

Children exposed to **GENDER VIOLENCE**

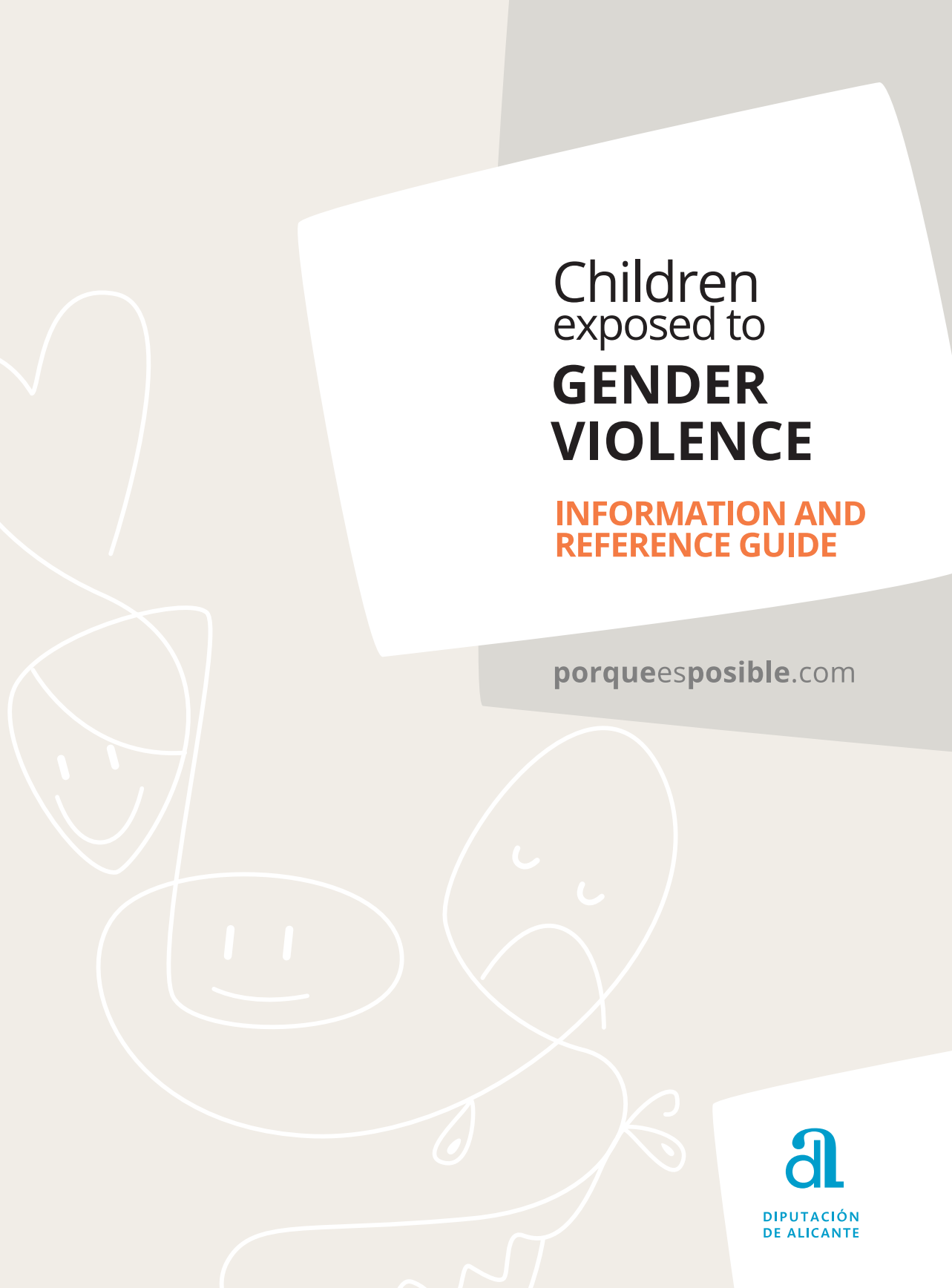
**INFORMATION AND
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**CHILDREN EXPOSED
TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Information and Reference Guide

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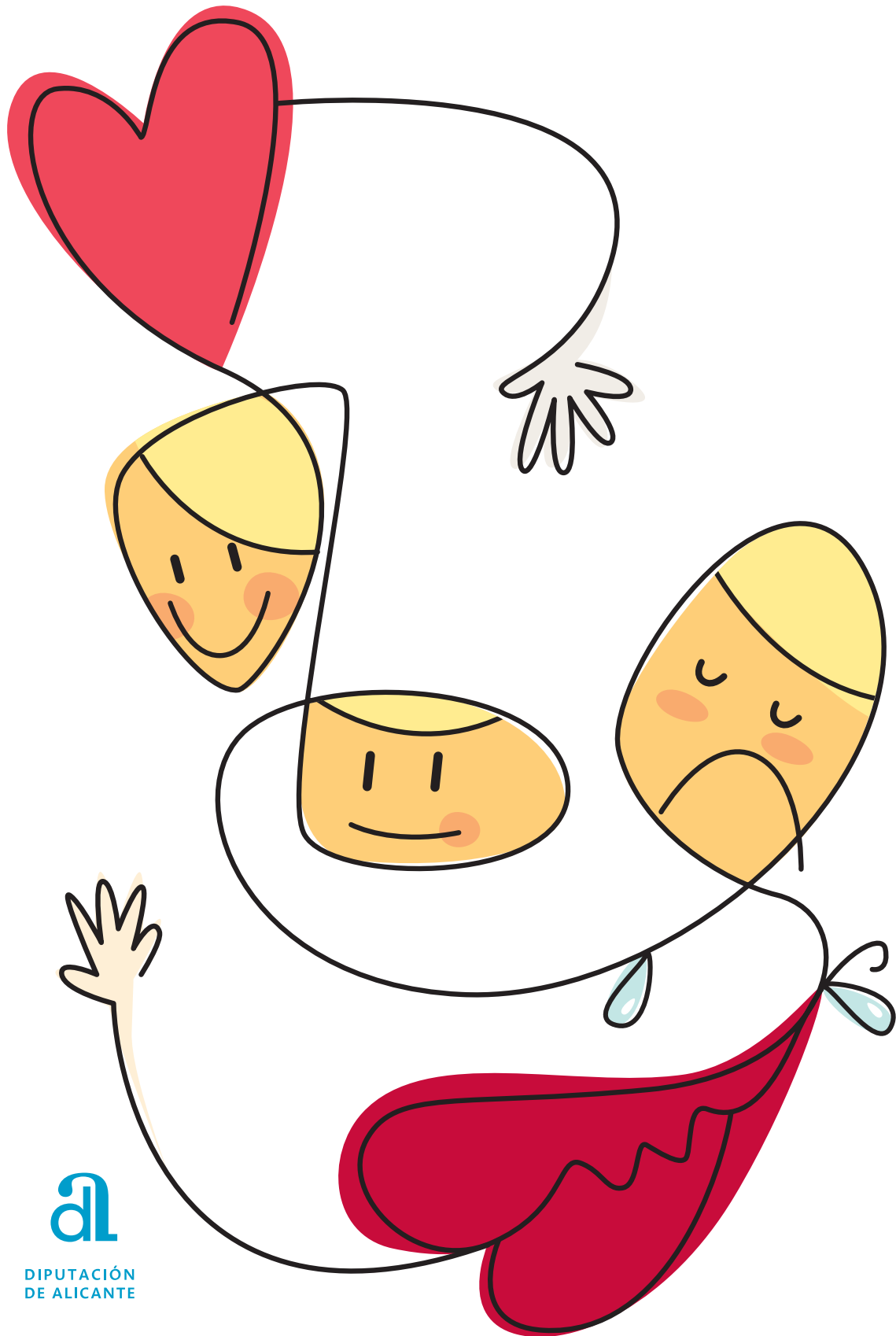
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Introduction

The Guide you're reading now is the successor to an earlier version, the "Information Guide to the Welfare Rights of the Victims of Gender-based Violence", in which we gave basic guidance on how to tackle and prevent situations of abuse. The guide also described the range of rights established by legislation so that victims, after reporting their case, can end the cycle of violence and be confident that the appropriate institutions will ensure they are compensated for the unfair damage inflicted on them.

After several years travelling around our province, visiting most of its towns and villages, we have seen for ourselves how, in the course of the many information sessions held¹, the problems experienced by children under 18 exposed to situations where violence is an everyday occurrence was one of the biggest and most urgent issues being raised for discussion by the many women – and men – who spoke out against this terrible scourge in our society. They all called for more information and better welfare provision in the fight to achieve a position of zero tolerance of this kind of behaviour.

In this new Information and Reference Guide, we set out to address one of the most complex and, at times, hidden reality of gender-based violence, which occurs when young children are exposed to violence and abuse as part of family life.

Often, when we talk about children's issues, we like to repeat the famous phrase that says: "we don't inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children". Maybe it was originally spoken in a different sense, but we like to interpret it beyond its literal meaning: we should not only be handing over the physical world in perfect condition to our children so they can enjoy it as much as we have, but we should also be setting up a sufficiently effective system for protecting it for them. We should also be finding ways of handing over that protective system by providing our children with a good education, so they understand how it works, see its full value and pass it on to their own offspring.

It's not just the physical world that we should be leaving intact for our children, we must also make sure we leave the system of basic human rights in a perfect state of health. To do this we must put a series of protective measures and well-defined concepts in place so everyone knows exactly at what point their rights end and others' rights begin, especially as far as children's rights are concerned.

It's a fact that gender-based violence does not only have a direct impact on the woman at the receiving end of it. If there are young children living in the family home, they will be direct and unwitting witnesses to that regime of abuse. This will have an effect on the way they see violence as their system of beliefs and values develops and will affect the early stages of their character-building process. It is highly likely that, although at first they might seem unaffected because the violence is not directed at them personally, they may eventually become part of that everyday climate of violence, either as aggressors or as victims, if the right trigger factors are in place.

This is why, before clarifying how this kind of violence affects children and young people exposed to it at home, it is vital that we begin by defining exactly what is meant by gender-based violence, in other words, what kind of violence we're talking about.

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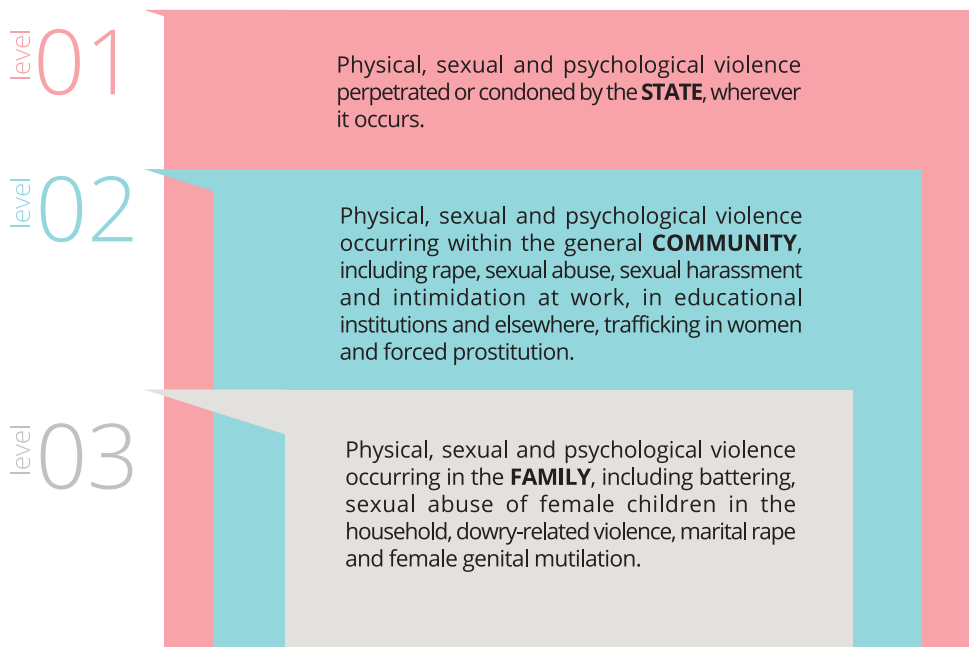
01

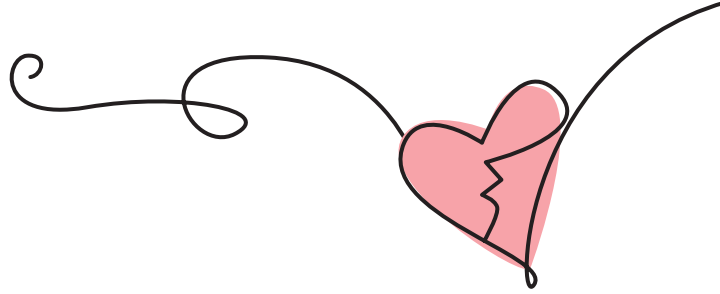
What we're talking about...

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as ***"any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life"***.

This means that it covers **three levels or concentric areas of action, which you can see in the diagram below:**

1993 INSTRUMENTAL DEFINITION OF GENDER VIOLENCE (UNITED NATIONS)





This instrumental definition encompasses both the violence suffered by women in the home or in private and violence inflicted and maintained by the social environment or community plus any other type of violence either perpetrated or condoned by the State.

In terms of our own laws, the approval of *Law 11/2004 on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender-based Violence* (commonly known in Spain as the “*Ley Integral*”) marked a turning point in the attitude of lawmakers to this extremely serious social problem.

This piece of legislation emphasises that gender-based violence is the most glaring **symbol of the inequality between men and women** that still persists in today's society. Gender-based violence is, therefore, a type of **structural violence aimed against women just because they are women**. They are viewed by their aggressors as people lacking any decision-making ability or personal independence, whose lives should revolve around the authority that men have traditionally exercised

over women. The aggressor refuses to contemplate any change in this flaky and outdated system of values and beliefs, filled with irrational notions that go against the most basic rules of real and effective democracy between men and women – between people who should be sharing and respecting each other as members of a society based on fairness and equality. However, Law 11/2004 focuses on violence inflicted against women by the person who is or was their spouse or partner, even if they are not living together. Article 1 defines such violence as “*discrimination, inequality and force exercised by men over women, when such acts are perpetrated by their current or previous spouses or non-spousal partners linked to them by similar affective relationships, even in the absence of cohabitation*”.

So, gender-based violence encompasses any act of physical and psychological violence, including attacks on sexual freedom, threats, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of freedom, provided that such acts are perpetrated by spouses or partners², not by any other person with whom there is not and never has been an affective and emotional bond.

Therefore, when producing this Guide, we have taken these premises as our starting-point and core idea for tackling the toxic exposure of children to violence against women. Our approach focuses on the violence that occurs in the family home or in the privacy of the intimate relationship between a couple and that has a damaging effect on the children involved³.

2// That is, when there is or has been an actual emotional bond between them.

3// This is because this type of violence is the most widespread inflicted on women across the world, according to the UN.

02

Inter-generational transmission of gender violence

Children who experience gender-based violence at home are victims of violence themselves, not just because they experience the effects in their everyday lives, but also because their development is affected by having spent their childhood and formative years in an environment of male chauvinism and inequality, where the norm was to see their mother subjected to a man's violent behaviour.

Having internalised these behavioural patterns and gender stereotypes can result in them reproducing that situation and becoming links in a new chain of violence when they reach adulthood.

To prevent these behaviours from being (re)produced, it is vital to break the chain of inter-generational transmission of gender-based violence



LEARNING NOT TO TOLERATE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

A VIOLENT MAN feels superior to a woman, by the mere fact of being a man, and he will defend the irrational idea that, as a man, his role in society is different and more important than a woman's. This contempt for everything female shows a complete lack of respect for an individual's dignity and equality, a right that democratic society demands for each and every one of us, regardless of whether we are male or female.

An EGALITARIAN MAN will not tolerate any kind of inequality for reasons of gender between men and women, either in private or public life. He will always support fair demands for putting a more balanced legal and social framework in place between men and women. He sees himself as someone who is committed to sharing responsibility for domestic chores and for looking after the children and elderly members in his family. This attitude makes him more affectionate, emotionally intelligent and assertive with victims of male violence.

The belief that MY HUSBAND ABUSES ME, but HE IS A GOOD FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN is the direct consequence of the woman's attempt to explain away a man's abusive behaviour (known as cognitive dissonance) and of the affective and emotional dependence suffered by victims of gender-based violence. What's more, this attitude is deeply counterproductive for the psychological development of the children involved.

Just like all adolescents think they have the right to be respected by their classmates and friends and not to be subjected to insults and threats, they should equally defend the idea that their mothers also have that same right, which must be respected by their husbands, in other words, the teenagers' own fathers.

03

The condition of victim and exposed child: the warning signs

“When young children are living in the same home where violence occurs, or they are bound by a regime of visits with an abusive father”

REMEMBER



CHILDREN EXPOSED TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ARE MORE PSYCHOLOGICALLY VULNERABLE BECAUSE THEY HAVE FEWER RESOURCES TO DEAL WITH THIS KIND OF SITUATION EFFECTIVELY.

IN THIS CASE



THEY WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP CERTAIN CLINICAL OR ADAPTIVE PATHOLOGIES THAN OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE FROM STABLE FAMILY BACKGROUNDS.



One indicator to consider in cases where there are reasonable suspicions that living with an abusive parent is having a detrimental effect on young children is if they **do not want to go with the father**. The children may say they are afraid or display anxiety before the father arrives or prior to being taken to him, which may be directly linked to their experience of abuse when both parents were living under the same roof. Alternatively, the children may be experiencing some kind of malicious questioning by the father about their mother or about her life after the separation. They may even be suffering

abuse themselves or not being looked after properly and experiencing neglect when with their father.

Sometimes children are unable to put their fears and worries into words when the time comes for them to be with their father, either because they have been threatened if they speak out or because they think that if they keep quiet, they are protecting their mother. In these cases, the symptoms of their anguish are frequently displayed as some kind of setback in their development:

- 01 >> They cry when they are alone
- 02 >> They have disturbed sleep and start bedwetting again
- 03 >> They may display non-specific psychosomatic symptoms such as complaining of headaches or stomach pains.
- 04 >> They may start under-performing at school and develop aggressive behaviour towards their peers, hitting out or bullying other children
- 05 >> Their eating habits may be affected or they may refuse to eat at all
- 06 >> They will become more anxious or irritable than normal on the days prior to the appointment with the abusive parent

If this attitude is perpetuated over time and **the children continue to be regularly exposed to this situation**, it is likely that the youngsters will even end up defending and justifying the abuser's behaviour and start to question their own mother, blaming her for the marriage breakup. This form of

injecting negative stress and deliberately manipulating children's feelings, attitudes and emotions gives them a distorted view of reality, in which they are upset by their father's apparent defencelessness and take it out on their mother, who they think is the one to blame for the situation.

04

Effects and consequences of gender-based violence on exposed children



HOW DOES GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AFFECT CHILDREN?

CAN WE CONSIDER CHILDREN TO BE VICTIMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INFLICTED ON WOMEN?

Being exposed to gender-based violence evidently has a negative impact on the lives, welfare and development of the children affected.

“ Council of Europe Resolution 1714⁴ states that witnessing violence against their mother is, in all cases, a form of psychological abuse which has potentially severe consequences for the children involved. For this reason, boys and girls in this situation need specific care and must be recognised as victims of the psychological impact of such abuse. ”

THIS MEANS:

THAT WHEN A WOMAN IS BEING ABUSED, EVEN THOUGH THE VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR MAY NOT BE DIRECTED AT THE CHILDREN, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT THE ONES BEING PHYSICALLY BEATEN OR THREATENED, **THEY ALSO SUFFER THE EFFECTS OF THIS VIOLENCE:**

- ➞ They can be regarded as victims without necessarily being the actual targets of violence.
- ➞ Witnessing violence inflicted on their mothers or living in an environment where inequality between a man and a woman is expressed in violent behaviour makes children victims too.

Whether they witness a single violent episode or experience a history of violence over a period of time, children may suffer various levels of toxic exposure to gender-based violence perpetrated on their mothers. This may affect their psychological and social development in that, if the basic conditions are in place, they may display any or all of the following:

01

they may become victims themselves in the future

02

they may show a natural leaning towards abusive behaviour

03

they may become active links in a (re)productive chain of violent behaviour

Some of the most common toxic sources of exposure to gender-based violence are:

- When the child becomes the target of violence while the mother is being abused
- When the child becomes involved in undermining the mother
- When the child witnesses the father's aggression towards the mother at first hand
- When the child hears the abuse from another room
- When the child sees how his or her mother has been or watches the arrival of the police or ambulance on the scene
- When the child witnesses violent conversations between adults

IN OTHER WORDS,

that children exposed to abuse find it much more difficult to reconcile the traumatic experiences witnessed in the family home (hearing shouts, seeing their mother's bruises, seeing her cry, etc.) with the world they are in the process of building for themselves. This is because they have not yet developed the mechanisms to enable them to adapt and handle these experiences

04

**THIS IS THE CASE
BECAUSE**

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IS ALSO DIRECTED AT YOUNG CHILDREN, **who are at risk of displaying some or all of the following symptoms:**

- They run the risk of experiencing developmental disorders
- They may have difficulty learning and socialising
- They risk developing abusive patterns of behaviour at some time in the future (especially boys)
- They run the risk of becoming victims of abuse as adults (especially girls)
- They come to accept that violence is a normal way of resolving everyday conflict
- They risk suffering from low self-esteem, chronic anxiety and personality disorders
- They risk suffering from PTSD⁵
- They may suffer from mood swings and a weak immune system (putting them at greater risk of illness)

Some abusers may even emotionally and sexually abuse their children, who, under threat or coercion, may not tell their mothers, which makes their dreadful situation even worse and renders them defenceless



WHEN A WOMAN IS
SUFFERING
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE AND
SCHOOL-AGE
CHILDREN ARE
INVOLVED...



**The top priority
must be to
seriously
consider putting
an end to the
situation by
reporting it to
the authorities**

The school should be informed of the situation that the abused woman finds herself in, giving an account of the true nature of her circumstances, so that teachers are aware of the problems facing the children at home

05

Reporting violence and the presence of children under 18 in the affected family

“ MOST WOMEN USUALLY REPORT VIOLENCE WHEN THERE IS A SERIOUS RISK TO THEIR OWN PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OR TO THAT OF THEIR CHILDREN, OR WHEN THE VIOLENCE IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE FREQUENT AND INTENSE ”



What does the mother tend to do if she finds herself in this situation?

She tries to keep up appearances in front of the children



What does the mother feel when she asks for help?

An absolute need to believe that change is possible



What are the expectations of the mother who takes this step and reports the abuse?

Safety
Protection
Knowing what is going to happen next



How do women feel when they have been subjected to gender-based violence?

They often feel insecure and confused, they suffer from chronic anxiety and low self-esteem. Some women even blame themselves for what has happened.



What should we reinforce in the mother who has reported abuse?

The feeling that she is being helped and supported throughout the process.



How should we proceed if the exposed child has some kind of disability?

We should act differently according to the type of mental, physical or sensory disability.

“ IT'S ESSENTIAL TO COMMUNICATE WITH WOMEN AND EXPOSED CHILDREN SO THAT THE WOMAN UNDERSTANDS THAT SHE IS A VICTIM AND EXERCISES HER RIGHT TO REPORT THE ABUSE ”

We should always be assertive and give feedback that shows we understand what victims are telling us. This attitude will be decisive in making them feel safer, understood and respected, plus it reinforces the basic message that we are concerned for their welfare.

It is vital that a victim tries to maintain a **positive interaction with her children, as the way she communicates with them is hugely important for strengthening their family bonds.**

Non-verbal communication is a basic way of instilling calm and trust in victims and children exposed to gender-based violence. In the case of young children, this type of interaction is even more important and necessary, as they have not yet developed the ability to reason, which plays such a major role in adult communication. Play is a vital way of communicating with children. Through play we can observe their behaviour and their emotional state.

“ WHEN THE VICTIM IS MAKING HER STATEMENT OR REPORTING ABUSE AND SHE HAS YOUNG CHILDREN, THEY SHOULD BE PREVENTED FROM STAYING IN THE SAME ROOM ”

It is a fact that when women go to the police station, court or welfare centre dealing with gender-based violence issues, they generally bring their children along with them.

It is a mistake to ignore these children's suffering while the victim's statement is being taken, so it is essential to give top priority to preventing them being present. This will avoid or at least minimise the chances of them being turned into secondary victims and enable the woman to report and describe the facts in greater detail.

A specially designed room or area should be set aside for looking after the children affected.

If it becomes necessary to talk to the children involved, **we should bear some issues in mind when doing so:**

01

Respect the cognitive and behavioural limitations of their age, stage of development and emotional state

02

Use a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication, tone of voice and gestural code

03

Don't infantilise the situation or speak to them like little kids. Use a normal tone.

06

The psychological vulnerability of victims and children exposed to situations of gender-based violence

What is psychological abuse?

Psychological abuse is understood to mean any verbal act or any kind of attitude of dominance and objectification, including threats and coercion, imposed on someone and that causes or may give rise following the actual assault, to psychological damage or trauma.

- 🌀 Psychological abuse is the most difficult form of abuse to detect and to prove, as it is usually accompanied by and made part of other forms of physical and sexual violence.
- 🌀 It is also the abuse that receives the lowest coverage in the press, despite the fact that any kind of physical assault or sexual abuse of children or adults is accompanied by psychological damage of varying kinds and severity.
- 🌀 So, psychological and emotional abuse is closely linked with physical abuse, as in most cases, physical violence goes hand in hand with psychological after effects, both in the direct victims (women) and the indirect victims, that is, the children involved in the toxic family circle.



HOW DO CHILDREN COPE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT DADDY ABUSES MUMMY?

How does their father's violent behaviour towards their mother affect them?

Will it still affect them in the future?

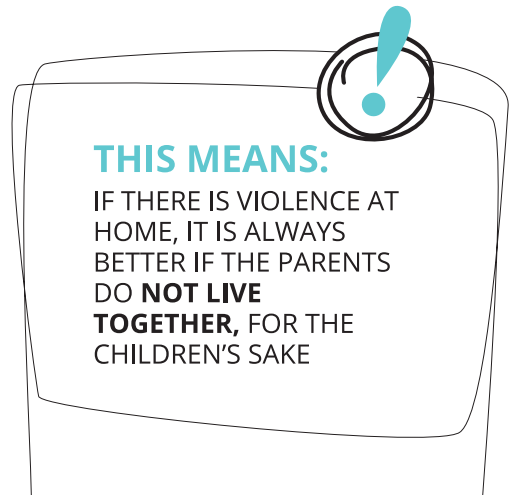
Could it have lasting effects or cause some kind of behavioural problem related to gender-based violence?

What will happen if they continue to have contact with their father?

All these questions and the inevitable uncertainty that comes with the fears that they plant in the mind of the mother affected by a situation of abuse become even more difficult to resolve if the violent father has the right to keep in touch with them via supervised visits, weekend visits or is allowed to have them to stay at weekends and during holidays.



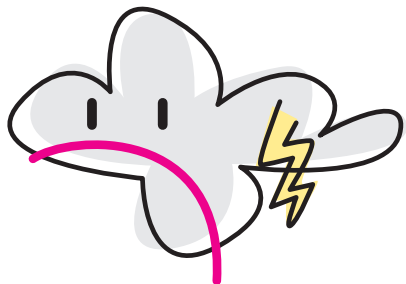
IF THERE IS
ABUSE, THE
CHILDREN ARE
SUFFERING,
TOO



THIS MEANS:

IF THERE IS VIOLENCE AT HOME, IT IS ALWAYS BETTER IF THE PARENTS DO **NOT LIVE TOGETHER**, FOR THE CHILDREN'S SAKE

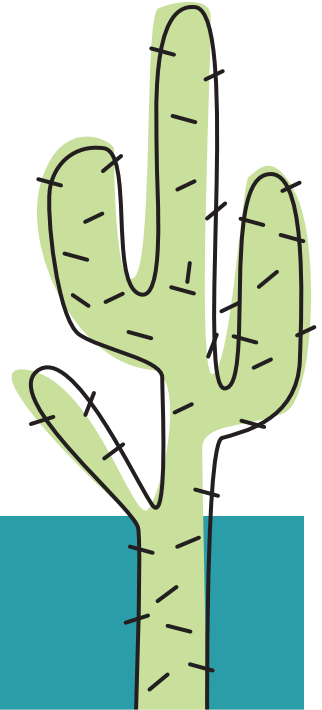
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HOW CAN A MOTHER COPE WITH HER CHILDREN KNOWING THAT SHE IS BEING ABUSED BY THEIR FATHER?

- ➡ If a woman is suffering gender-based abuse she should know that her young children are not oblivious to the situation.
- ➡ It is essential to have a clear view of what is most important and take decisive action, keeping calm and, depending on the children's age and ability to understand, explaining the reasons why they have to be removed from exposure to abuse.
- ➡ It is important that they are listened to and that interest is shown in their views, fears and reservations, but it is also crucial to remember that the main priority is to intervene and safeguard the quality of life and psychosocial welfare of any children involved.

WHEN CHILDREN
WATCH THEIR
MOTHERS BEING
ABUSED BY THEIR
FATHERS DAY
AFTER DAY...

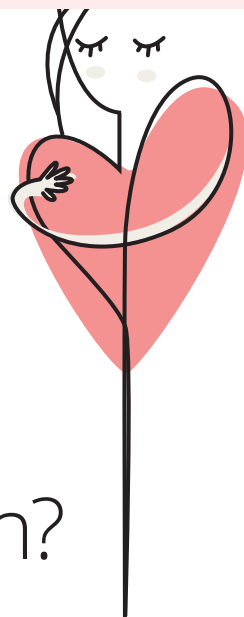


Do you think the child is growing up learning that this kind of violence is acceptable because they think their father is doing it for their mother's own good?

Could it even be possible that if this chain of value transfer is not broken these same children may imitate the behaviours they have learned from their fathers and become the abusers in future relationships or marriages?



07



What legal protection is afforded to these children?

The criterion of putting children's interests first is the point of reference used by Spanish legislation for putting legal measures in place for young children, especially when addressing child protection issues. These guidelines provide the basis for civil as well as criminal law. On this subject, Organic Law 1104, although it focuses on the gender perspective, does not ignore this priority.

The opening statement of Law 1104 says that situations of gender-based violence against women also affect children living at home, who are direct or indirect victims of that violence. It therefore addresses their protection, not only in terms of safeguarding their rights but also in terms of effectively guaranteeing protective measures adopted in respect of the woman involved.

Although the Law recognises children's rights as direct or indirect victims of gender-based violence inflicted on their mothers, other regulations are in place to provide care and protection against violence for children.

All applicable legislation rests on the presupposed **recognition of children's best interests**, as the principle behind any measures to be taken that may affect them in the administrative and legal sphere.

Children's best interests should be understood **as being those which are appropriate for their effective psychosocial development**.

“ Article 2 of Organic Law 1/1996 of 15 January for the Legal Protection of the Child establishes the basic general principle that in any matter or legal proceedings, *“children's best interests take precedence over any other legitimate interest that may coincide”* ”

FOR THIS REASON,

ARTICLE 158 OF THE CIVIL CODE HAS A FINAL CLAUSE THAT ALLOWS THE JUDGE TO ADOPT, IN GENERAL, ANY OTHER MEASURES THEY CONSIDER APPROPRIATE IN ORDER TO REMOVE THE CHILD FROM DANGER OR TO PREVENT THEM SUFFERING HARM. ALL THESE MEASURES CAN BE ADOPTED AS PART OF ANY CIVIL OR CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS⁶.

⁶// Or as part of a voluntary jurisdiction procedure.

08

Legal background to the rights of children living with victims of gender-based violence

ORGANIC LAW 1104 sets out a series of measures and rights that have a direct impact on children living with the immediate victim of the violence, that is, the mother:

01

School and educational measures

The Law states that children affected by a change in the mother's residence as a result of gender-based violence should be **enrolled at school immediately**.

It also states that **teachers should receive training** (initial and on-going) in detecting a violent home background at an early stage, especially when violence is being inflicted on the woman and her children. This enables school teachers to raise the alarm if they detect signs of violence in their pupils.

02

Health and social care measures

In the same way as applies to female victims, the rights of young children in the custody or legal guardianship of a woman suffering gender-based violence to receive comprehensive healthcare are also enshrined in the law. This protection should be translated into **specialist care, not only for the women who are victims, but also for the children affected by this same violence**.

To ensure this, social services in charge of guaranteeing the effective delivery of such care must provide specific training in gender-based violence to staff responsible for managing and delivering care measures, to effectively prevent and counteract situations in which a feedback cycle of violence is being maintained. **The right to comprehensive social care includes educational support for the family unit.**

The fact that the victim has **children in her care** is one of the most important factors to consider when setting the amount of **financial aid** mentioned in Article 27 of Law 1104.

03

Legal measures

When classifying abuse, threats and coercion as gender-based violence crimes, if such acts have been perpetrated **in the presence of children**, this is a determining factor in **imposing a harsher sentence**. In the interests of the child exposed to this type of violence, if the judge or the court considers it to be appropriate, **custodial and guardianship rights may be removed** from the abuser for a period of between 6 months and 5 years, even if the violence was directly inflicted solely on the woman.

In the case of assault on both the woman and the children, the Violence Against Women court has jurisdiction. Likewise, the Violence Against Women courts have jurisdiction for criminal proceedings relating to crimes committed directly against children living with the abuser or for whom he has custody or guardianship if an act of gender-based violence has also been committed. In the case of assault on both the woman and the children, the specialist court has jurisdiction also.

In addition to the appropriate sentences, judges may apply **another measure** in respect of the perpetrator of gender-based violence, consisting of suspending custody or **legal guardianship of the children** involved, as well as the **regime of visits**⁷.

“ In respect of **unpaid maintenance**, the State guarantees that children's allowances will be paid for amounts set out in a legal agreement or fixed by a court ruling, via specific legislation that sets out the payment system for these cases and that takes into account the circumstances of the victims of gender-based violence. ”



REMEMBER.

Complementary to this, *Valencian Law 5/2011 of 1 April, on the family relations of children whose parents do not live together (known as the Valencian Law of Shared Custody)* establishes an ordinary regime of shared custody between both parents in cases where the parents do not live together, **BUT MAKES AN EXCEPTION IN CASES OF GENDER-BASED OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**.

Plus, *Law 71202 of 23 November passed by the Government of Valencia*, which addresses Violence against Women in the Region of Valencia in Article 5, recognises as children and/or anyone in the perpetrator's custody or legal guardianship as victims of gender-based violence and therefore having equal rights under the law as the woman being abused".

08

THE SPANISH CONSTITUTION

Article 39.4 states that *children are entitled to the same protection set out in international conventions that safeguard their rights*. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, along with other international regulations for child protection issues, is essential, as the Spanish Constitution does not contain a thorough list of the rights of the child and refers instead to international treaties⁸

“**THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD⁹, recognises children as individuals in their own right**

”

We can classify children's rights contained in the UN Convention as follows:

- 01 » Rights relating to their **existence and survival**: these rights aim to protect and guarantee the right to life and to have their basic needs met (food, shelter and healthcare).
- 02 » Rights relating to their **freedom to develop and grow**: protecting and safeguarding children's right to reach their full potential (physical, spiritual, moral and social). They include the right to an education, to have access to culture, play and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- 03 » Rights relating to their **protection**: protecting and safeguarding children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. They include the right to have a name (and their own identity), to have a nationality and to be looked after and respected.
- 04 » Rights relating to having their say in decisions affecting them: protecting and guaranteeing they can take part in decisions affecting them and in the activities of their local communities and countries, such as freedom of expression.

8// UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

9// Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989



The precepts of this Convention include three articles pertinent to this Guide:

01



Article 19:

States that it is the State's duty to protect children from any form of physical, psychological or sexual maltreatment, abuse and exploitation.

02



Article 27:

States that every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

03



Article 9.3:

Enables contact with the parents to be prevented if it is not in the child's best interests. It says: ***States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.***

09

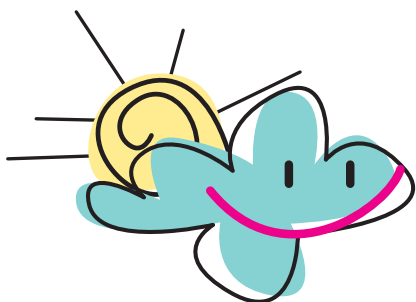
The professionals' role: the commitment

Despite the undeniable dedication and often voluntary efforts of most professionals involved, Spain needs more specialist resources for working with child victims of gender-based violence.

In fact, assistance for victims of gender-based violence focuses mainly on the figure of the crime victim, that is the mother, leaving the children in second place. Institutions providing assistance for victims do not always have the resources they need to take action as soon as the mother admits to being abused by her partner.

This is why it is crucial to improve the response of the police and of the legal and care systems in this respect. This entails **taking a more in-depth approach to the specialist training and awareness given to professionals and improving the legal instruments and assistance provided.**





The following could be taken as an examples of **good professional practice**¹⁰:

01	Working to get abolish violence and abuse, guaranteeing that exposed children receive effective protection.
02	Providing women with easy access to legal protection services.
03	Encouraging children to play an active part in the decisions affecting them, including those made by the administrative and legal systems.
04	Improving living conditions of families at risk of suffering gender-based violence, using networking and cross-institutional coordination.
05	Carrying out fully inclusive assessments on children, combining various sources of information and taking into account different aspects of their lives and those of their families.
06	Recognising the value of the social and family support network.
07	Promoting specialist training for the professionals involved.
08	Carrying out research into how to improve intervention programmes and psychosocial rehabilitation.

Help from behavioural science professionals, such as psychologists, social educationalists and criminologists might contribute to helping exposed children and their mothers the victims to come to terms with their own feelings about what is really happening to them.

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Resources

It is up to the Public Administration to adopt child protection measures as set out in current legislation, notwithstanding any responsibilities assigned by law to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the courts. In the Region of Valencia, the Regional Government's Social Welfare Office is responsible for applying child protection measures, although certain actions come under the remit of local organisations.

Useful telephone numbers

900 10 00 33

Child Line in the Region of Valencia

This is a Freephone number, with lines open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Its main purpose is to centralise telephone calls reporting or raising awareness of cases where children may be at risk or are in a situation of neglect. In some cases, action can be taken immediately, in others it can give information, redirect or refer the matter to the appropriate authorities for investigation and/or intervention.

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Information and legal aid helpline run by the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality.

900 580 888

24-hour Women's helpline for the Region of Valencia.

and in an emergency...

112

Emergencies
24 hours a day

091

Policia Nacional
(National Police)

062

Guardia Civil
(Civil Guard)



More information



Useful links

www.ladipu.com

This web site gives details of the 141 local councils in the province plus useful documentation produced by the Equality, Youth and Foreign Citizens' department.

www.bsosocial.gva.es

Web site of the Social Welfare Office giving comprehensive information, documentation, publications and resources in the Region of Valencia.

www.msssi.gob.es

Web site of the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality giving a range of information about gender-based violence in Spain and how it is dealt with, with sections on topics such as the Spanish Government office for Gender-Based Violence, a portal with statistics on death rates, the State Violence Against Women observatory, documentation and publications.

www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/violenciagenero

Government Office on Gender-Based Violence.

Equality Organisations in the various Spanish Autonomous Communities and Regions

Regional and local Women's Assistance Centres

Assistance for Victims of Crime offices based in the law courts

Legal Guidance Services in Lawyers' Associations

Organisations supporting women and foreign nationals

MAKE A STAND AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
FOR YOUR SAKE AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN

