



Let's Talk Programme

Let's Talk is a 12-week concurrent psycho-educational, trauma informed programme to help women and children recover and heal from abuse and strengthen their relationship. It is a child focused programme.

Main aims

- Children's groups to help children to process their experiences and begin the healing process.
- Mothers' groups to support women to understand how to help and communicate with their children.

Guiding Principles

- To promote a child centred model
- To support women in recognizing their right to live without violence
- To provide opportunities to feel less isolated as mothers
- To provide information about safety planning
- To make personal connections and form a support network
- To validate importance of self-care and self-esteem.

Core issues addressed are:

- Validation of the children's experiences
- Understanding abuse
- Reducing self-blame
- Safety planning
- Managing appropriate and inappropriate expressions of emotion.

Please note that in order to accept a referral the perpetrating adult must not be living in the family home.

Effects of witnessing domestic violence on children

Children react differently to their experiences of domestic violence and their responses to fear may become evident. Many children feel isolated, helpless and sad and believe that violence and fear are a normal part of everyday life.

Emotional problems including:

- Aggression
- Irritability
- Panic
- Regression
- Withdrawal
- Underachievement
- Self-blame and guilt.

Physical symptoms such as:

- Problems sleeping
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Eating disorders
- Excessive crying
- Headaches.

Children's Groups

Children's groups help children begin the healing process by:

- Allowing children to share their experiences with other children
- Exploring ways of expressing their feelings safely
- Looking at coping strategies for the future.
- Express and name their feelings and emotions
- Identify abusive behaviours
- Develop their own personal safety plan
- Discuss and dispel myths regarding violence and gender stereotyping
- Understand who is responsible for violence and abuse
- Identify anger and develop non-violent forms of communication
- Build self esteem

The groups involve a variety of activities including using art, play, drama, discussions and other creative activities to explore the issues affecting children and young people exposed to domestic violence.

Mothers' Groups

Mothers' groups support women in understanding how to help their children recover by:

- Research suggests that therapeutic programmes to help children to recover from the effects of domestic violence are more likely to be successful if mothers get help as well.
- Giving mothers an opportunity to meet other women who have had similar experiences and share their feelings
- Exploring the impact their experiences may have had on their children
- Finding ways to heal from the past and look to the future thereby strengthening the bond between mother and child.
- Mothers are supported to reflect on the impact that witnessing domestic violence has had on their children and to consider and understand how to best support them and talk to them about the abuse that has occurred.

Eligibility Criteria

- Separation has occurred (but child can be having contact with the perpetrator)
- Child has experienced domestic abuse
- Child is impacted by the abuse and can remember it
- Risk assessment - ensure it is safe to attend
- Child assessed as appropriate and willing to attend
- Families need to be safe, secure and settled physically before they can engage in a group
- Attendance must be voluntary and should never be a requirement of a child protection plan.

Feedback

Hounslow Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services. Ofsted Report. November 2009

“There is very good work undertaken in relation to domestic violence. Mothers who have been victims described excellent project work which has enabled them to support their children in very difficult circumstances, while making decisions which significantly impact upon their own lives.”

Children’s feedback indicated that they liked most or all of the activities, particularly the affirmations, storybooks, discussions, the volcano experiment, which teaches them about anger and posters made in the final session.

Mothers’ feedback about what was useful about Let’s Talk Groups

“Meeting with people who have been through the same as I have and been able to share support”

“Talking about problems and how to solve problems”

“It showed me what the children were doing in the next section”

“To understand you are not alone”

“To be able to talk in confidence and not be judged”

“During the groups I found that what happened in the past wasn’t my fault and started believing in me”

Who can attend?

Children can attend the programme even if their mother does not, but children respond best when mothers participate.

The programme is open to children aged 5-14 (in age appropriate groups) depending on availability.

How can I make a referral to the programme?

Please email the completed referral form to Rachel.atterton@hounslow.gov.uk or Tejinder.Aiyadorai@hounslow.gov.uk or DomesticAbuseSupport@hounslow.gov.uk



Programme description

Week	Children and Young People's Group	Mothers' Group
1	Getting to know you. Introductions, establishing guidelines, why we are here, snack, free time, understanding check-in and check-out.	Making Connections Getting to know each other, Breaking the silence Defining the experience of domestic violence
2	Breaking the secret about abuse that happens in families. Check-in, snack, types of hurting and fighting, free time, check out.	Honouring Feelings Moving towards healthy healing
3	Understanding our many feelings. Check in, snack, talk about feelings, iceberg feelings activity, free time, check-out	How being exposed to abuse in the home affects children Understanding and honouring children's experiences.
4	Children's experiences of violence in their families. Check in, snack, Tulip DVD, talk about hurting and fighting in families, drawing activity, free time, check out.	Personal Safety planning for mothers and their children
5	Staying safe when abuse happens. Check-in, snack, playdoh activity, talk about safety, safety plans, free time, check-out	Who is responsible when abuse happens? Understanding responsibility
6	It's not our fault. Check-in, snack, talk about responsibility, hands are not for hurting activity, personal responsibility plans, free time, check-out	Honouring and understanding anger.
7	Anger is important. Check-in, snack, talk about anger, story, volcano activity, free time, checkout	Understanding conflict Guiding children to solve problems in without hurting.
8	Learning about problems. Check-in, snack, talk about problems, story, role play – puppets problem solving framework, free time, check-out	Choosing healthy relationships
9	Staying safe from sexual abuse. Check-in, acknowledge group ending, talk about sexual abuse, story, safety plans, free time, check-out	Grieving the losses Celebrating choices and change
10	Dealing with family changes when abuse has happened. Check-in, snack, talk about family changes, story, drawing, free time, check-out	Staying connected Getting the support I need in my life and in the community
11	Self esteem. Check in, snack, talk about last session, talk about self esteem, story, Best Me I can be activity, free time, check-out	The importance of Self Care
12	Saying Goodbye. Check-in, talk about last session, review group material, collage or poster, free time, closure activity, check-out	Celebrating how far we've come Moving forward