

7 Minute Briefing

The Toxic Trio

1. Background

The term 'Toxic Trio' has been used to describe the complex issues of **domestic abuse**, **parental mental ill-health** and **substance misuse**

There is a noted prevalence of the toxic trio in the lives of families at the centre of serious case reviews.

2. What is it?

The toxic trio are viewed as indicators of increased risk of harm to children and young people and are common features where harm has occurred.

In cases where serious case reviews have been undertaken a quarter of children lived in households affected by all 3 of the toxic trio.

3. Why it matters

An analysis of serious case reviews investigations showed that in 86% where children were seriously harmed or died one or more of a “toxic trio” – played a significant part.

The toxic trio represents a significant risk to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

4. Why it matters?

Nearly two thirds of these cases featured domestic abuse and in 60 % mental ill health was identified in one or both parents.

Children in one quarter to the families experienced all three.

5. What are the effects?

The effects on children often include: poor attachment; poor school attendance; babies failing to thrive; injuries; low self-esteem; looking uncared for.

Children are exposed to **significant risks and the harmful effects can be long term and corrosive**

6. How to respond

Make sure that any immediate harm is managed. Ensure safety of children is paramount.

Staff should know how to identify common signs of abuse and neglect, and who to consult with and how to refer.

WSCB Training includes the toxic trio

7. Action

Recognise warning signs. Consult if unsure. All safeguarding concerns must be referred into the MASH team on a Request for Services form.

For more information:

<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/public/concerned-about-a-child/>

<https://www.wirralsafeguarding.co.uk/toxic-trio/>