

## **Safe & Together™ OVERVIEW**

The **Safe & Together™ Model** is an internationally recognized suite of tools and interventions designed to help child welfare professionals become domestic abuse informed. This child-centred model provides a framework to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children.

The model derives its name from the concept that children are best served when we can work toward keeping them safe and together with the non-offending parent.

**Safe & Together™** highlights that there are multiple pathways to harming children. An abusive parent's harmful behaviours are known to damage their children's behavioural, emotional, social and educational development. It is recognised that the negative outcomes of domestic abuse and the developmental difficulties for children can be enduring.

The **Safe & Together™ Model** gives mental health professionals tools on how to best understand how domestic abuse impacts overall mental health, treatment setbacks, healing, and recovery for the perpetrator as well as adult and child survivors.

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**PRACTICE EXAMPLE** : how to gather information using **Safe & Together™ Key Principles** that describes the impact of harmful behaviours

**Safe & Together™ Model** includes Key Principles of:-

- How the non-offending parent's behaviour and actions keep their child safe
- How the non-offending parent's behaviour and actions help their child heal from the trauma experienced as a result of the perpetrator's violence and coercive control
- How the non-offending parent's behaviour and actions provide stability and nurturance for their children

**How can we apply Safe & Together for Orla and Tara Smith?**

Mum: Mavis

Dad: David

Children: Orla (4yrs) & Tara (6mths)

David Smith's parenting choices indicates that he does not take full account of his children's safety and well-being.

His harmful pattern of behaviours included being violent towards the mother of his children. Orla and Tara have been present when their father was physically violent towards their mother:-

- This included 3 occasions when David pushed Mavis against a wall, holding her by the throat with such force that she lost consciousness. These aggravated assaults caused bruising to Mavis's throat and damage to her vocal cords.
- There were other incidents when David was violent towards Mavis leaving her bruised and in pain, e.g. David spat in Mavis's face, and then threw her against a door frame with such causing bruising to her eye and face.

- On another occasion David would not let Mavis out of the house and he locked the front door. Mavis was fearful that he would hit her, so she ran to the bathroom. David then pushed the bathroom door open and pushed her into the bath, causing bruising to Mavis's back.
- On each of these occasions, Mavis was pregnant with Orla & Tara was in the house.
- On another occasion David was holding Tara in his arms while he was assaulting her mother.
- He also he held a knife to Mavis's abdomen while she was pregnant with Orla saying he was going to "*cut that baby out*".
- There was evidence of violent incidents in the house as David had punched holes in doors.

As well as physical assaults towards the mother of his children, David was very threatening towards Mavis causing fear, stress and anxiety. He would use threatening language towards Mavis accusing her of "*shagging*" other men. He would call Mavis a "*lunatic, slut, bitch, whore.*"

David was also threatening towards Mavis by phone: he would send texts threatening to take the children away from their mother; he would accuse Mavis of making him feel suicidal and he would threaten to slit his own throat.

David also made threats towards the children's maternal grandparents saying he would "*Slit their throats.*" David also threatened to throw things through the windows of the children's maternal great-grandmother.

David's parenting choices includes not providing financial support for Orla and Tara.

David's pattern of physical abuse, threatening language and behaviours and coercive control would mean that some of Mavis's energy would have to be used in addressing his harmful behaviours towards her, Orla and Tara, instead of allowing her to use her energy in caring for the children.

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