

Working with Domestic Abuse

Supporting Children and Families in the context of Covid-19

**Principle Children & Families Social Worker (PCFSW) Network
& What Works Centre for Children's Social Care**

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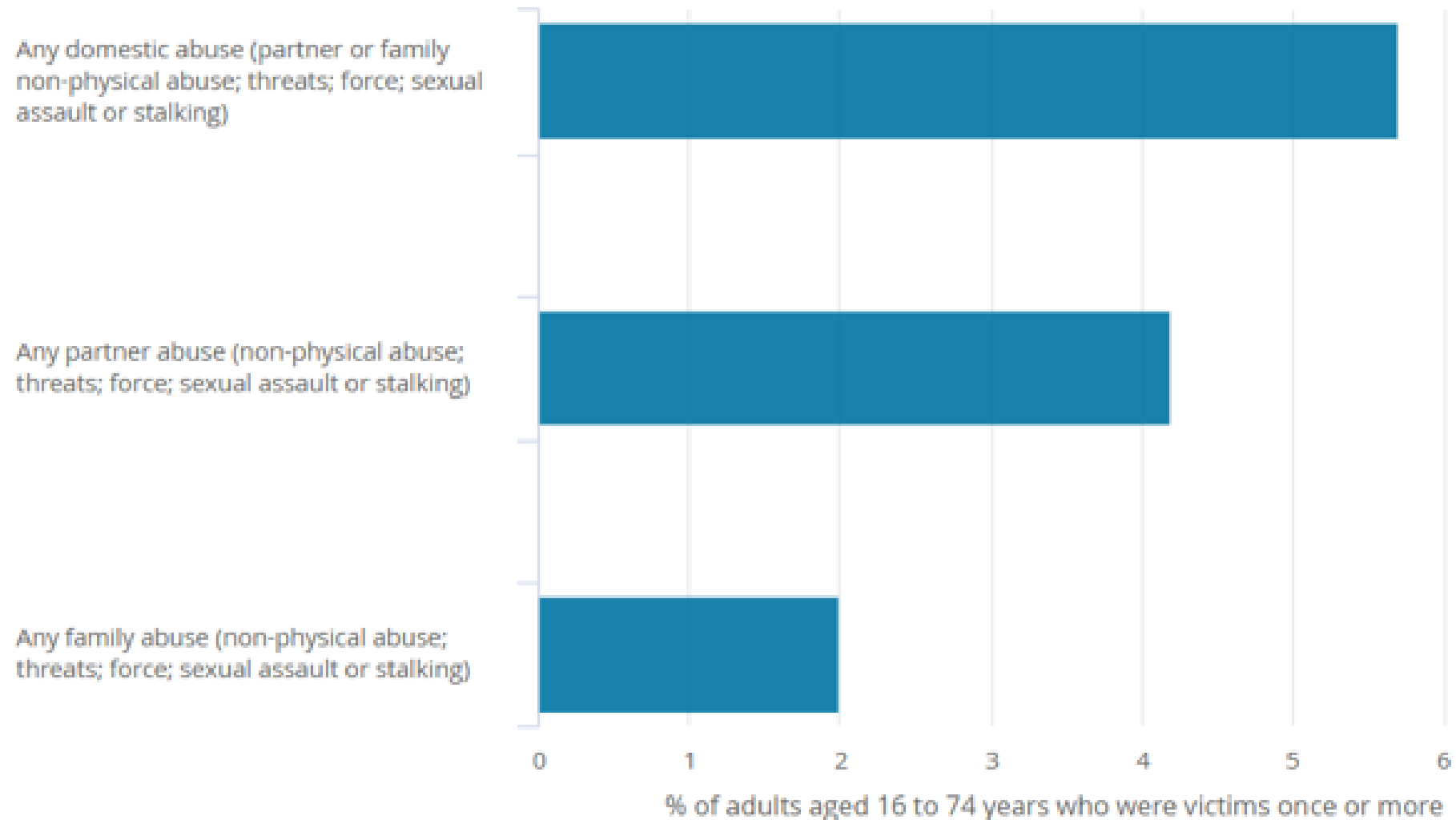
Domestic Abuse

- 1. For the perpetrator domestic abuse combines:***
 - 1. Deep psychological insecurities with a desire for domination; and***
 - 2. a range of controlling and damaging behavioural responses***
- 2. Domestic abuse is a psychological trap disguised as love***
- 3. It is about isolation and chipping away the person's identity, sense of self and relationships to dominate and control their mind, body and thoughts and emotions.***
- 4. Domestic abuse happens in intimate, interdependent relationships***

Domestic Abuse Data ONS March 2019

Figure 1: A higher percentage of adults were victims of partner abuse than family abuse

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 to 74 years, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



Messages from Research and Stats

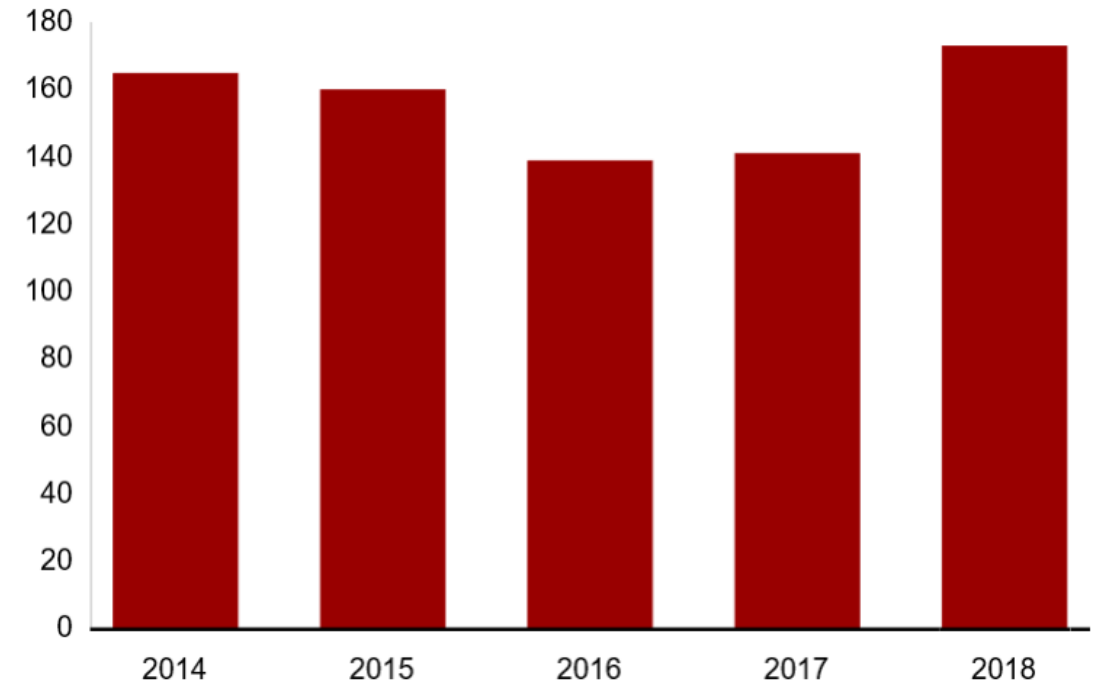
- **Of 936 cases of homicide of women** between 2009 and 2015, **598 (63.9%)**, **nearly 2 out of 3, involved IPF** (intimate partner femicide) (Brennan 2016)
- **Where there is control, violence (even low level) and a separation** after living together, there is a **900% increase in the potential for homicide** (Stark, 2009)
- The UK's largest domestic abuse charity, **Refuge**, has reported a **700% increase in calls to its helpline in a single day.**
- A **helpline for perpetrators** of domestic abuse seeking help to change their behaviour **received 25% more calls after the start of the Covid-19 lockdown.**

Domestic Abuse & Digital Abuse

- Conviction data for 'revenge pornography' show that **out of the 464 prosecutions** for revenge porn recorded in the year ending March 2018, **400 (86%) were flagged as being domestic abuse-related** (ONS, 2018).
- Most commonly, Revenge Porn takes place following the dissolution of a romantic relationship as a way to control or 'punish' (Burris, 2014; Stroud, 2014).

Domestic violence-related homicides

Data from 43 UK police forces



Source: BBC research



Domestic Abuse and Online Safeguarding

- 85% of respondents received online abuse from a partner or ex-partner, it was part of a pattern of abuse.
- Almost a third of respondents (29%) experienced the use of spyware or GPS locators on their phone or computers.
- 50% experienced direct threats to them or someone they knew.
- Almost a third received threats; threats had been made online by a partner or ex-partner.

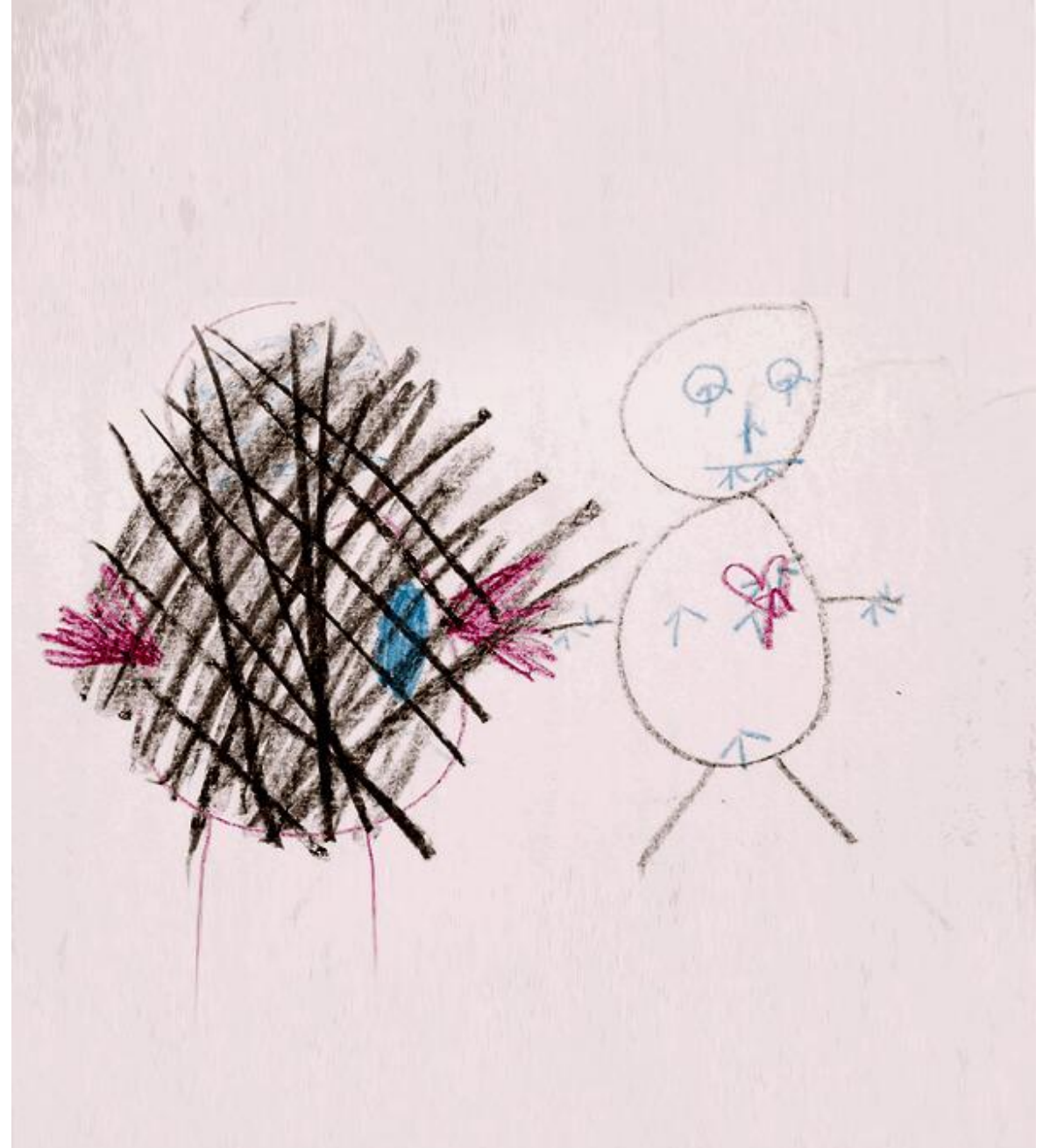
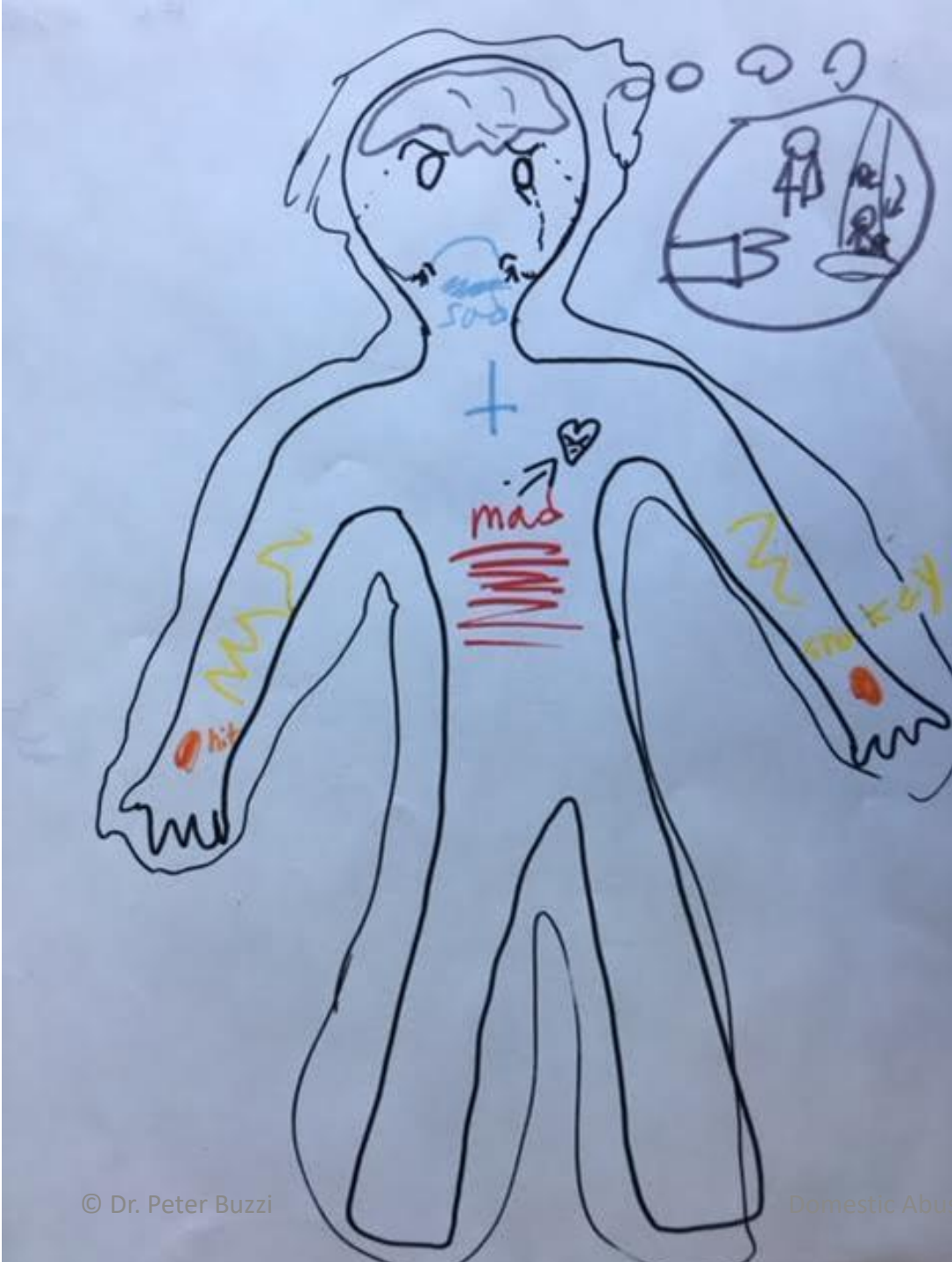
Source: Woman's Aid (2014)

Reflecting on the Children and Family Circumstances

- 1. Trauma, stress and loss response***
- 2. Childcare***
- 3. Housework***
- 4. Finances***
- 5. Attachment and inter-dependence vs. co-dependence***
- 6. Mental health including changes in circadian clock, routine & mood***
- 7. Other vulnerabilities or relationship difficulties***
- 8. Sex and abuse***
- 9. The need for control and coercive control***
- 10. Things people like or dislike about themselves and their partner***
- 11. Community and social factors***



Children's Experiences of Domestic Abuse



Working with people experiencing domestic abuse

- The alternating cycle of violence followed by soothing behaviour is aimed at creating emotional confusion.
- Learning about and knowing healthy relationships is important as many people, at least in initial stages, feel this is normal relationship and this is love etc.
- Keeping people connected with their friends, family and social networks.
- Recognising and distinguishing triggers and motivations

Working with perpetrators

- Working with perpetrators may not come as the first option for some professionals however, it can be effective at times and at times the perpetrator themselves may be experiencing mental health issues and may need additional help.
- Understanding motivations as well as behaviour to initiate positive change
- Perpetrator intervention is necessary for behaviour change whether they are in probation or community.

Thinking about Domestic Abuse in Practice

Identifying, understanding and being alert to:

- History of the perpetrator: Previous record or **history of violence, abuse, stalking etc.**
- **Increasing presence of coercive control** in relationship: Any indication of controlling behaviour
- **Understanding and managing triggers for both parties**
- Any **triggers** that may threaten the perpetrator's control: for example, financial or other factors resulting in significant stress or anxiety, relationship ending
- **Change and escalation of incidents, emotions and behaviour** – increase in the intensity or frequency of the partner's control tactics, stalking or threatening suicide or self-harm
- **Shifts in perpetrator's mindset or changes in thinking or narrative** – change takes place over time therefore, sudden changes may be reflective of hidden risks such as **choosing to move on, either through revenge or by homicide**

What is helpful in practice?

- ***Domestic abuse is complex and often reflected in patterns of escalating risks, behaviours and incidents.***
- ***Therefore, in working with domestic abuse and to bring about positive change:***
 1. ***Multi-agency chronologies and close multiagency working are essential***
 2. ***Patterns of behaviour and a systemic view of risk and relevant markers***
 3. ***Understanding motivation to understand actions and behaviour***
 4. ***Every instance of violence is significant: The Language of Violence***

Safeguarding Partnerships & Multiagency working requires:

- Ensuring effective multiagency working through:
 - Professional curiosity and a shared language of risk, support and resilience;
 - A shared and systemic understanding of risks and risk markers and patterns of behaviour and their evolution, escalation and ramifications;
 - A proactive multiagency partnership approach with a uniform, unified and consistent person-centred approach that prioritise people and their experiences over thresholds and processes;
 - Clear prioritisation and robust pathways that can be implemented and monitored.
- There are real opportunities for better multiagency working; for example, looking at routine enquiry approaches such as in schools and health settings.

If we reach-in many may reach out:

- **Going beyond safeguarding partnerships:** Campaigns and interventions should include commercial settings and communities and other everyday places to create everyday opportunities for safety and for identifying DA, these include: **employers, drug stores and pharmacies, supermarkets and department stores, public transport, etc.**
- Using consistent and clear messages, approaches and campaigns, including social media, to raise awareness and ensure whole community awareness and action.
- **Making sure people know and feel they can reach out and that if they do so, they will be heard and received and supported.**
- **People experiencing domestic abuse are waiting for help: the question is whether we reach in appropriate ways so they can reach out.**

Guidance developed in partnership with The PCFSW network & Social Work England

We are working with Social Work England to develop new practice guidance and support practitioners here is a list of the available guides:

- ***Covid-19: An Ethical Response: this is a guide on ethics***

<https://esafeguarding.org/publications/PSW-and-SWE-Coronavirus-Ethical-Response-and-Best-Practice-Guide-20200505.pdf>

- ***Guidance for Risk Assessment:***

<https://esafeguarding.org/publications/PSW-and-SWE-Best-Practice-Guide-for-Prioritizing-Children-and-Families-Needs-and-Risks-20200505.pdf>

- ***Guidance for Video Calls and Online/Virtual Home Visits:***

<https://esafeguarding.org/publications/PSW-and-SWE-Best-Practice-Guide-for-Video-Call-and-Virtual-Home-Visit-20200505.pdf>

- ***Guidance for Assessing Online Risks, Harm and Resilience and Safeguarding of Children and Young People Online:***

<https://esafeguarding.org/publications/PSW-and-SWE-Best-Practice-Guidance-for-Assessing-Online-Risks,-Harm-and-Resilience-and-Safeguarding-Children-and-Young-People-Online-2020-05-26.pdf>

Questions & further information

To join the national network for digital practice, research and wellbeing and access other helpful tools and resources, please email:

PSWresearch@esafeguarding.org

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