

At a glance

Domestic abuse and mental health of parents and children

What we hope to find out

We aim to understand how domestic abuse, parental mental health and child mental health are related and how relevant services can better provide support.

Why are we doing this study

When children live with domestic abuse this increases the risk of their own mental health difficulties. When their parents are also suffering with mental health difficulties this can make it even harder for children to cope with domestic abuse.

We currently do not know how living with domestic abuse is related to parental and child mental health difficulties or whether these links are captured in health records. We also do not have any evidence of 'best practice' in co-ordinated working between domestic abuse and mental health services.

Why this is important

For families to cope with and recover from the impact of domestic abuse, it is important that they can get the support they need. Understanding the relationship between mental health and domestic abuse will help professionals work together more effectively and offer services that are better co-ordinated. Looking at the data recorded in health records and in long-term studies of family health, as well as interviewing different types of professionals will help us to make recommendations about how families suffering from domestic abuse can be identified and supported.

What we will do

We will analyse data from longitudinal studies which follow up parents and children over time to assess how parental mental health problems and domestic abuse relate to one another over time. We will also assess how these experiences affect the mental health of children and adolescents. Using data from general practitioners and hospitals we will explore how families present to health services with mental health concerns and experiences of domestic abuse.

We will also interview domestic abuse and mental health professionals across three different areas in England. Using qualitative methods to analyse these interviews, we will build a detailed picture of what is happening in each area, as well as trying to understand what 'good practice' looks like in general. We will consult with survivors throughout this part to ensure that we ask questions that are relevant to service users and to help us understand the findings.

Project team

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