 The impact of…

Everyone is different and will respond differently to difficult experiences. Research\* shows us though that children and young people who experience too much arguing, aggression, violence and controlling behaviours in the home struggle with the following if they do not have enough protections in their lives:

Body

* getting hit or hurt by adults
* feeling sick, stomach-aches, headaches and other pains
* bed-wetting, nightmares or difficulty sleeping
* so stressed that it’s getting in the way of normal brain and body development

Thoughts & Feelings

* scared and worried
* unhappy, sad, low, flat
* grumpy and angry
* going over difficult things at home in my mind again and again
* thinking about people in my family members being sad or hurt
* finding it hard to concentrate and focus
* thinking about hurting myself or others
* find it difficult to understand others’ feelings (empathy)
* fear of being alone struggling to learn

Behaviours & Relationships

* I find it difficult to connect to mum and/or dad (attachment - which effects my social, physical, emotional and intellectual development)
* I need to look for people’s attention
* it’s not easy to relate to people
* I might seem ‘shut-down’ or locked away in my own world
* I use violence to solve problems
* I can have tantrums
* I sometimes act younger than I am
* I am copying behaviours I’ve seen at the home
* When adults are fighting I try to get involved to stop it
* When I feel scared I’m quite jumpy
* I’m avoiding school
* I have difficulty making good friends
* I take too many risks
* I’m getting into trouble too often at home or in my community
* I might start (or already have started) using alcohol or drugs
* I have problems with eating
* I’m not practicing safe sex and am at risk of sexual infections or teenage pregnancy
* I prefer to keep to myself and be on my own
* I am doing things to harm myself
* I choose partners who don’t treat me well, and/or who I might not treat well – I’m repeating a cycle

It’s important to remember that when children face too much arguing, violence, aggresion and controlling behaviours in the home on top of other difficulties (like parents struggling with their thoughts and feelings, parents using drugs or alcohol inappropriately, criminal behaviours in the family, poverty) the impact can be much greater.

\* Research from: ‘Preventing child abuse and neglect: Domestic Abuse: Signs – Symptoms – Effects’ (NSPCC); ‘Domestic Violence and Abuse – the impact on children and adolescents’ (Royal College of Psychiatrists); ‘Behind Closed Doors: the impact of domestic abuse on children’ (UNICEF).