kids are still in recovery and it can be hard when agencies don’t recognise this.”

¹⁷ Operation Encompass was seen as a very helpful initiative to share early information with schools
www.operationencompass.org

The impact of contact with the abusive parent

Parents and professionals from both referral agencies and specialist services all expressed concern, and a degree of helplessness, about the impact of an abusive parent's ongoing behaviour on the wellbeing of a child or young person. Parents and professionals described abusive parents as:

- Using parental responsibility to block children's access to therapy, either refusing permission or missing appointments/arriving late.
- Being emotionally abusive to the child/young person. "She's still scared of him." "It's questions, questions, questions all the time, she's a different person in that house."
- Denigrating the non-abusive parent to the child. "She comes home crying because her dad's been bad-mouthing me."
- Using contact as a means of continuing to exert control to the extent that "it feels like you are still in the (abusive) situation."
- Blaming the non-abusive parent for the perceived poor behaviour of the child or young person.

Both parents and professionals described feeling helpless in the face of such situations – "Early Help were concerned about the situation for my daughter, but there's nothing much they can do." When asked what she would wish for if she had a magic wand, one parent said, "Someone to back her (the child) up, instead of saying we can't do anything." Another parent noted the change in the professional language used saying, "Once the contact order was made any problems are described as parental conflict – domestic abuse is in the past".

Conclusion

In many respects, Newcastle has some good services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse and it compares well to other authorities elsewhere in England¹⁸. The organisations providing these services have specialist knowledge and experience in this field and there is dedicated provision for both children and young people, as well as specialist provision for children from minoritised communities.

There are some gaps in existing provision, for example, play therapy for younger children, and areas where there is some provision but more is probably needed, for example, young people experiencing intimate partner violence in their relationships.

However, both parents and referring agencies found the current patchwork of provision confusing. Both groups would welcome better advertising of what was available and clear guidance about what types of support were available, and for which children and young people.

¹⁸ Action for Children (2019). Patchy, piecemeal and precarious. <https://tinyurl.com/3xx6x9h5>

The specialist services are all over-subscribed to a greater or lesser extent. There is a sense of at least some of them not being able to cope with demand if the availability of services was widely advertised to everyone who might benefit. Using the proxy of numbers supported at a well-known and long-established service in North Tyneside, referrals to Newcastle services that were widely advertised and easy to access are likely to significantly exceed current provisions.

Neither services nor commissioners were happy with the very short-term nature of some of the funding which resources this work. It acts as a barrier to service development and adds to the confusion about what is available. It is of particular concern that two key services are largely dependent on funding from the National Lottery Community Fund which expires within the next six months. There is no guarantee that this funding will be awarded again and both these services could therefore be at risk of closing. However, local commissioners clearly see work with children and young people affected by domestic abuse as a priority and there is enormous scope for some joined-up commissioning, particularly if ring-fenced central government funding continues.

In light of the above, we would suggest:

1. There is scope to increase awareness in professionals and parents of the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people and how trauma affects them.
2. As local statutory agencies reflect on their new responsibilities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, there is a great deal of positive provision already in place in Newcastle. Future focus could usefully be placed on joint working between commissioners to maximise the resources available for this work over the long term, to ensure services have both the stability and the capacity to meet demand.
3. Commissioners might also want to work with providers to promote the availability of services, with coherent messaging and simple referral pathways that work for both professionals and the wider community.

Appendix 1: Specialist service provider details

Organisation	Action for Children (A4C)
Project	Breaking the Cycle
Service provision	Weekly therapeutic sessions for children and young people, including sessions with child and non-abusive parent/carer
Age range	4–16 years (but predominantly primary-age referrals)
Other demographics	Newcastle-only service - delivered at A4C's base in west and children centres across the city in Newcastle or in the child's school
Length of intervention	6–10 weeks, plus introductory sessions
Capacity	50–55 children and young people a year
Waiting list	77 on waiting list post-COVID-19 (with triage system which means some children are seen earlier)
Referral pathways	Various including Early Help, Children's Social Care, schools and self-referral
Staffing	1 x FTE Lead Counsellor 1.5 FTE Counsellors
Funding	Funded through National Lottery Community Fund (six years funding ends March 2022), also one year of funding from the OPCC
Unmet need	The service is massively over-subscribed, as evidenced by the waiting list There is a big gap for children who are still living with an abusive parent
Notes	Two-thirds of referrals are boys During the pandemic, the service was able to provide lots of additional support for children and their families

Organisation	Angelou Centre (AC)
Project	Ma Simba
Service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one children's therapy • One-to-one parent support • Two children's voices groups (7–10 and 11–14 years) • Parent therapeutic group work programme • Social and cultural activities, creative workshops • Intersectional children's advocacy
Age range	0–18 years (boys up to 12 with some flexibility)
Other demographics	For Black, minoritised and migrant communities
Area of benefit	Most children come from across the six local authorities of Northumbria, including Newcastle
Length of intervention	Flexible
Capacity	The service can work with up to 30 families at any one time and support 80-100 children a year It has six counselling spaces a week
Waiting list	6–8 weeks
Referral pathways	Referrals come from the police, children's services, health, schools etc. All referrals are assessed and referred through to Ma Simba by ACs Violence against Women and Girls service.
Staffing	1 x PT parenting co-ordinator (21 hours) 1 x PT Children's IDVA (24 hours) 2 x PT children's counsellors administrator, service manager and clinical supervisor
Funding	2016 - 2022 funding from National Lottery Community Fund; this funding expires in March 2022 Also one year of funding from the OPCC
Unmet need?	In addition to the impact of violence and abuse, staff see children and young people struggling with cyber and/or racist bullying, causing significant mental health problems, with few avenues for specialist support.
Notes	AC also provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist support for families with NRPF, and • Support to children in its refuge • A young women's network on campaigning Older boys are referred to youth work services Programmes are bespoke, drawing on evidenced-based programmes (e.g. recovery toolkit) but incorporating elements from other programmes (e.g. Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities) to ensure relevance to the communities being served

Organisation	Barnardo's
Project	Wellness Recovery Project
Service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one therapeutic interventions for children and young people • One-to-one therapeutic interventions for non-abusing parents • 'Real Love Rocks' prevention programme delivered in schools
Age range	4–18 years
Other demographics	N/A
Area of benefit	Available to families across six authorities of Northumbria
Length of intervention	Assessment appointment followed by six sessions and then a review. A further block of six sessions can be offered if required
Capacity	The service is now able to work with 75 individuals (children/ young people and adults) a year
Waiting list	Eight weeks (largely because of COVID-19)
Referral pathways	Most referrals come via Victims First, with an occasional GP referral
Staffing	1 x PT (22.5 hours) Children and young people's worker Recruitment ongoing for another part-time post
Funding	Single year funding from the OPCC – this is the second year the service has received this funding
Unmet need?	Barnardo's does not widely promote the availability of the service beyond its existing referral pathways because it would not be able to meet demand
Notes	This service is delivered within Barnardo's over-arching ethos of work with the 'system around the child' so referral meetings always include the non-abusing parent who is also offered advice on safety planning and understanding their child's behaviour

Organisation	Children North East (CNE)
Project	Domestic Abuse Services
Service provision	Domestic abuse recovery and education (DARE) programme for (non-abusive) parents, children and young people (with some one-to-one support for individuals before and after where needed). General counselling CYP
Age range	5–19 years DARE and one-to-one support 9+ for counselling
Other demographics	Services are open to families across Tyne and Wear but largely accessed by Newcastle residents Counselling contracts in Gateshead and Newcastle from CCG and region-wide through Police and Crime Commissioner
Length of intervention	DARE – five-day programme, delivered in a single week Counselling – six weeks via CCG and 12 weeks via OPCC
Capacity	100 CYP and 50 parents i.e. Six DARE programmes a year x 8-10 families (average one adult and two children) The counselling service has the capacity to support 60-70 CYP
Waiting list	DARE – three months Counselling – two weeks
Referral pathways	Early Help, Victims First, CNTW single point of access, GPs and self-referrals
Staffing	One Domestic Abuse lead (30 hours) One Domestic Abuse practitioner (18 hours) Other CNE staff contribute to the running of DARE, including 3 x social work students One Counselling team manager Two Clinical coordinators Seven FTE counselling staff
Funding	DARE is funded by OPCC for one year (also funded in the previous year) and by a small grant from the Community Foundation One-to-one work is also funded by OPCC Counselling is funded by CNTW/CCG and PCC
Unmet need?	CNE ran a Caring Dads programme in 2020 but funding was not continued – it sees a need for more work with perpetrators to recognise their abusive behaviour It has also offered a ‘Today’s Teens’ programme which includes content addressing adolescent to parent violence and sees a need for more of this work More focus is needed on healthy relationships in secondary schools There is also a gap in providing young couples with collective, non-judgemental support via counselling

Organisation	Thirteen Group
Project	Newcastle's Integrated Domestic Abuse Services (NIDAS)
Service provision	<p>For children and young people (CYP) in refuges and being re-settled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical support e.g. finding and settling into new schools/nurseries • Assessment and development of Early Help plans • Weekly playgroup for toddlers and mums - focus on learning to Play and parent confidence. • Fortnightly group for primary children • Fortnightly group for teenagers • One-to-one delivery of CYP recovery toolkit or 'drawing and talking' therapy, as needed • Play activities, holiday activities and field trips • Creche provision to support parents activities <p>For CYP whose parent is receiving outreach support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one delivery of CYP recovery toolkit or 'drawing and talking' therapy • New Beginnings session for parents on 'Impact of Domestic Abuse on children'
Age range	0–17 years CYP accommodated with their parent; 16–17 year old boys assessed on an individual basis - service accepts 16–17 year old girls as victims in own right
Other demographics	CYP must have a parent actively engaging with NIDAS
Length of intervention	Varies on need and length of engagement with services
Capacity	150 across refuge (two thirds) and outreach (one third)
Waiting list	Interventions offered within refuge and on resettlement are immediate, there is an 8-12 week waiting list for those referred via the outreach service.
Referral pathways	CYP are either living in the refuge or are referred through the NIDAS outreach service.
Staffing	2 x CYP Co-ordinators (25 hours each) in refuge 1 x CYP Co-ordinator (30 hours) for outreach Plus five hours of team leader
Funding	Most CYP provision included in NIDAS' statutory contract; the outreach post is funded for one year only by MHCLG
Notes	All outreach intervention sessions are provided at the child's school

Organisation	Streetwise Young People's Project
Project	Victims of Crime
Service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling and trauma work for any victim of crime, both recent and historic • EmpowHER - a rolling, bespoke group work programme providing further support to young people who have received counselling
Age range	11–25 years
Other demographics	Northumbria-wide
Length of intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling is offered for 6–12 sessions • The group work programme is for six weeks
Capacity	Staff can offer 16–20 sessions a week. The whole Victims of Crime service has the capacity to support approximately 75 young people, 60% of whom present with issues relating to domestic abuse; Streetwise also has a generic counselling service that sees some young people presenting with issues around domestic abuse
Waiting list	Staff try to keep the waiting list below four weeks
Referral pathways	Young people can self-refer, referrals are also taken from the police, Victim First, GPs, etc.
Staffing	One female counsellor and one support worker (a male counsellor is also available if required)
Funding	Funding comes from the OPCC
Notes	All counsellors at Streetwise are trained and experienced to support young people who have been victims of crime

Organisation	West End Women and Girls Centre (WEWGC)
Project	Domestic Abuse Champions
Service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic abuse peer educators provide one-to-one support and advocacy for women and girls who are affected by domestic abuse both in their families and in their intimate relationships • Peer educators also deliver groups and training in schools, colleges and universities around domestic abuse awareness and recruit DA Champions • New Safe for Life recovery course for teenagers
Age range	11–25 years
Other demographics	The services are open to anyone who identifies as female
Length of intervention	Varies: One-to-one support can be long-term; average is one year. Safe for Life is a ten week programme
Capacity	100–120 young people (aged 11-25) a year for one-to-one support 60–70 on average are under 18 each year Up to 2,000 through work in schools (inc. assemblies) 75 on Teenage Safe 4 Life Course
Waiting list	There is no waiting list currently
Referral pathways	Self-referral, Children’s Social Care, Schools, Voluntary organisations, Health Visitors, GPs, Family Support, DA Champions.
Staffing	4 FTE
Funding	OPCC fund 2.5 FTE IDVA posts #Iwill Virgin Money Foundation funds one FTE school’s post There is always a shortfall in funding that needs to be made up from other smaller funding bids or centres core costs
Unmet need?	Staff see the need for more timely, accessible therapeutic responses for children and young people As we are training more DA Champions in Schools we are receiving more referrals – increasing the need for more one-to-one workers

Appendix 2: Funding from the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria (information provided by the OPCC)

With the resources at its disposal, and within the time constraints it operates in, the OPCC used the 2021–22 allocation of CADA funding to commission services for an estimated 937 children and young people affected by domestic abuse, including:

- Accredited training for 44 multi-agency professionals to deliver the ‘Healing Together’ programme to 352 children and young people (including 6 trained facilitators and 48 children and young people in Newcastle).
- 210 play therapy and counselling interventions (including 30 for children and young people in Newcastle).
- 191 trauma-informed domestic abuse group work places (including 75 places for children and young people in Newcastle).
- 124 places on therapeutic programmes for children and their non-offending parent (including 18 children and 18 parents in Newcastle).
- 60 places on trauma-informed therapeutic programmes for children and young people from minoritised communities (including 31 places for children and young people in Newcastle).

This is in addition to force-wide services for children and young people affected by domestic abuse funded through the PCC’s ‘Supporting Victims’ Fund, including:

- Barnardo’s Wellness Recovery programme – offering one to one counselling and healthy relationships interventions for 100 children and young people.
- Children North East ‘Safeguarding Futures’ Programme - for 100 children and 50 parents whose relationships have been impacted by domestic abuse.
- Children North East ‘Ways to Happiness’ one-to-one counselling programme for 60–70 children.
- Streetwise EmpowHER group work programme for 35 young women who have experienced sexual violence or relationship abuse.
- Princes Trust pilot of a new domestic abuse programme – for an initial cohort of 20 children and young people.
- WEWAC Peer Educators – one-to-one and group work support to 175 children and young people and DA taster sessions to 500 young women.
- Someone Cares schools-based counselling service for 11-18 year olds who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence.

Various other 2021–22 funding allocations have also been used to support:

- DA services for children and young people that operate within a single local authority area.
- The training of local CHIDVAs who specialise in the support of young people experiencing abuse in their relationships.
- Adult victims of domestic abuse to maintain/enhance their own and their children’s safety.

Appendix 3: Glossary of abbreviations

CADA	Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (Fund)
CYP	Children and young people
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CNTW	Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
DA	Domestic Abuse
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (or Advocate)
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (known as the Ministry for Levelling up, Housing and Communities from September 2021)
NLCF	National Lottery Community Fund
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
OPCC	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

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