



Domestic Violence & Child Protection Training for Practitioners

Attendee Testimonials, April 2021

“My learning objectives have definitely been met in this session. I have been somewhat removed from the practice of child protection work in the court arena over the past few years and this has really refreshed the critical principles for me in making applications as per the Child Care Act.

An excellent Social Work assessment may stand alone very well until the point where an application is required but at that point there is such a critical shift needed in terms of how we present that analysis to quickly and clearly articulate how threshold has been met, how fair procedures have been applied, how proportionality exists and this session has made all of that really clear in an accessible uncomplicated way, I loved the case examples.

For me, this course has highlighted that we are working with a lot of families where we would meet threshold for care orders and have been working for some time through safety planning processes and alternatives that have not actually worked to increase the safety of the children sufficiently, particularly through the pandemic.

Social Workers are tolerating a significant amount of risk in domestic violence cases and in my local areas this is leading to a high level of professional anxiety and burnout.

In slowing down my thinking around our work with domestic violence through these modules, it raises a lot of systemic and organisational questions for me that I actually think would make for very uncomfortable but worthwhile conversations at a higher level in our organisations.”

Signs of Safety Practice Lead, TUSLA, April 2021

“1. The focus on the experience of children as victims of domestic violence and the research evidence around this experience was really informative for our work and I felt it allied with our direct experience as a local domestic violence service. We could see the gap between this and the current responses from social work that exist on the ground. We are finding it challenging the gulf that exists between how we think social work should respond to DV in families and what responses actually happen and this can undermine joint working and understanding of each other's roles. This programme provides an analysis for how we should approach this work

2. Having an evidence base and the focus on the voice and participation of children was central to the first two sessions and indeed for DV services working with children and trying to engage other professionals to speak directly with children to ascertain their experience is often quite difficult for us as children are not asked about their experience. I felt the academic rigour and evidence could support our work with professionals alongside our direct experience with children who experience domestic abuse.

3. In addition the legal framework sessions provides a good insight into the legal aspects of thresholds and interventions and areas like section 32 reports and the assessment process for social work.

I think while our staff have a lot of direct experience in their work, sometimes the academic and the legal frameworks and how they connect or do not connect to practice on the ground is not fully understood.

Having this knowledge would enhance our work but also gives us a better insight into the constraints both legally and in practice that exist and assist us in strategizing on how to address them proactively. I also think it would assist in better working relationships with Tusla social work and family support teams.”

Manager of Domestic Violence Service, April 2021

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"I am SO GLAD I took this course as it is a really timely reminder of the legislative framework underpinning why we do what."



We work within a process and other frameworks, which (in my experience) do seem to align with our legal obligations (as in - we consider strengths and safety under SOS - we know it's for balance and to help work towards solutions, but I did not consider that it's also about fair process, and rights of the family and parents etc).

I do have to say that I don't consider very much the legal side of 'why we do things this way', and it's beneficial to remember this. I actually texted a client whilst I was reviewing the safety/barring order slide to tell her to have a look at the citizen's advice page which outlined the '17 factors' so she could consider what evidence or information she needs to prepare for her solicitor when going to court next month to convert a protection order into a safety order.

The domestic violence act is something I was very unclear on (it came out after I left college so probably when my legal learning stopped) - it's probably been presented to us through a TUSLA NEWSCAST but I can already see a need in my team for us to have a look at this again - we are so focused on Children's First and the Child Care Act that I guess I would have felt that that covers me, and because DV is such a complex situation to deal with that we social workers do get dragged into a lot.

We try so hard to avoid being pulled between both parents whilst positioning the child as the focus - I find working with families where DV is a big part of the picture, it's very challenging, especially when the dads get aggressive towards me too."

Social Worker, April 2021

"I have been challenged to consider more widely the impact of DVA on a child's development and indeed their ability to form and maintain positive relationships as they get older and have children themselves."



The literature has helped me to reflect on the impact of living with DVA and particularly those young children I work with who present with delay in their speech, ability to use the toilet and display heightened levels of anxiety. For me the challenge this week is realising that children are seeing and hearing much more than is often thought, that they are experiencing the abuse with all their senses and they are impacted from in utero throughout their childhood.

The trauma and impact on a child's development is more profound than I had recently thought about. Children are central to the experience of DVA and they should also be seen as victims."

Social Worker, Children in Care Team, TUSLA, April 2021

"As a SWTL on a busy child protection team I have referenced the material from this week with most of my team members. This was in the context of discussion relating to safety planning on cases where DVA is prevalent. While I have always been aware of DVA and the complexities of it, I was not aware of the far reaching effects of it as it transcends across the lifetime of a person, from in utero to adulthood and cycle of intergenerational abuse. This really challenged my thinking to not assess any incident in isolation."



The material has made me more aware of the complex issues involved and will strengthen my understanding of the lived experience of children and the impact of the environment they are living in. I am hoping this will make for better safety plans for children.

I really enjoyed the course & got a lot from it. You might be interested to hear that because of the course I guided one of my workers to help make a mother's "world bigger" to the point where she recently accepted the SWs help to leave an abusive relationship safely with her two children."

SW Team Leader, TUSLA, April 2021



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“I leave with lots of new learning on the current legal context for child protection and domestic violence, that will help ground how we go about our work in practice; the importance of balancing individual rights, with our statutory responsibilities to child protection in domestic violence cases by upholding the principle of fair procedure and being curious about the impact and harm to a child to ensure any intervention is proportionate to risk to the child.

On a very practical level, I learned the key considerations if considering whether to make an application for a domestic violence order on behalf of a person; the questions to consider during assessment for example Is the person entitled to make an application under the domestic violence Act?

Are they choosing not to because of fear, intimidation or other inhibition? Or are they being prevented or deterred by the perpetrator in some way? Do they acknowledge the problem?

And do they want Tusla to intervene in this manner? Are you of the view that they can provide reasonable care for the child, if the application was granted?”

Social Worker, TUSLA, April 2021

“I feel this last section completed any questions of how state interventions are implemented.

Again although you may work and advocate on behalf of one party involved in child and domestic violence cases it highlights the importance of knowledge needed to understand it in a more comprehensive manner.

While working with other professionals daily it is clearer to me, the difficulties all have in ascertaining evidence and gathering the correct information in support of all parties involved.

This course has refreshed my mindset and insisted you question, reflect and research more to advocate as best as possible for our clients.

It is my responsibility as a working professional to not part-take in creating an even more difficult experience for clients, and continue to educate research and respect the client, leaning more emphasis on their own voice and words and creating opportunities for our clients to feel comfortable, to gain the supports they need in difficult circumstances.

Being more aware and reminded of the legal framework and structures that are in place today is crucial in this area of expertise and to acknowledge human rights and equality for all also. I have very much enjoyed this course.”

Domestic Violence Support Worker, April 2021