FAMILY DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT ADVISORS

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE

Together for Families

First Light

WHO WE ARE

About First Light

Every year, thousands of family members, friends, colleagues and children are impacted by sexual violence and domestic abuse.

First Light represents the strength, courage, and resilience of anyone impacted by abuse, the dedication of all our team members, and every unheard voice.

We stand proudly as an independent voice, where everyone will be believed, heard, and supported, no matter their gender, age, or ethnicity.

Because everyone who has experienced abuse deserves to be heard.

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Family DASA Project

Pilot DASA's Jan 2022

- The Supporting Families programmed funded three Family DASA's who worked directly form the FAST teams and were employed by First Light
- Tailored support to the individual needs of the adult experiencing DA
- Supporting social workers with assessments to identify and respond to risk
- Providing advice and guidance to families
- Acting as a single point of contact and pathway for ongoing support to domestic abuse services for the FAS teams.

- The project then started with 9 Family DASA's across Cornwall

SUPPORT WE OFFER

- Provide direct work with families, contributing to Child in Need/Family help assessments and child plans where there is domestic abuse, including advice, information, and advocacy to all genders experiencing domestic abuse
- Focused relationship building with families impacted by DA, to empower and support change and improve outcomes for children impacted by DA
- Work in partnership with children's social care staff to ensure that children and young people are supported to have a voice in families where they impacted by domestic abuse
- Provide a single point of contact to practitioners in the FAS teams for domestic abuse, undertaking risk assessments and referral pathways to Safer Cornwall Domestic Abuse Services
- Identify and deliver effective interventions to increase safety and reduce risk, and, where required develop a package of support with other organizations.
- To support increased knowledge, skills and confidence of social work staff working with Children and Families impacted by domestic abuse and provide advice and guidance to social care teams

The FDASA team provides a person centred, trauma informed support service for families who are currently experiencing risk domestic abuse.

The role of the Family DASA is to work with Families effected by domestic abuse, with a focus on improving the lives of children.

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THE DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT (2021)

Domestic Abuse Act 2021-

Recognition of Children as Victims

Under Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a child is officially recognized as a victim of domestic abuse if:

- They see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse, and
- They are related to the perpetrator or the victim.

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Why Embed Domestic Abuse Specialists in Children's Social Care?

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Key Lesson 1:

Early Identification Changes Outcomes

One of the clearest lessons is that early identification significantly reduces escalation.

- Routine enquiry should be standard practice—not only when physical injury is visible.
- Family DASA's help teams interpret risk assessment tools and recognise non-physical abuse, including:
- Coercive control
- Financial abuse
- Post-separation abuse

When abuse is identified early, safety plans are proactive rather than reactive

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Key Lesson 2:

Trust Is Central

Embedding Family DASA's helps counter fear. Survivors are more likely to disclose fully when they feel heard, not judged.

Transparency is critical:

- Be clear about thresholds
- Be clear about information sharing
- Be clear about purpose

Trust leads to better information. Better information leads to better safeguarding decisions.

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Key Lesson 3:

Multi-Agency Working Improves Risk Management

Domestic abuse cases rarely sit neatly within one service. Effective embedded Family DASA model show:

- Improved information sharing
- Reduced minimisation of risk
- Clearer action planning
- Upskilling

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Key Lesson 4:

Impact on Children

A key learning point is that children require direct consideration—not only as ‘secondary victims.’ Effective practice includes:

- Age-appropriate safety planning
- Access to therapeutic support
- Stability in housing and schooling

Where specialist advocacy is embedded, we see improved emotional stability in children and reduced repeat safeguarding interventions

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Barriers & Solutions

Good Integration	Poor Integration
Shared expertise	Statutory dominance
Focus on the abusive person	Focus on survivor behaviour
Clear roles	Role confusion
Trust with survivors	Survivors disengage
Joint decision making	Token involvement of charities

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Case Study:

Sarah is a mother of five and is currently expecting her sixth child. She has been known to services since 2019, including the Health IDVA, although engagement during that period was limited.

Sarah has experienced multiple abusive relationships, many of which her children have witnessed. She disclosed that one former partner would call the children into the room to watch her being degraded, asking them, *"Do you want to watch mum die?"*

Sarah later began a relationship with Daniel, and the relationship progressed quickly, resulting in a pregnancy. Daniel became extremely controlling and abusive. Last year, he kicked and strangled Sarah, causing her to miscarry. This incident triggered a referral to the Health IDVA. Sarah disclosed the abuse to her social worker, provided a police statement, and Daniel was placed on police bail. However, at that time, she did not engage with specialist domestic abuse support.

With no further police action taken, Daniel gradually returned to Sarah's life. She became pregnant again, but his abusive behaviour continued. Following another assault, Sarah asked him to leave. She expressed significant concern for her own safety and that of her children and reported her fears to the social worker.

This is where the Family DASA became involved…

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Key points to take away

To conclude:

Specialist Family DASA involvement strengthens safeguarding.

Early identification prevents escalation.

Trust improves disclosure and engagement.
Partnership working reduces risk.

And most importantly—children benefit when adult survivors are supported safely and effectively.

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Feedback and successes:

''Thank you for all your support, if it wasn't for you God knows where we would be''

'' There is such value of having Family DASA's in our team, not only can we respond to incidents and families very quickly but we can arrange for joint visits often on the same day, this means we can start the whole package of support together almost immediately. As Social Workers we know that people often don't want us involved and don't like us knocking on their door but when we can go in with a Family DASA we're offering something different to them, they feel heard. This has improved our relationships and engagement with families. Social Worker- Truro FAST

''The Family DASA goes above and beyond with her support of our families. She always responds to their need, She is resourceful and holds excellent knowledge of her subject. I cannot give enough praise for a job so well done. She is such an asset to our team.''

''I want to thank you as you have been so supportive and amazing. especially with court, you really helped me carry on through the process when I felt like giving up''

''I cannot thank you enough for what you have done and continue to do for my daughter & granddaughter.''

''Thanks so much for all your help and support.

Knowing you were only a phone call or text away. To help when you could.

Also to sort out therapy for S too. Was just less stress for me to go through at such a hard time in our lives. ''

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ANY QUESTIONS?

First Light
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Support for All

www.firstlight.org.uk

First Light is the operating name of First Light South West Ltd
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ARMED FORCES COVENANT

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