



## Cedar Borders

### Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery

#### End of 1<sup>st</sup> Cedar Borders group work programme

The first Cedar Borders group ran from 5<sup>th</sup> March – 4<sup>th</sup> June for women and 6<sup>th</sup> March – 4<sup>th</sup> June for children.

The Cedar groupwork programme also held an evaluation morning at Bowhill, this was a wonderful event with women, children and facilitators coming together to celebrate the end of this first group.

#### Referrals

- The referrals came from Children 1st, Integrated Children's Services and the Domestic Abuse Advocacy Support Service.
- The families were from Galashiels, Melrose and Hawick.
- Families were at different stages of recovery; two of the children were still going to contact with their father at the time of group commencing, one mother and child had been out of the abusive situation for 6 months, one child and her mother had been out of the abusive situation for 5 years and one child and their mother had been out of the abusive situation for 6 years.
- Two boys age 8 and 11 and two girls age 8 and 12 completed group. One girl did not complete group and left as her family had to leave Scotland due to ongoing domestic abuse.
- Four mothers completed group, two of the mothers want to return to a future group as they have more than one child.

#### Partnership working

- Cedar promotes partnership working and encourages joint assessment between referrer and Cedar where appropriate.
- We rely on schools to release children for Cedar and inform them regularly as to a child's progress.
- Cedar have attended a variety of meetings, including Section 31, MAC's and Core Groups to advocate on the families behalf and also to extend knowledge of the Cedar approach to statutory and voluntary agencies.

#### What partners said

Education - "Thank you for this communication, you are doing great work with xxx - well done. Thank you also for the communication, it is really good to have an idea of what is being covered and how he is progressing.

"Thanks for the update. We have only been back at school one week but more and more I am seeing positive changes in xxx. This is great to see and everything that you are doing is really benefiting him."



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#### Facilitators who delivered the first Cedar Group

The key focus was a culture that encourages review, sharing of good practice and continuous improvement.

- Children 1st
- Wheatlands residential unit, Social Work
- Scottish Borders Council
- Berwickshire Housing Association
- Eildon Housing Association

#### What we learned

- Contact with mothers between sessions is important to update them on the progress of their children and also to provide additional support, including signposting.
- Women and children all said that group was not long enough (currently an hour and a half) to mingle and have free time together.
- Children should gain an experience that is age and stage appropriate ie no more than a 2 year age gap.
- Mothers must engage in Cedar - so children and mothers can share the experience and learning.

#### What children said

“I love coming to group, I wish it didn’t have to end.”

“I know I am not to blame for what happened.”

“I couldn’t talk to people before I came here.”

#### What mothers said

“Using tools through Cedar I know that me and my child now have a voice.”

“If it hadn’t been for group I would have gone back to him.”

“I need to be here with people who just get it.”

“As a group we trust each other and share a bond”

- Children should be made aware that attending Cedar is a choice.
- Children’s confidentiality and rights are very important to them and were able to build up trust and openness with the facilitators on this basis.
- Agencies must be aware they are referring the mother *and* child/children and must therefore have explained Cedar to them both prior to assessment
- Assessments must take place no later than 4 weeks before group (preferably 6) to enable Cedar to engage with family, schools and other agencies involved with the child.

#### Next Steps

- The next Cedar group commences on 27th August, supporting the 12 to 14 age group from all over the Scottish Borders.
- New facilitators in this group include a Home School link worker, Health improvement practitioner and Housing Association Officer.