



# One minute guide

## 'Prevent, Protect and Repair' - report on domestic abuse JTAI inspections

No. 179, December 2020

### What is Prevent, Protect and Repair?

The report 'Prevent, Protect and Repair' publishes the findings of six Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) carried out between September 2016 and March 2017. The report considers the extent to which children's social care, health practitioners, the police and probation officers are effective in safeguarding children who have experienced domestic abuse. It reviews the practices of individual agencies, as well as multi-agency working. The full report can be read [here](#).

The report focuses on three key areas:

Long term strategy — having a long term plan in place which focuses on the bigger picture and aims to change perceptions and behaviour on a large scale;

Focusing on the right things — ensuring that focus is on the right individuals and understanding incidents in the family context rather than in isolation; and

Information sharing — sharing information across a range of services and agencies and encouraging effective joint working.

Whilst findings show that services have gone a long way to address some very complex challenges, and have dealt with the enormous volume of cases of domestic abuse, there needs to be a subtle shift in the way services understand and respond to domestic abuse.

While much good work is being done to 'protect' children and victims, more needs to be done to 'prevent' domestic abuse, and 'repair' any damage that is caused.

### What were the findings in relation to long term strategy?

Services were observed to be mainly working in a reactive, 'incident-led' way, and they focused on the immediate challenges of isolated incidents of domestic abuse. In doing this, they have failed to see the bigger picture, such as any history of abuse, or patterns of abuse in the family context. This has meant that interventions have often been ineffective as they have failed to have a long-term impact.

The report suggests that there needs to be a clear public service message aimed at reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse as part of a long-term strategy. This should include changing perceptions about what family interactions can look like, and what forms a healthy relationship. This should help to shift behaviour on a large scale.

## What were the findings in relation to focusing on the right things?

When dealing with incidents of domestic abuse, services have focused too much on the victim, asking 'why doesn't she leave?' rather than 'why doesn't he stop?'. The immediate solution has often been to remove the victim and children from the perpetrator, whilst putting responsibility on the victim to protect their children. However, research tells us that separation can escalate risk to the victim.

There needs to be a greater focus on children's emotional needs to prevent the long-term emotional and psychological impact of witnessing abuse. The report found that the needs of some children in the family were less well understood than others, and the needs of younger children and older children were often assumed to be the same. Also, the voices of very young children were often ignored; even in cases when young children are unable to talk, their interactions and behaviours should be observed in order to understand their feelings.

There needs to be more collaboration from services in order to put children's behaviours into context. Failure from services to see the bigger picture and understand underlying contributory factors has often led to children getting into trouble for misbehaving at school. Furthermore, the report states that some adult-focused agencies, notably probation and adult mental health services, did not ask about children's welfare at all when dealing with a domestic abuse incident.

## What were the findings in relation to information sharing?

The report states that it is unclear what information can be shared amongst and between services, with whom, and when. The absence of information sharing protocols has led to poor decision-making about when to share information. Often, information sharing was delayed due to concerns around consent, but in most of these cases, the safeguarding concerns in relation to the children should have overridden the need for consent.

The report also highlighted problems with data collection, which was often complicated and inconsistent across services. In particular, the complexity of the systems across health services created barriers to information sharing.

Furthermore, the report highlights the importance of a range of services meeting regularly, including schools and the school nurse, to ensure that important information about individuals is being communicated. The ability to share information quickly and effectively is critical to whether or not agencies are able to work together to identify risks, understand a problem and find a solution.

## For more information

To read the Prevent, Protect and Repair report in full, as well as the reports from each of the JTAI Domestic abuse inspections, see [here](#).

For more information about the programme of Joint Targeted Area Inspections, please visit the Government [website](#).