Exposure to abuse: Disrupting the parent-child relationship

- Mother, struggling for her own survival in an abusive relationship, is likely to have insufficient resources for parenting.
- Child’s experience of disrupted parenting causes confusion and anxiety.
- Children who see their mother experiencing domestic abuse are also likely to feel unsafe.

Post-separation: Presenting difficulties

- Mother has lost the respect and authority to manage the parenting task.
- Child presents behavioural difficulties.
- Mother underestimates the impact of the abuse on the child.
- Mother and child struggle to acknowledge or talk to each other about the domestic abuse.
- Mother and child have poor self-esteem.
- Mother-child relationship is damaged.

Domestic Abuse: Recovering Together (DART) programme

- Manualised programme of 10 group sessions for mothers and children aged 7-14 who no longer live with the domestic abuse perpetrator.

Subjects include:
- Understanding domestic abuse
- Challenging emotions
- Making healthy relationships
- Managing loss and embracing change
- Safety planning
- Improving communication between mother and child
- Modelling positive behaviour
- Breaking down the idea of “family secret”
- Helping mothers and children understand how domestic abuse has impacted their relationship
- Helping mothers and children in taking responsibility without blaming self
- Improving mothers’ confidence in parenting
- Helping mothers and children move forward as a family unit
- Equipping mothers and children with skills to continue to develop positive relationships at home

Long-term vision: Breaking the cycle of intergenerational transmission

- Child is less likely to become:
  - a domestic abuse perpetrator.
  - a domestic abuse victim.

Inputs

- Mother has increased confidence and self-esteem, which leads to safer parenting and greater emotional availability.
- Child feels less anxious and is less likely to present difficult behaviour.
- Child has improved self-esteem, enabling them to make better friendships.
- Mother-child relationship is strengthened.

Outcomes

Key findings from evaluation

- After completing DART...
  - Almost two thirds (62%) of mothers with low self-esteem reported substantial improvement.
  - 88% of children who found their mothers struggled to show them affection reported substantially improved relationships.
  - Over half (51%) of children with high/moderate behavioural and emotional difficulties reported substantially lower levels of need.