

Early Years Alliance Domestic Abuse Recovery Service



Breaking the cycle of
domestic abuse in
Lewisham



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Abbreviations

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| EYA | Early Years Alliance |
| LCFC | Lewisham Children and Family Centres |
| LBL | London Borough of Lewisham |
| DA | Domestic Abuse |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |
| CODA | Children Overcoming Domestic Abuse |
| VOICE | Victims of Intimate Coercive Experience |
| MARAC | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference |

“ Lewisham commissioners are proud of the way we have continuously developed and innovated in the delivery of domestic abuse interventions for children. Recognising the impact of abuse on children or even children as victims was not commonplace in 2019. Our partners have continuously risen to challenges like Covid-19 to adapt, innovate and create to respond to the needs of service users. ”

Early Years Alliance is a national educational charity established in 1961. Delivering community-based services for children and families across Lewisham for over 60 years, we have a strong local presence. Our mission is to ensure that all children, regardless of background, are given the best possible start in life. EYA have been commissioned to deliver Children's Centre services in Lewisham since April 2017. This includes a wide range of universal stay and play sessions, parenting courses, programmes and workshops, 1:1 family support and outreach as well as the domestic abuse recovery service.



Introduction

Why do we focus on Domestic Abuse in EYA?

Because we can't afford not to. Lewisham has one of the highest rates of domestic abuse in London and it is clear that if we don't act nothing will change, and it may get worse.

Domestic abuse is still largely a hidden crime and prevalence data is unreliable due to underreporting. Whilst the extent of domestic abuse is difficult to quantify, estimates suggest 1 in 5 children and 1 in 3 women* experience domestic abuse. As there are approximately 75,000 children in Lewisham this would mean up to 15,000 children in the borough are affected.

Our referral records show that consistently around 50% of referrals into LCFC include current or relevant historical domestic abuse. Lewisham Youth Offending Service report that 100% of young women and 63% of young men who reoffend are known to have experienced domestic abuse. Generally, society has been slow to acknowledge the impact on children. The recent Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises, for the first time, children who live in a home where domestic abuse takes place as victims in their own right.

Our focus in EYA is on Recovery, providing an essential community gateway for women and children survivors. Recovery from domestic abuse is a long term process and a fluid one. For children the effects of the abuse can be devastating and last into adulthood, undermining their basic need for safety and security, affecting their development, education outcomes and mental health. Mothers who have experienced domestic abuse face additional challenges alongside the day to day demands of being a parent - dealing with the effects of their own experiences and at the same time supporting their children's recovery.

In order to support children and women's recovery from abuse we offer the following services:

CODA Programmes

Freedom Programme

VOICE Programme

Bespoke DA Family Support

Information, Advice and Workforce Development

Tech Empowerment Workshops for Children & Parents

1 in 5

children experience DA

50%

of our referrals have an element of DA

Services Delivered April 2021 to December 2022

We delivered a comprehensive service to support children and families who have experienced domestic abuse in Lewisham. This included specific recovery programmes together with a bespoke family support service; access to therapeutic interventions for children; and advice, information and workforce development.

Programmes: CODA, Freedom and VOICE

(in groups and 1:1)

34

programmes delivered

456

sessions delivered

75

women attended

144

children impacted

4

tech empowerment workshops

* headline statistics include all funding streams (WWCSC, CADA and the core Children's Centre contract)



Bespoke DA Family Support Service

The Bespoke Family Support service was developed by EYA in response to feedback from adult victims/survivors who said it would help to have additional support along with attending programmes. It aims to help families with the following:

- reduction in isolation
- improvement in professional connectivity via the establishment of a multi-agency response
- increased 'programme readiness'
- reduction of risk within the home and community
- improvement in child and adolescent emotional wellbeing
- validating and believing survivor experience
- helping families access the right support at the right time
- improvement in receiving a timelier service

106

families received DA holistic support

227

children positively impacted

268

holistic family support sessions

17

children received advocacy intervention from Victim Support

11

cases presented to MARAC

“ It felt like a lifeline. I know that sounds dramatic but it felt like someone was throwing me one of those life saver rubber ring things and saying 'you can hold on to that'. I didn't have anything to hold onto before, **I was drowning.**

So I don't feel quite like that anymore, I feel like my chin is above the water and sometimes more of me is above the water. I don't feel like I'm drowning anymore. ”

mother attending CODA programme

School Aged CODA Programme (Children)

CODA is a twelve-week psychoeducational programme for women and children over four, who have experienced domestic abuse. It provides a community based setting for children to share and talk about their experiences so they understand abuse, reduce their self-blame, can plan to keep themselves safe, and learn how to manage their emotions so they can be expressed appropriately.

CODA enables the recovery process and aims to:

- Validate the children's experiences
- Reduce the self-blame that is commonly associated with children experiencing abuse
- Develop a child-appropriate safety plan
- Manage appropriate and inappropriate expressions of emotion
- Enhance the mother-child relationship
- Enable both the mother and child to heal together

There is a separate programme for the children and the mothers, these run concurrently. It can be delivered as both a group programme and 1:1. It is a Canadian group work model adapted for the UK by AVA (Against Violence and Abuse). Feedback from mothers can be seen below.



<https://youtu.be/0-1w2bZpJ2k>

children said attending the programme has:



“ I've never talked with anyone before about my biological father abusing my mother. ”
child attending CODA programme

“ It's a good way of talking and expressing what's happened. ”
child attending CODA programme

“ I could talk about stuff to you that I can't talk about to other people. ”
child attending CODA programme

School Aged CODA Programme (Mothers)

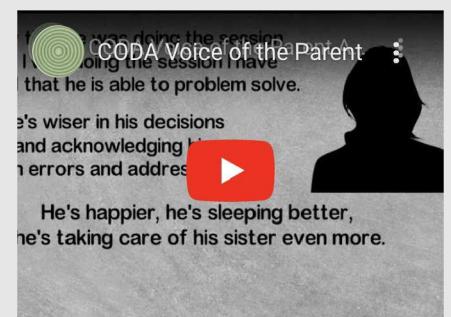
The mothers programme runs concurrently with the children's programme. Many mothers who have experienced domestic abuse have experienced isolation. The CODA Programme provides them with a safe space to process their experiences and have them validated. CODA aims to empower mothers and recognises their expertise and knowledge of their children. The programme dispels the myth that mothers are somewhat responsible for the abuse that has been experienced, and places the responsibility where it rightly lies: with the perpetrator. It enables mothers to see through the eyes of the child, restoring their relationship and bringing about long-term outcomes.

mothers attending the programme said it has:



“ There was a male facilitator in the children's group which was a real sense of balance. Men are not good role models in our family so that connection with a man is really important. ”
mother attending CODA programme

“ There's a sense of calm and peace. We're a team now and I don't think we were before - that's a healing thing and entirely to do with the programme. I have the ability to support my son. ”
mother attending CODA programme



<https://youtu.be/BGpCovCmZPY>

“ If every woman who has been abused and every child who has experienced this can have this group the world would be a different place. ”
mother attending CODA programme

“ She knows her feelings are valid, you can see in her face she knows she is allowed to speak. ”
mother attending CODA programme

“ Before the group he was sounding like his dad and if he can grow up to be a man who is respectful of women, that's life changing. ”
mother attending CODA programme

Pilot CODA Under 4s Programme

CODA for Under 4s has been developed by AVA to complement the CODA programme for older children. The pilot is being delivered by the EYA, with Lewisham being the first locality in the country to deliver this piece of work. The EYA continue to feed into the development and rewriting of the CODA Under 4s Programme.

Following the successful training of facilitators in Lewisham in December 2021, the first pilot programme has been delivered in Lewisham ending December 2022 and the full evaluation will be available soon.

mothers said attending the pilot programme has helped them:

100%

think through
the eyes
of my child

100%

feel more hopeful
about the future with
my child

100%

learn new skills
to interact and
support my child

100%

recommend the
course to other
mothers

“ It helped me to be able to talk to all my kids, especially my oldest daughter. Using all the skills, I learnt to manage contact and ongoing abuse and coercive control from their dad. I would not have had the confidence to support my children so well and use those skills without the programme. ”
mother attending CODA programme

“ It's been hard coming to terms with it, which is weird but I'm processing it now and I also feel a bit empowered. There are things I've done in the last 8 weeks that I wouldn't have done before. ”
mother attending CODA programme

What I have established is that I come from an abusive household. It wasn't just about my ex husband, it hit me that I grew up in an abusive household as well. ”
mother attending CODA programme

4 Tech Empowerment Workshops for Children and Parents

We deliver Tech Empowerment Workshops in partnership with Athena (Refuge) for children and parents who have attended our CODA programmes. The workshops run separately for the children and the parents and can be online or virtually.

The workshops support the long term recovery and safety of the children and their parents, helping them to :

- Recognise how modern technology can be used to jeopardise young people's safety
- Identify different forms of technological abuse affecting young people
- Find out how to stay safe online
- Learn about safety & security settings on popular social media platforms
- Recognise different forms of scam and inappropriate messages and how to deal with them
- Understand the risks of online gaming and how to use consoles and accounts safely

Why are they needed?

Modern technology gives perpetrators ever-growing ways to stalk, isolate and control women and men using the tools of everyday life. For young people, technology is often used by peers, partners, gang-members and family-members to groom, exploit, control and harass them. The workshops aim to empower both children and parents to use technology safely and positively.

“ Really useful, my year 5 daughter just popped up to find out if she can have Tik Tok now and it was great to be able to have an informed conversation with her. ”
mother attending the workshop

“ Thank you for teaching us how to keep our children (and ourselves) safe through the various social media apps. There's a lot that I've learnt here today. ”
mother attending the workshop

'Empowering
children to use
technology safely
and positively'



The VOICE Programme

The VOICE Programme is a ten-week psychoeducational programme for adults addressing domestic abuse, coercive control and the behaviours that create the dynamic of intimate partner relationship abuse. Weaving in the themes of intersectionality, the programme is inclusive of survivors from all communities including men and LBGTQ+. EYA were the first to pilot the VOICE programme in Lewisham and now support other services within the partnership with delivery and sharing of resources. The main aims of the programme are to support victims/survivors through:

- recognising abusive tactics and behaviours
- understanding post-separation abuse and coercive control
- validating participants' experiences of domestic abuse
- reducing social isolation
- understanding trauma responses
- tools for self-regulation and self-care
- insight into intersectionality
- understanding how digital technology can be used to perpetrate domestic abuse
- The programme can be run online or face to face, in groups or one-to-one



mothers said attending the programme has made me feel:



“It’s so empowering, it’s like having guardian angels and feeling positive for the future.”

mother attending VOICE programme

“We learn new language and advocating for ourselves, no longer agreeing with things we don’t want to happen, being more assertive to say no.”

mother attending VOICE programme

“Sometimes it feels like its overflowing and then you have to empty the bucket to make space for happiness so it’s a good thing to deal with these things. Let it out, so we can let the good things in.”

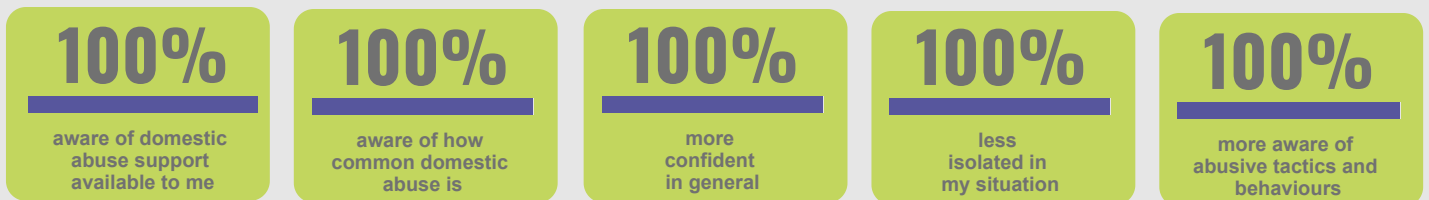
mother attending VOICE programme

Freedom Programme

The Freedom Programme is an eleven-week programme for women who are or have been experiencing domestic abuse. It examines the influence of attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusers and the responses of those who have experienced the abuse. The programme helps women to make sense of, and understand what has happened to them. It supports women to understand how their children are affected by being exposed to this kind of abuse and how their lives are improved when the abuse is removed. The Freedom Programme can be delivered face to face and virtually; in small groups and 1:1.

- to help women understand the beliefs held by abusive men and to recognise which of these beliefs they have shared
- to illustrate the effects of domestic abuse on children
- to assist women to recognise potential future abusers
- to help women gain self-esteem and the confidence to improve the quality of their lives
- to introduce women to other women who share similar experiences

mothers said attending the programme has made me:



“It’s helped me with my kids. They’re calmer, they’re not walking on eggshells. I understand them more. It’s made me realise why they do things. I comfort him I give him a cuddle and tell him it will be alright, it makes a big difference to him.”

mother attending Freedom Programme

“It made me more powerful, more control in my life. It made me stronger as well – it’s my right to say no, I don’t have to stay in a relationship with him anymore if I don’t like it.”

mother attending Freedom Programme

“to be given the tools to identify this in the future and not make the same mistakes and to protect yourself and keep your children safe.”

mother attending Freedom Programme

“A massive eye opener. You start to recognise the patterns of the abuse, even the very subtle ways they use to manipulate you. I can see it now.”

mother attending Freedom Programme

Freedom Programme 2
 find out more by visiting our website

www.lewishamc

<https://youtu.be/QFf1CUbl1uU3>

Information, Advice and Workforce Development

Domestic Abuse Digital and Community Reach

Our experience of supporting families through COVID-19 accelerated the development of our online and digital offer ensuring families and professionals can access the services, support and information they need online as well as face to face. We digitalised the CODA programme in partnership with AVA and developed essential top up training for online delivery. This ensures programme standardisation and enables facilitators to provide a safe, confidential and private space for women and children to access the online activities and process their experiences. Our online presence is an essential part of our domestic abuse recovery service. The domestic abuse page on LCFC website provides information on all the programmes we offer in Lewisham. It contains a wealth of up to date information on local and national services, that can support people experiencing domestic abuse. We refresh the information regularly to ensure information is relevant, useful and responsive to the needs of families and professionals.

We also offer a password protected domestic abuse portal for professionals. Here they can access additional information from the professionals' perspective including detailed information on programmes and services. From the portal they can also book onto the domestic abuse advisory hub sessions delivered by Lewisham, which are led and coordinated by EYA to facilitate case reflection hosted by a multi-agency panel of experts. Our digital reach also expands to our blogs and social media posts. Since April 2021 our reach has expanded and shows the need for families and professionals to have online access to information and support.



DA Information Poster

Do you need help to keep you and your family safe?
Any one of us can find ourselves needing support. If you need advice all of these organisations are completely confidential, non-judgmental and can help you make some decisions or changes to keep safe.

We have developed a poster detailing local and national domestic abuse services to raise the visibility of the range of services available. There is a version of the poster for service users and one for professionals. It has been translated into a range of community languages and distributed widely for agencies locally and nationally to display on their socials and virtual/physical workspaces.



<https://rb.gy/ivyvsz4> Download

Workforce Development and Outreach

We convene regular programme facilitator meetings to support our multi agency delivery team. We work with partners across Lewisham to raise visibility of our service; outline local and national therapeutic support for children who have experienced domestic abuse; increase knowledge about the impact that experiencing domestic abuse can have on children's development, along with the signs and symptoms of trauma. Partners we have worked with include:

- MASH
- Family Thrive
- Sir Francis Drake Primary School
- Gordonbrock Primary School
- Ashmead Primary School
- School Health Safeguarding Nurse Team
- Safeguarding and Vulnerable Child Team
- Kaleidoscope
- Tidemill Primary School
- Prendergast Vale Primary School
- Torridon Primary School

Future developments include a domestic abuse podcast series launching early 2023, an e-learning training programme and bitesize videos on specific themes and topics that relate to domestic abuse.

Family Hubs and Start for Life

We are well placed to support the emerging Family Hubs and Start for Life programme as our domestic abuse recovery service provides a crucial community gateway for both families affected by domestic abuse and frontline organisations they come into contact with. This initiative acknowledges the impact of intergenerational trauma caused by domestic abuse and the need to provide specific support, information and education during pregnancy and beyond to mitigate this.

We already offer online access to local and national support services, through our DA Website, DA Portal and Poster which all include awareness-raising information about local services and the 24/7 domestic abuse helpline. The poster is distributed in public spaces around the borough, including toilets. Our support and training offer to the workforce includes resources for the whole family, and self-care for all those who work with cases of domestic abuse, and this offer can be expanded further to meet the Family Hubs workforce development specifications.

How our offer aligns with the Lewisham Domestic Abuse and VAWG Strategy 2021 - 2026



EYA are active and committed to a strong DA and VAWG partnership in Lewisham. We recognise that the causes and effects of domestic abuse are complex and multifaceted, and can only be tackled through supporting and being part of a multi-agency response and working alongside the community. We bring an essential community link to universal services in Lewisham. We ensure help is integrated, visible and accessible within the community; whilst providing a unique recovery offer for children that is rooted in a community-based programme and using multi-agency personnel as co-facilitators.

EYA provide a range of training, awareness raising, information and support for professionals across the borough.

We have trained and continue to support facilitators from agencies across Lewisham to deliver our CODA, Freedom and VOICE programmes. Our Network Meetings - or Communities of Practice - support this multi-agency delivery model and are attended by a range of different partner agencies. These include Athena, Children's Social Care, Family Thrive, Health Visiting, Midwifery, Family Nurse Partnership, Met Police, Youth Offending Service, Education, Young Carers and Housing, with 65 professionals attending. We also provide advisory support to agencies such as Family Thrive and Midwifery, convene and attend TAF Meetings, Professionals' Meetings and feed regularly into the MARAC.

65

professionals
attended
Network
meetings

