

## »» 2020 Live Webinars: Summary

This year, due to Covid-19 restrictions, we held 3 webinars in place of our annual "Voice of the Child" conference. These took place from 26<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and explored the theme of domestic abuse.



The FJYPB members hosted the webinars via Zoom. The three webinars were:

- > **Covid-19 and Domestic Abuse: The Impact on Children and Young People;**
- > **Domestic Abuse: The Effects and Impact on Children and Young People;**
- > **Domestic Abuse: The Family Court's Responsibilities for Children and Young People**

Approximately 70 to 80 people attended each webinar with representatives from across the family justice sector.

Our goal was to bring together the key professionals in the world of family justice to focus on the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people who are involved in family law proceedings.

### »» HIGHLIGHTS

- Powerful and emotive 'In My Shoes' from FJYPB members who shared their personal experiences of domestic abuse.
- Interactive Mentimeter polls and surveys displayed an on-screen visual representation of the comments and responses from attendees.
- Workshops to hold key discussions.
- Recorded messages from Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division; Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families at the Department for Education; Alex Chalk MP Parliamentary Secretary of State for the Ministry of Justice and Jacky Tiotto, Cafcass Chief Executive.



# WEBINARS

## Webinar 1:

### Covid-19 and Domestic Abuse: The Impact on Children and Young People

Exploring the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people experiencing domestic abuse and the response of services and professionals who support them during this time.

**EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF COVID 19 ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

How has COVID-19 + lockdown made you feel? *isolated, uncertain, trapped, frustrated, bored, lonely, anxious, exhausted*

How has it felt not being able to see friends, family, colleagues and not going to your place of work? *sad, upsetting, weird, frustrating, lonely, strange, isolating*

How would it make you feel if you are experiencing domestic violence at home? *alone, terrified, helpless, scared*

**THINK:** Imagine a child or young person witnessing and experiencing domestic abuse and is locked at home

I don't know where to turn!

**Hi, my name is Khalil THIS IS: In my shoes**

I'm 22 years old, I joined the fjypb in June

Real life experience from a FJYPB member

I lived in Yemen as a young child, my grandparents wanted to adopt me - it took 5 years this was a nightmare

My grandfather was very controlling

I'm your father now...!

When I decided to leave my grandfather cut himself off from me

But my grandmother always tried to protect me

I decided I wanted a Christian foster family

My foster family were so important!

EDUCATION SAVED ME! & Sport!

no-one is listening to me

I was SCARED for my LIFE

At 16 I went to the courts MYSELF

**KHALIL'S TOP TIPS:**

- LISTEN TO THE CHILD
- PLEASE: go into a child's HOME
- TURN UP ON TIME
- Bring an interpreter when needed

**DOMESTIC ABUSE & COVID 19**  
The impact on children and young people

62% of children in households where domestic abuse is happening are directly harmed

2 in 7 children + yep under the age of 18 will have lived with domestic abuse

increase in counselling sessions

I feel lonely, tired, stressed, anxious

I need MORE SUPPORT

I felt SCARED...

- I felt SCARED...
- I knew it was wrong
- I didn't know WHAT TO DO...

**SUGGESTIONS + IDEAS**

- 1:1 meetings Ask me if I am safe
- Prioritise the child
- see the child OUTSIDE the home
- Help me! I'm vulnerable and unseen...
- Read the signs
- GET HIM OUT OF THERE
- Don't assume
- Have I got this right?
- Um, not really...
- make sure the child has contact details
- So I KNOW who to turn to!
- Be mindful of your language
- Every child is different

**FINAL THOUGHTS AND FEEDBACK**

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

How can I find child-centred resources?

Make it child friendly - and not frightening!

Postcode lottery... local services are vital!

I don't have the same internet.

but they need to be good in all regions

**EDUCATION**

What about learning about what's abuse at my school?

I found out about abuse from my social worker: I thought what was happening to me was normal...

**COVID-19**

Personal impact of COVID-19

Heavy impact on services

Lockdown: a tool for further abuse

Thank you for attending and please, feed back!

Don't make assumptions: race/gender/culture

The importance of Empathy

Let's focus on these issues & show some light on them

# Webinar 2:

## Domestic abuse: The effects and impact on children and young people.

Understanding the short-term and long-term effects of domestic abuse and how professionals and services reduce the impact on children and young people within family law proceedings.

**fjypb** Family Justice Young People's Board

As many as 1.5 children and young people have been exposed to domestic abuse.

### Domestic Abuse: The Impacts and Effects on Children and Young People

Only 1/3 receive counselling

I felt like they were giving me back to the abuser.

I felt scared and trapped

I have nightmares

I feel anxious

I'm angry

I feel bad about myself

My tummy aches

I feel withdrawn

I had awful dreams

It was so unpredictable

I had really bad trust issues

I suffer with trauma

I still worry and I'm upset when I think about it

What was the worst thing?

The shouting!

THE UNCERTAINTY

Not knowing when it was going to happen again

Watching someone I'm meant to idolise hurting my mum

Do not judge

How can YOU HELP?

Read the signs

Empathise

Put yourself in their shoes

Build the relationship

Equal treatment

Child-centred policies

Look at what's available for that child

HOW CAN SERVICES HELP?

Help parents understand the impact of their behaviour

Check: What's best for the child - not just the parents

Hi, my name is **Lois**

This is my story

In my shoes

My words of advice to others going through this: Stay Strong: everything will be ok

NOW: I'm proud of how I've grown resilient + STRONG

When I was 5 my Dad moved out and we could finally breathe

I expect you to see me + love me

Dad was abusive to mum so I was very protective of my MUM

We felt powerless

For a long time I had panic attacks + anxiety I attended counselling but I had different counsellors over different periods

I don't have anyone to talk to...

me + my sister

Don't presume anything

Make children + young people feel listened to and supported

Build trust

Connect before you go into the serious detail

Exploring the effects and impacts of domestic abuse on children and young people

What are the signs...?

Aggression

Bullying

Attention seeking

Confused

Scared

Anger

Anxiety

Withdrawal

Problems at school

Bed wetting

depressed

Quiet

sad

I don't become used to it

Domestic Abuse

It is the duration of the exposure to the abuse that can cause the most harm (English 2003 in Stanley 201)

Short-term effects?

Sadness

bed wetting

anger

fear

Anxiety

disorders

I skip school

My tummy aches

Long term effects?

depression

low self-esteem

self-harm

anxiety

Greater risk of substance misuse

This never goes away

I can't cope!

**Maha**

In my shoes

This is my story

I am a 17yr old girl from Tripoli, Lebanon (via GulfEed + west London)

Please learn from it!

4 days before my 3rd birthday my mother left us and filed for divorce as well as custody of me + my older sister

My dad eventually won custody of me + my sister in 2010 after 10yrs of emotional hell.

I'm really not...

My mother: irrational!

He's abusive! he doesn't respect my family

My dad has never been abusive at all!

Why did you leave my dad?

The problem was: everyone assumed my mum was the victim...

She passed on my dad's identity: male Arab Muslim, Battered

My sister and I have decided to not keep in touch with her...

There are no typical stereotypes

Don't make cultural assumptions!

# Webinar 3:

## Domestic Abuse: The family court's responsibilities for children and young people.

Reflecting upon the Harm Panel report. Reviewing the responsibilities of professionals working with children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse in family court proceedings.

**fjypb** Family Justice Young People's Board  
Published June 2020

**FJYPB Domestic Abuse:**  
The Family Courts responsibilities for children and young people. Focussing on the Harm Panel report

**20%** of children in UK live with domestic abuse. This can continue through the court process.

**Focus MUST BE** on the child. What's best for the child?

The voice of the child should have more **weight**. But also look out for **NON-verbal** clues.

**Reflections** (Harm Panel Report):  
Mainly positive as focuses on needs of the child.

- Pro contact system
- Adversarial system
- Resource limitations
- The way the courts work

**NEEDS TO CHANGE**

**What can services do to help?**

- Learn about and know the signs of abuse & how these can affect us.
- Listen - don't dismiss what we say.
- Remember: Domestic Abuse is wider than physical abuse.
- Think and know about support services for children not just parents, before during & after proceedings.
- Recognise: Children & their siblings may have different needs about contact & these may contrast to the abuser parent.

Other notes: "No-one cared about me", "It felt like the court was handing me back to the abusers", "Voiceless worried hopeless scared trapped!", "I feel like the court was handing me back to the abusers", "I feel like the court was handing me back to the abusers".

**Hi, my name is Molly**  
**This is my story**

**In my shoes**  
I'm 21, I've been with the FJYPB for 7yrs. My story today focuses on abuse and my experience of how it was handled.

Sept 2007 - my dad filed for residency 2 months before, holidays from hell. Near-drowning, scalding. My dad was completely incompetent.

Why are the neighbours not helping?

**How could we prove the abuse happened?**  
Emotional abuse - intimidation, are particularly hard to prove.

**Coercive Control, happens little by little..**  
**it was terrifying**

Do I scare you Molly?  
Why does no-one believe me or mum?  
I've got to record this...

**KEY QUESTION 1:** How can one person effectively supervise a person with two children?  
**WHEN A CASE IS CLOSED:** There needs to be follow-up especially in instances of abuse.

**A RESPONSE TO THE HARM PANEL REPORT**  
SIR ANDREW BYRLANDINE, President of the Family Division

So important focus to keep in focus!  
The insights of young people are invaluable (let us encourage thoughts).  
Keep giving us your insights.

**A RESPONSE TO THE HARM PANEL REPORT**  
ALEX CHALK, President of the Family Division

Domestic abuse cases much higher in families going through family court system overall.

**Let's make our own new adventure with you!**  
**Hi everybody**

**A RESPONSE TO THE HARM PANEL REPORT**  
FROM JACKY TOTTO, CEO, CAFASS

What Cafass has to do: to safeguard & protect your interests.

Sometimes we get it wrong - we need to learn from this.

**Let's learn alongside you!**  
Learning & improvement board NEW

**as a child ALWAYS REMEMBER:**  
**Nothing is ever your fault**

**Hi, my name is Katie**  
**This is my story**

**In my shoes**  
I've been on the FJYPB for just over 2yrs.

**Currently studying Family Law**  
**MY ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE:** Always follow your heart!

I had a very happy childhood until aged 10 my parents wanted to get divorced.

I wanted to live with Dad - but I still love my mum.

The social workers didn't understand this.

**My mum:** abusive behaviour, narcissistic traits.  
**It was always all about her.**

Why don't you come back "home"?  
You need to live with me.  
I'm sorry.

**MY ADVICE TO PROFESSIONALS:**

- Question everything
- Never assume: find out more
- Every child is unique
- Look for non-verbal clues
- Hearings impact over a lifetime

Summaries of all three Voice of the Child 2020 webinars are available on the [FJYPB webpage](https://www.fjypb.org.uk/).

## »» FEEDBACK

We are very proud to have achieved this year's Voice of the Child via three live webinars. This is not something that we have formally done before and from our experience and the feedback from those who attended we can confidently say we did an excellent job.

Each of the Webinars and workshops were awarded a 5-star rating from our attendees who said they would recommend them to their colleagues and teams.



Attendees were asked which of our presentations they found most useful. Overwhelmingly they responded with the 'In My Shoes' from FJYPB members who shared their personal experiences of domestic abuse.

**We asked attendees to share their views of the webinar they attended; some comments included:**

*"You did a superb job...what an incredibly professional webinar...honestly, it's probably the best one I've ever attended."*

*"These young people are amazing! Getting us thinking and committing to do more and then to be asked to come back and say what we have done!!! Well done to all for arranging such a great conference."*

*"This is the most powerful training I have been to for some time, it can't be easy to put together and share personal experiences but is incredibly valuable. Thank you."*

### FEEDBACK FROM FJYPB MEMBERS:



*"It was a great idea to go ahead with the VOTC via Zoom, I am glad we did it".*



*"I think the VOTC Live Webinars went really well and it was great to be able to see everyone's reactions and comments to the individual presentations".*



*"I think that the In My Shoes had just as much impact via Zoom as they usually do when presented live".*



*"It was a great event and I am so glad we did it, doing three live webinars was hard but they were so good, and our key messages were strong, they came across really well."*





The webinars highlighted the key issues raised by us, the FJYPB, on domestic abuse. The attendees were able to discuss the challenges that children, young people, families and services face when supporting those experiencing domestic abuse.

We asked the attendees: “What is one thing you will do differently following the webinar to take forward the voice of the child in their work you do?” Here are some of their comments:

*“Be more creative in gathering young people's views and be mindful that they may be saying something different to what they actually want - behaviour is key.”*

*“Discuss with other members of my team creative ways to regularly ascertain the views of children and young people in respect to the arrangements for them to sustain meaningful and safe family time with important people.”*

*“Encourage practitioners to consider support for children post proceedings to ensure they feel safe and introduce some level of ongoing review as required. Fantastic event!!!! More of these webinars please, it was fantastic and helped reflection.”*

*“Signpost young people to services where they can access support.”*

*“Make sure our information to children when we meet for the first time is crystal clear about what to do if you live with violence.”*

## KEY MESSAGES FROM OUR SPEAKERS

- Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families at the Department for Education emphasised that children should be regarded as victims of domestic abuse during her video message.
- Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division described the insight and contributions of FJYPB members as ‘invaluable’ in the ongoing improvement of the Family Justice system.
- Alex Chalk MP, Parliamentary Secretary of State for the Ministry of Justice presented by video. He thanked the FJYPB for their input to the Integrated Domestic Abuse Court pilot and assured them that the voice of the child would be recognised within improvements being made to the family courts in England and Wales.
- Cafcass Chief Executive, Jacky Tiotto, also provided a video message to the third webinar. She shared Cafcass response to the harm panel report and what actions they have taken.

## »» LEARNING

The use of Zoom and hosting live webinars was a new task for us. We do believe that we produced an excellent training event. However, we did find some areas we think we needed to improve on:

- Some PowerPoint slides on the pre-recorded videos that were shared via Zoom were unclear on the screens of attendees. We resolved this issue for Webinars 2 and 3 by presenting live.
- Something for us to consider for our future events is to ensure that our presentations and discussions also reflect upon the positive work undertaken by professionals within family courts as well as the changes that are needed.

*“As the information is aimed at professionals working within the private/public law process, it might be nice to put things in perspective at the end and talk about how often we do get things right for children, that is what helps us to keep being enthusiastic about our jobs”*

- We had an overwhelming response to the webinars, however, not all those given a place attended on the day. We are going to amend the process for future webinars to ensure those offered a place confirm their attendance. We will also ensure places are confirmed well in advance.
- We had a few participants in workshops who kept their videos off and did not participate. We will ensure for the next webinars we give clear instructions about our expectations.

## »» NEXT STEPS

- The FJYPB to review and consider our achievements from the webinars and learning for future events at our December board meeting.
- Attendees to be contacted in January and to be asked what one thing they have taken forward as learning from the webinars.
- To produce an online training tool based on the webinars by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- To run the webinars again in February 2021.
- Begin planning for the “Voice of the Child” conference 2021. We will plan to host the event as webinars if the COVID-19 restrictions are still in place.

**Check us out at:** [www.cafacss/fjypb.co.uk](http://www.cafacss/fjypb.co.uk)

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