

The 'Toxic Trio'

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER & DISCUSS

- Is a parent's drug or alcohol use significantly affecting their parenting capacity?
- Do we take into account all members of the household e.g. fathers, new or ex-partners who are still in the picture?
- Is there evidence of non-engagement/disguised compliance by parents we work with?
- Are there children or families in our care who could be in this situation?
- Can our team recognise the warning signs? Do we know who to consult if unsure?

WHAT TO DO

- know how to identify common signs of abuse and neglect; who to consult with and how to refer – find **resources on** www.manchestersafeguardingboards.co.uk
- focus on the needs of the child or vulnerable adult and act in their best interest at all times
- learning cites lack of information sharing as a key factor:

ASK - LISTEN - SHARE

Complete a team action plan

Parental mental health:

- Mental health conditions, such as depression, can inhibit a parent's ability to respond to their child's emotional cues and offer consistent care
- they can cause a parent to be either 'intrusive & hostile' or 'withdrawn & disengaged'
- adults with mental health problems are statistically more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
 - people who abuse drugs have a markedly increased lifetime occurrence of diagnosable mental health issues.

BACKGROUND

The 'toxic trio' is the combination of **domestic abuse, mental ill health and substance misuse** within a family. The term is used to identify the common features of families where significant harm to children has occurred.

Each of these issues is hard to manage on its own and can have a severe impact on family life, particularly for children & other adults.

However these problems rarely exist in isolation; there is often a complex interaction between them.

WHY IT MATTERS

The toxic trio are indicators of increased risk of harm to children & families and are significant factors in IPV (Interpersonal Violence) & AFV (Adult Family Violence).

The toxic trio features in findings from serious case reviews - analysis showed that in 86% of cases where children were seriously harmed or died one or more 'toxic trio' issue had played a significant part.

The toxic trio represent a significant risk to the safety & wellbeing of children & families. These parental risk factors impact on outcomes for children into adulthood.

INFORMATION

Domestic abuse:

- creates an inconsistent & unpredictable environment for children
 - carers may demonstrate a lack of emotional connection and /or higher levels of aggression
- those living where there is domestic abuse suffer emotional abuse
 - there are established links between domestic abuse, neglect & the physical abuse of children.

Substance misuse:

- it is not inevitable that substance misuse will affect parenting capacity
- however, it is a significant feature in cases where children have been seriously harmed or killed
- alcohol dependence linked with depression is particularly associated with poorer, less consistent parenting
- the impact of alcohol/ substance addiction on the child is often underestimated by professionals.
- always review the impact of work in terms of the outcomes for the child.