

Effect of domestic violence on children

Domestic violence has a range of complex effects on children. Children are not able to feel safe when they or their mother are being hurt. Children see, hear, feel and know about violence in their homes, even if they do not witness it directly.

Every child is affected differently but children who have lived with domestic violence generally experience some of the following:

- feelings of shame, distrust, anger, sadness, confusion and loneliness
- physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, eating difficulties, sensory issues, bed wetting and frequent unexplained illnesses
- challenges meeting developmental milestones
- falling behind at school
- difficulties relating to adults and peers
- aggression, hyperactivity and controlling behaviours
- regular nightmares and sleeping difficulties
- challenges with new experiences or changes to regular routines
- children may be fearful, fussy, sensitive, anxious and clingy
- feelings of withdrawal from others, distracted or appear as if in a daydream
- difficulties identifying and managing their emotions
- challenges with close relationships, in particular with their safe carer

Safe caregivers and their children who have experienced domestic violence often have much to overcome. The BRIC Project assesses the effects on children and the impact on their primary attachment relationships. In partnership with their safe carer, the BRIC Project develops a response focussed on repair and resilience.

The BRIC Project acknowledges domestic violence, and the associated patterns of perpetration and victimisation, as being gendered in nature.

The BRIC Project recognises that women are overwhelmingly the victims and survivors of domestic violence.

The BRIC Project acknowledges that domestic violence results in significant impacts on identity, mother and woman.

For more information or to discuss a referral, please contact Sutherland Shire Family Services' BRIC Project.

Phone 02 9528 2933 ext. 108

Email bric@ssfs.org.au



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Building Resilience in Children (BRIC) Project



THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT SERVICE



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What is BRIC?

The Building Resilience in Children (BRIC) Project is a child focused, early intervention, domestic violence support service. The BRIC Project provides support to safe caregivers to explore the impacts of domestic violence on their child's development, relationships and capacity to meaningfully engage with their community.

The service has a three pronged approach to support and promote safety for families:



The BRIC Project works within a trauma and attachment framework, aimed at easing the damaging effects of exposure to violence, with a particular focus on repairing attachment relationships.

Who can use the service?

Services are available post separation to safe caregivers and their children, living in the St George or Sutherland Shire areas, who have had past exposure to, or are currently experiencing ongoing domestic violence after separation.

A full risk assessment will take place during intake. Risk and safety will continue to be monitored throughout the provision of support. Services provided will be based on the BRIC Project's assessment.

What you need to know

- Whilst services are provided at no cost to families, fees may however be charged to the referring body where a fee for service agreement exists between Sutherland Shire Family Services and the referrer
- Referrals from professionals and self-referrals are accepted
- If you wish to make a referral, please contact a member of the BRIC Project to discuss suitability. Once assessed as appropriate, the referral form will be emailed out to be completed and returned. In the case of a self-referral, the referral form will be filled out over the phone by a BRIC Project staff member.

How does it work?

The BRIC Project supports families to heal in the aftermath of domestic violence by:

- providing support to strengthen the capacity of safe caregivers to respond to their hurt children with therapeutic connections and experiences
- supporting carers to rebuild and sustain secure relationships with their children in the context of post separation domestic violence
- encouraging caregivers to explore their child's experience through a compassionate lens and provide buffering from further traumatic experiences
- advocating for ongoing safety for caregivers and their children
- supporting the capacity for self-efficacy in parenting post domestic violence.

The BRIC project participates in capacity building within the local community by:

- regularly participating in, and hosting events aimed at encouraging collaboration across services and the wider community
- continuing to explore and build on trauma and attachment knowledge and its translation into practice
- the provision of tailored training packages for local service providers including Education and Early Educations settings.

