



Liverpool
City Council

ADOLESCENT TO PARENT

VIOLENCE & ABUSE

A resource booklet for parents and carers

We wish to acknowledge the Inner South Community Health Service 341 Coventry St, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205 for allowing us to adapt their publication for use in Liverpool.



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Centre 56

Liverpool City Council Parenting Coordinator

Liverpool City Safe Team

Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service (LDAS)

Liverpool Domestic Abuse Strategy Group

Liverpool IDVA Service

Liverpool YMCA

Merseyside Domestic Violence Service (MDVS)

NSPCC

PSS UK

RASA Merseyside

Contents

1.	Adolescent violence & abuse to parents	5
2.	Types of violence & abuse	7
3.	Knowing if you have experienced abuse?	9
4.	What you may be feeling	10
5.	Possible explanations	14
6.	Things to remember about abusive behaviour	16
7.	Signs of abusive or violent behaviours	18
8.	How can friends or relatives help?	23
9.	Regaining control and moving forward	25
10.	Useful services to contact	26
11.	Emergency numbers	30

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent violence & abuse to parents is a serious issue. Anecdotal evidence suggests it is increasing.

Adolescent violence & abuse can be directed against mothers, fathers, step- parents, adopted parents, siblings, grandparents and carers foster carers. There may be no apparent reason why it happens, but we know that contributing factors may include:

Children witnessing or experiencing family violence or other forms of abuse and repeating abuse

patterns towards others, separation and divorce in times of conflict, traumatic or stressful situations, parenting styles, mental health or drug and alcohol issues and other contributing factors.

This booklet provides a resource for parents who experience abuse or violence from their adolescents. We hope it will help to increase the safety and wellbeing of parents and carers, and provide strategies to promote caring, responsible and non-abusive behaviour.



1. ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE & ABUSE TO PARENTS

Adolescence is the time between childhood and adulthood. It is normal during this time for adolescents to challenge parents and authority as they head towards an independent life.

Parents struggling with their adolescents' abuse are often confused when confronted. It can be hard to find ways to keep everyone safe including the adolescent whose behaviour is posing the risk to positive family relationships and safety. It can be difficult to know how to make things better.

- Although most people know about domestic abuse and its effects, less attention is given to adolescent abuse and its impact on the family. This makes it very hard for parents to recognise their adolescents' behaviour as abuse and to seek out services that can support them.
- Domestic abuse from adolescents is not a normal part of growing up. Most adolescents will 'act out' in some way at some time during their adolescence. When this behaviour is controlling, threatening, or intimidating, it stops being what is considered 'normal' adolescent behaviour.
- Adolescent abuse is a complex issue, particularly when adolescents have experienced a difficult life event/s such as domestic abuse, have suffered grief or loss, or have an illness or disability. Whilst these issues mean adolescents and their families need support, it does not mean that adolescent abuse should be excused

You are not alone!

- 77% of all parent victims were female
- 87% of all reported incidents involved male adolescents
- 66% of cases involved son to mother
- (APV key findings for Youth Justice Service, September 2013)
- Adolescent abuse is not just against parents. Many adolescents are also abusive to their siblings.
- Adolescent abuse exists across all sections of society irrespective of gender, race, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class, or educational level.

2. TYPES OF VIOLENCE & ABUSE

Violence and abuse is not the same as anger. Anger is an emotion; violence and abuse is about control and power.

Adolescent abuse is any behaviour used by an adolescent in the family to control, dominate, threaten or coerce a parent or sibling. It can include any of the following:

Emotional, Psychological and Verbal

- verbal abuse, yelling, screaming, swearing, 'put downs' and humiliation
- verbal intimidation
- whispering campaigns; for example malicious rumours being spread about a parent
- emotional and psychological intimidation
- playing mind games
- making threats to hurt or kill themselves or run away, in order to get their own way or to control you and the family.
- social media threats
- e-violence
- controlling access to other family members/friends/professionals
- controlling/not allowing parent access to their own medication

Financial

- demanding money or things you cannot afford
- stealing money or possessions from you, your family or friends
- incurring debts that you are responsible for.

Physical

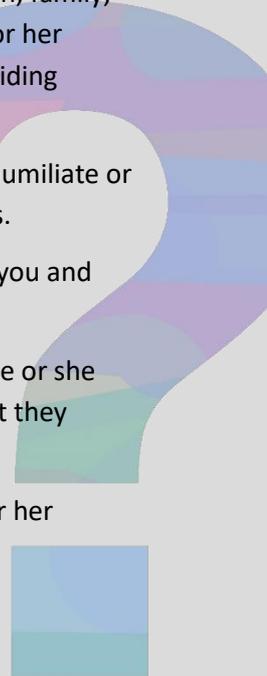
- spitting, shoving, hitting, kicking
- throwing things, breaking things and punching holes in walls or doors
- bullying or physical violence to siblings
- cruelty to pets
- any action or behaviour that threatens a person's sense of well-being and safety

3. KNOWING IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED ABUSE?

Listen to your own gut instinct. You know when things are not right so go with your own feelings and thoughts.

You may have experienced adolescent abuse if:

- you feel afraid of upsetting your adolescent and you change your behaviour to avoid it.
- you are 'walking on eggshells' trying to predict your adolescent's wants and needs.
- your adolescent pushes, hits, punches or hurts you or his or her siblings, throws things or damages your possessions or those of other family members.
- your adolescent threatens to hurt you, themselves or others (such as children, family, friends, pets) if you do not meet his or her demands, this can often include providing money to purchase drugs/alcohol.
- your adolescent ridicules or tries to humiliate or embarrass you, your family or friends.
- your adolescent constantly criticises you and puts you down.
- your adolescent threatens you that he or she will leave home if you do not do what they want.
- your adolescent blames you for his or her behaviour



4. WHAT YOU MAY BE FEELING

Denial

Parents can understandably find it difficult to accept that their child is being abusive towards them. As a parent, you may try and make sense of this by thinking about how your child is acting towards you is perhaps a normal part of growing up. Or that this behaviour may be due to some of the challenges they experience perhaps associated to their school life, or friendships or another area of their lives.

You may feel:

- totally alone and isolated.
- unsupported and solely responsible for your situation.
- you have 'hit the wall' and that nothing can help.
- hopeless and helpless because you cannot bring the situation under control.
- totally unsupported by a lack of services or information available to help you.
- despair at not having a harmonious family life.
- you cannot talk or think about anything else but your adolescent.
- your adolescent's behaviour seems to be a replica of your abusive partner's (current or former) abuse towards you.
- That you could have done more as a parent bringing your child up.

You may ask yourself questions such as;

- You did not protect them from seeing abuse around them?
- There were issues in the family that impacted upon them?

Fear

These are all normal reflections to have at this time however you need to remember that what is happening is not acceptable and that there is support for you and your child

You may feel:

- like you are living in fear, both in the present and of what might happen in future when your son or daughter is bigger and stronger than you, the abusive behaviour may increase.
- 'unsafe' in your own home.
- Shame and humiliation

- like a failure and experience a great sense of shame/embarrassment.
- confused about where you went wrong and question your parenting abilities.
- you are entirely responsible for your child's abusive behaviour.
- you are to blame and you are a 'bad' parent.
- you may react in a way that may harm your child, perhaps as a way of trying to protect yourself, this may then affect your relationship and the potential implications of this.
- worried that your family and friends may not understand what you are experiencing.
- anxiety that other children in the home are witnessing what is happening, and that they repeat the behaviour towards you.
- worried about what professionals/children services may think should they become involved with your family.

Loss

You may feel:

- heartbroken and a huge sense of loss because the child you used to know, love and enjoy, seems to be driving a wedge in the relationship.
- grief if your adolescent has had to leave home.
- the loss of friends and family who do not want or know how to assist you.
- worried the young person will leave home and sever the relationship entirely.

Relationship stress

- Adolescent abuse often leads to arguments between adults in the family, as to how the behaviour should be dealt with. You may have different ideas on what helps or on what

caused the abuse. This can place enormous stress on family and partner relationships.

- You may not feel it is helpful when people give you solutions, as they do not know what you are going through.
- other parent who may take your adolescent's side (particularly if you are a sole parent).

Loss of trust

- You may feel unable to trust your adolescent especially when you are not at home to supervise. You may be worried your child may have damaged or stolen property and whether the other siblings are safe. You may find it difficult to leave the home at all.

Sibling concern

- Other children may be affected by their sibling's abuse. Many adolescents who are abusive to their parents are also abusive to their siblings. Siblings may be unsafe because of the abuse.
- You may not have the time or energy to give to other siblings because you are dealing with the abusive adolescent.
- Your adolescent may also use drugs or alcohol or engage in illegal activities. This may mean their siblings are unsafe or at risk of harm.

Health issues

- You may be depressed or anxious and this may impact on your physical and mental health well-being. You may experience insomnia, physical illness and fatigue.

- You may resort to substance use as a way of coping e.g. alcohol, non-prescribed drugs, smoking.

Work issues

- Your worries and anxieties may extend into your workplace where you may find it hard to concentrate.
- You may find that you need to take time off from work to seek support.
- You may experience financial difficulties due to additional costs of repairs to damage caused by the adolescent, giving the adolescent money for alcohol, drugs, clothes etc. or paying for counselling to combat the emotional pressure.
- You may be at risk of losing your home because of debt or complaints about anti-social behaviour, noise or abuse towards people outside the home.

5. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

It may be difficult to understand why your adolescent is being abusive. Some explanations include:

Adolescent issues

Factors which may contribute to an adolescent developing abusive behaviours:

- have an over-developed sense of entitlement
- exposure to negative views of women
- lack respect for family members
- are influenced by their peer group
- misuse alcohol or drugs
- have mental health issues
- are involved in gangs or organised crime
- Neuro diverse conditions
- acquired a brain injury
- radicalisation

- criminal or sexual exploitation
- separation/divorce in family unit
- blended families

Traumatic experiences

Adolescents who witness or experience:

- domestic abuse or abuse to a parent
- have been bullied at school
- have experienced trauma such as war or family violence
- have been abused themselves.
- in the care system

This may still happen even if the adolescent was a baby or young child when the abuse occurred.

Social issues

Adolescents may be influenced by the society and culture in which they live. Some influences may include:

- societal exposure to violence and abuse
- ideas about the role of women and sex role stereotyping
- ideas of sex role stereotyping of men
- availability of pornography.

Parenting

Parenting can be a difficult job and sometimes parents/carers need some extra support. There are lots of reasons why parents may feel they are unable to ask for support including:

- Embarrassment
- Shame
- Lack of confidence

- Scared children may be removed
- Being seen as a bad parent
- May feel judged
- Fearful adolescent may become more abusive through parent/carer asking for help



6. THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

- You are not alone, there is help available to support parents through this experience. It won't go away on its own. Abuse generally worsens over time.
- There are no simple answers.
- You don't have to know why things are happening to enable change to happen. Even a small change may feel like an improvement in the situation.
- The adolescent will not be able to stop their abusive behaviour on their own. With support from others, you can help to facilitate the change.
- All types of abuse are inappropriate and physical abuse and property damage are criminal offences.
- Abuse may not happen all the time. It may occur in cycles or as isolated incidents. Adolescents may apologise after the abuse, giving you a false sense of hope that things may improve. They usually need more help to change.
- Abusive behaviour is the responsibility of the adolescent. The abuse is never an acceptable or healthy way for the adolescent to solve difficulties in their life, their family or community.

- You may not want to report abusive behaviour to the police because you are concerned for your adolescent's future. You may not want to compromise his or her life chances and opportunities. You may feel you may not be believed, you may be blamed or may lose family and friends' support if you bring the adolescent to the attention of the Police or other services.
- Remember that it is better for your adolescent, your family and you if the abuse stops. If nothing else works, reporting it to the police may be the only way to stop the escalation of physical violence, financial control and other forms of abuse.

- Adolescents often blame their parents for provoking them or not giving in to their demands. Remember the person being abusive is always responsible for their behaviour.
- You have probably tried to talk to your adolescent about their behaviour. Give yourself credit for all the things you have tried.
- We all experience stress and anger, from time to time. However, the adolescent may use these feelings to excuse abusive behaviour. It is important to separate your adolescent's feelings from their behaviour. All feelings are acceptable; abuse is not.

7. WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOUR ADOLESCENT IS DISPLAYING SIGNS OF ABUSIVE OR VIOLENT BEHAVIOURS?

If you feel it is safe to do so and will not increase risk to you and your family then the following strategies may be helpful:

It is best to start making changes when you are feeling strong and if possible, supported by others. Firstly, think about what you expect from your adolescent:

- Be clear in your own mind about what behaviour is reasonable & unreasonable. Write this down to remind yourself.
- You may decide that it is reasonable for your adolescent to wash the dishes two nights a week. You may decide that it is unreasonable for your adolescent to swear at you when s/he wants something.
- Use 'I' statements - 'I will be very upset if you are not home when you agreed you would be'.
- Clearly state the expectations to your adolescent - *"I need you to speak respectfully to me if you want me to drive you to your friends. If you swear at me, I will not be taking you" or "I will not tolerate you breaking possessions. In the future your pocket money will be used to replace broken things"*.
- Your adolescent may try and negotiate you down – don't feel bullied into changing your expectations. Stand firm!
- Don't start with too many expectations. Two or three related to stopping their abuse and behaving responsibly is a good start.
- Explain to your adolescent that you love them but will not tolerate being abused.

Secondly, think about what consequences you can put in place to support your adolescent meeting your expectations.

- Consequences must be relevant and important to your adolescent.
- Decide how and when you can use these consequences.
- Explain to your adolescent that if they do not meet your expectations you will put the stated consequences into action.

Some examples of consequences

- Withdrawal of privileges such as internet access, television, iPod or mobile phone use for a certain number of days.
- ‘Grounding’ in general or stopping your adolescent doing something they want to do like staying the night at a friend’s house.

- Cutting back or stopping pocket money or mobile phone use.
- Undertaking a compulsory activity such as extra household chores.

Remember

- It is often difficult to start using a different approach and it might take some time to implement. Your adolescent may rebel against any new approach, so for a time things may become worse before an improvement becomes evident.
- Your words lose all impact if the adolescent does not believe you will follow through. If you have been in the habit of making threats that never happen (or only half happen) then your adolescent knows not to take you seriously.
- Ignore the behaviours you can live with. Choose your battles.

Changing your own behaviour

It is important to think about your own behaviour. You cannot expect your adolescent to change his or her behaviour if your behaviour is inappropriate. It is hard to tell an adolescent not to smoke when a parent does. Similarly, if you swear at your adolescent or use abuse yourself it is highly likely that despite what you say, your adolescent will feel justified to also behave this way.

- Think about how you respond to your adolescent's behaviour – does it make them angrier or calm them down?
- Understand what your adolescent says or does to make you angry – know your own triggers.
- Be quiet and calm – not angry. (This can be hard to do!)
- Don't think about 'winners' and 'losers' – think about building more harmonious family relationships.

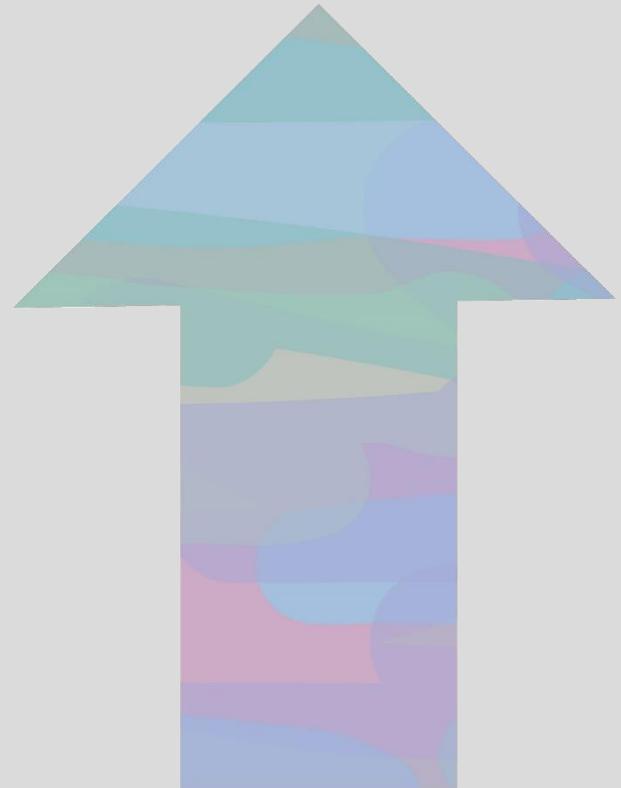
- Always treat your adolescent with respect no matter how angry, disappointed or frustrated you are.
- Try to remain verbally and physically affectionate.
- Recognise when you are stressed. Think about how stress affects how you parent and communicate with your adolescent.

If you or your family members' safety is threatened If you try to make changes and your adolescent's behaviour worsens and you or family members feel unsafe, you need to put safety before using consequences or other strategies. If you are unsafe walk away and leave the home if necessary.

If your adolescent's behaviour escalates it is your right to call the police. Everyone, including parents, has the right to feel safe. Your other children have the right to feel safe too. Calling the police is one of the strongest consequences but it is often one that works. The police will provide a response.

Talk about the abuse with someone you trust, such as a friend, family member or counsellor.

- Use the contact list at the back of this booklet to identify services.
- If you are at any time in fear for your own or another's safety, call the police. Abuse, threats of abuse and assault are crimes that can be reported to the police.
- You may feel that calling the police is totally unacceptable. No parent likes to consider this possibility but the readiness to do so, clearly explained to the adolescent, may indicate you will not tolerate the abuse.
- Develop a safety plan for you and your family should you need it.



Preparing a Safety Plan

Sometimes an adolescent's abuse may mean family members' safety is at risk.

In the event of a crisis, where you may have to leave home in a hurry, it can be useful to have a safety plan in place. Here are a few suggestions for preparing a safety plan.

- Think about where you could go and who could support you if an emergency arose.
- Always carry a list of numbers you would need to call e.g. police, family members, support services.
- Ensure you have access to a phone or mobile.
- Try to keep some money aside so that you can use a taxi, train or bus if needed.
- Keep a spare set of house and car keys in a safe place.
- Ensure other children can use a phone and know emergency numbers.
- Keep notes or a diary with dates and brief details about the abuse. These may be needed in the future if you take protective or legal action.
- It is important to inform yourself about your legal rights and rights of your child so that you are clear about the full range of options available to you, even if you choose not to take legal action.
- Call the services listed at the end of this booklet for more information and to discuss your options.

8. HOW CAN FRIENDS OR RELATIVES HELP?

Emotional Support

If a parent experiencing adolescent abuse tells you about it or you suspect they are experiencing difficulties, there are a number of things you can do to support them. These include:

- Don't be afraid to express your concern to them and offer support.
 - Be there to listen to them and believe in their experience without minimising, blaming or judging it.
 - Listen to, believe and offer practical support to a parent who confides in you about adolescent abuse. Ask: "How can I help you?" or "Are there any steps you can take to increase your safety and the safety of family members?"
- Don't criticise their management or lack of management of the situation and don't excuse the abuse.
 - Be aware that it is a very difficult family situation to be in and reinforce to them that you will be there should they need support.
 - Respect their privacy and keep the information confidential unless they give you permission to tell others or you feel someone is at risk of harm.
 - Encourage parents to care for themselves and to consider their own needs.
 - Stay in regular contact with them to show your ongoing support.
 - Support the parent to be confident to make their own decisions and don't tell them what to do.

Practical Support

Providing someone with practical support help them feel more in control of their situation and better able to make the necessary decisions to start taking control of the family situation.

Practical ways to assist include:

- Encourage them to think about safety planning in the event of a crisis.
- Help the parent find helpful resources or information they may need.
- Accompany them to counsellors or other services.

What NOT to do

If you are supporting a friend or family member experiencing adolescent abuse there are a number of things you should avoid:

- Don't tell them what to do.
- Don't confront the adolescent – this can lead to further complications and may increase family conflict.
- Don't give solutions or lecture to parents, as you do not know what they are going through – 'you are not living through it'.
- Getting involved does not mean you have to solve the situation. If someone turns to you for help and support, it means helping them find their own answers. It is important not to be disappointed if they do not do what you think they should.

9. REGAINING CONTROL AND MOVING FORWARD...

Adolescent abuse to parents is still a taboo subject in the community. Breaking through the isolation and secrecy is the first step in restoring and healing the relationship with your adolescent. You can regain some control over the family situation.

Often the adolescent will blame you or others for their behaviour and refuse to take responsibility for their actions. They see it as 'your' problem and usually refuse counselling or other help.

Adolescents need clear and consistent rules and expectations to feel safe and secure. By holding the adolescent accountable for their actions, you are

teaching them how to behave and respond appropriately.

By caring for yourself and seeking help you can regain your confidence, work on your own behaviour and responses and effect changes in your adolescent's behaviour.

It may be useful to participate in a group programme or individual, couple or family counselling to explore ways to keep you and your family safe, look after yourself and stop the abuse if these are available.

The sooner you take action the sooner things will improve.

10. USEFUL SERVICES TO CONTACT

If you have any concerns about what is happening in your family, the following services will treat you with respect, ensure confidentiality and provide advice and support to talk things through with you.

DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES

Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service – Liverpool Domestic Abuse service main aim is to Protect, Support and Empower women and girls who suffer from domestic abuse, so they can go on to live safe independent lives in the future.

<https://liverpooldomesticabuseservice.org.uk/> -

0151-263-7474 - Freephone: 0800 084 2744 - Services Mobile/Text for hard of hearing: 0756 201 3316.

South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service – We offer **FREE and accessible support** to women who experience domestic violence or abuse:

<https://www.sl-domesticabuseservices.org.uk/> - **0151-494-2222**

Merseyside Domestic Violence Service -

Merseyside Domestic Violence Service are an integrated service, supporting families, children and young people and marginalized groups such as

BAME and LGBT. . <https://www.mdvs.org/> - **07802 722703**

RASA Merseyside - At RASA, we are here for anyone who has experienced rape or sexual abuse or for anyone who has been affected by any form of sexual violence at any time in their lives -

<https://www.rasamerseyside.org/> - **0151-558 1801**

PSS Ruby @ turnaround cover Merseyside (apart from Wirral) offer support to all adult DA victims - Contact number **0151 702 5555 or FREEPHONE 0800 688 9990**. Email ruby@pss.org.uk

Savera UK (honour-based abuse & harmful practice specialist) **0800 107 0726**

Worst Kept Secret Helpline (Merseyside) **0800 028 3398**

National Domestic Violence Helpline – 24hr service offering advice and support to anyone experiencing domestic violence and abuse. - Tel: **0808 2000 247**

Men's Advice Line – Advice and support for male victims of domestic abuse. Tel: **0808 8010327** (helpline) www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Galop – Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic abuse. Tel: **0300 999 5428** (helpline) - <http://www.galop.org.uk/>

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Liverpool Early Help Service - aims to target early help services for the most vulnerable children, young people and families with complex needs who require additional and intensive support, with a focus on delivering better outcomes.

<https://ehd.liverpool.gov.uk>

Family Action – A national charity offering family support for children and carers. Tel: **020 7254 6251** (office enquiries) www.family-action.org.uk

Action for Children -

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/>

Live Online Parental 1-2-1 support -

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/in-your-area/services/parent-talk/>

Family Lives (formerly known as Parentline Plus) –

A national charity offering help and support in all aspects of family life. Tel: **0808 800 2222** (helpline)

Live online chat with staff:

www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/online-chat - Email support: www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/email-support

Family Rights Group – A national charity offering advice to families who need extra support from Children’s Services. Tel: **0808 801 0366** (advice line)
Website - www.frg.org.uk

Relate – Information leaflets and support for parents of teenagers - Tel: **0300 1001234** (helpline)
- www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/parenting-teenagers

Ministry of Justice -

www.justice.gov.uk/courts/mediation

Qwell - Provide an online mental health and wellbeing counselling and support service for adults - **7 days a week, 365 days a year, from 12 noon to 10pm Monday to Friday and 6pm to 10pm at weekends**
<https://www.qwell.io/>



SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

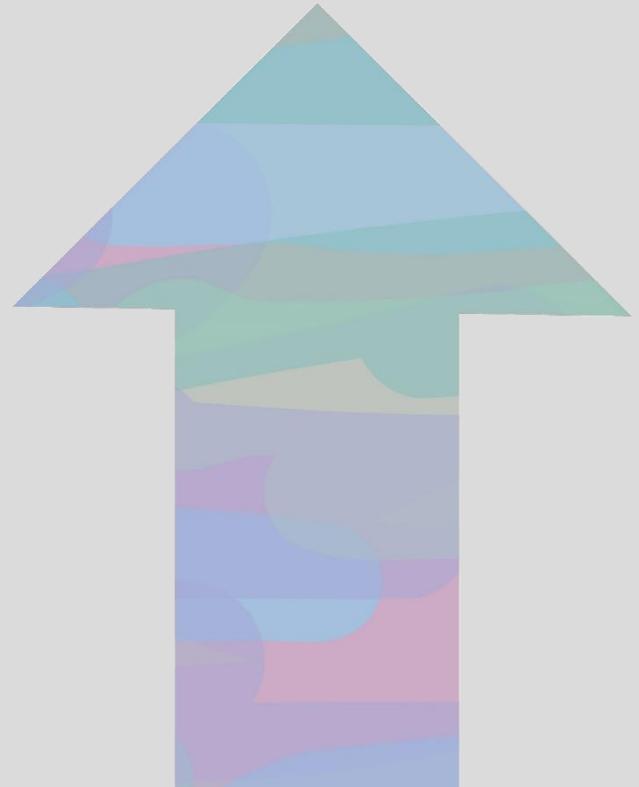
YPAS - Providing mental health and emotional wellbeing services for Liverpool's Children, Young People and Families. – www.ypas.org.uk

Childline – To get help and advice about a wide range of issues. - Tel: **0800 1111**
www.childline.org.uk

Kooth - is your online mental wellbeing community. Access free, safe and anonymous support.
<https://www.kooth.com/>

The Mix – An online guide to life for 16-25 year olds. Advisors available 24hrs a day.
www.themix.org.uk

YoungMinds – YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk



EMERGENCY NUMBERS

24 hours 7 days a week

Merseyside Police – In an emergency ring **999**, for all other enquiries ring **101**

Samaritans Crisis intervention & counselling, support & information for those experiencing feelings of distress or despair –
Tel: **08457 909 090** -
<https://www.samaritans.org/>

Childline Telephone counselling for children & young people - Tel: **0800 1111** -
<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

NSPCC (National Child Protection Helpline) -
Child Protection - Tel: **0808 800 5000** -
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

National Domestic Violence Help Line
National support & refuge referral - Tel: **0808 2000 247**

