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What are children and young people's views and opinions of perpetrator programmes for the violent father/male carer?

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Gwynne Rayns

Childrens Workforce Development Council (CWDC)’s Practitioner-Led Research projects are small scale research projects carried out by practitioners who deliver and receive services in the children’s workforce. These reports are based in a range of settings across the workforce and can be used to support local workforce development.

The reports were completed between September 2009 and February 2010 and apply a wide range of research methodologies. They are not intended to be longitudinal research reports but they provide a snapshot of the views and opinions of the groups consulted as part of the studies. As these projects were time limited, the evidence base can be used to inform planning but should not be generalised across the wider population.

These reports reflect the views of the practitioners that undertook the research. The views and opinions of the authors should not be taken as representative of CWDC.

A new UK Government took office on 11 May. As a result the content in this report may not reflect current Government policy.

“What are Children and Young People’s views and opinions of perpetrator programmes for their violent father/male carer?”

Gwynne Rayns

Abstract

This research sought to clarify what knowledge children and young people have about the perpetrator programme attended by their father/male carer and the processes by which they were informed. Consideration was given to the attendance of the father/male carer on a perpetrator programme with the impact on the child’s feeling of safety and whether any improvements are noted regarding the father/child relationship.

The research focused on the views of children and young people who lived with or had contact with their violent father/male carer.

The report highlights the lack of research in this area and the lack of the perspective of the child victim in perpetrator work. It suggests areas for further research and practice development which would lead to a more integrated approach.

The key learning points were:

- Children had limited knowledge of perpetrator work, but saw it as a helpful and an appropriate intervention.
- Children considered their mother to be “safer” when a perpetrator was on, or had attended a perpetrator programme, but did not necessarily feel safer themselves. The report also established that there was little consistency with regard to safety planning work for the children in this sample.
- Children were aware that perpetrator work was linked to violent/angry behaviour by their father/male carer and that attendance was an attempt to change this behaviour.
- Perpetrator programmes did not appear to lead to violent fathers/male carers talking openly to their children about their violent behaviour.

The research has shown that there are significant gaps in our existing knowledge base regarding the impact and outcomes of perpetrator work for children and young people. Further research is required that consistently captures the views of children and young people whose father/male carer is attending a perpetrator programme, in order to inform and influence the development of perpetrator interventions, especially if we are to evidence that this work has an impact on children's safety and well being. Further research should be considered to understand the processes through which children are informed about perpetrator work, including what part professionals and/or mothers and fathers should play in this communication. We need to understand more about the factors that ensure a child feels safe or unsafe whilst their father/male carer attends a perpetrator programme and whether improved outcomes could be achieved by removing the "split" in services and developing services which meet their "joint" needs.

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Finally, I would like to thank the Children's Workforce Development Council for funding this research project and for the provision of advice and mentoring support.

Introduction

This project was concerned with addressing a gap in the existing knowledge base regarding domestic abuse and children, namely that of children's views and experiences of perpetrator programmes for their violent fathers or male carers. I was interested in exploring what children and young people thought about perpetrator programmes: whether they knew basic information such as the name of the programme their father/male carer attended, whether anyone had talked to them about the programme, and the work their father/male carer would be undertaking.

Aims of the Project

The overall aim was to begin to explore children's views and opinions of perpetrator programmes for their violent father/male carer, with a particular focus on the following:

- To consider what understanding children and young people have about perpetrator programmes for violent men, and the process by which they were informed of their father's/male carer's attendance.
- Whether children and young people feel safer if their father/male carer is on or has attended a perpetrator programme for violent men?
- Whether attendance on a perpetrator programme impacts on the father/child relationship from the child's perspective?

There is no evidence base for whether perpetrator programmes for violent men, especially fathers/male carers, improve outcomes for their children, or ensures their safety, yet there is a clear evidence base which supports the correlation between domestic abuse and child abuse. The aim of this project is not to consider the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes, but to begin to explore what children think about perpetrator intervention and whether they consider that this work has impacted on the father/child relationship.

Context

There is a wealth of literature, research and policy documents relating to domestic abuse, father-child relationships and the importance of understanding the perspectives of children, however, of necessity I have limited the literature review for this small scale project.

I have been unable to find any existing references to the views or opinions children hold regarding perpetrator programmes for violent men, perhaps suggesting that this area is a new topic for developing practice. Houghton states that the literature available on children's perspectives of domestically violent fathers is limited (Houghton, 2008). Houghton (2008) suggests reasons for this may relate to the general lack of engagement with violent fathers in the child protection arena, the sensitive nature of the topic, and an adult imposed limit in setting parameters for children. The focus of literature available with regard to children and their violent fathers has highlighted children's feelings (of fear, sadness, anger, confusion, ambivalence and torn loyalties) towards their fathers; and of the psychological and emotional impact for their children regarding the consequences of their father's abusive behaviour (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al, 2002).

I have, therefore, chosen to focus on the material available in the following areas:

- A brief account of the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.
- Work with perpetrators of domestic abuse and the objectives that underpin these programmes.
- The importance of seeking the child's perspective.

Definition

The definition of domestic abuse as defined by the government focuses on adult violence, and includes: *“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”*

(Home Office, 1999). Within this definition the impact of the abuse on children and young people is not recognised.

Policy context and prevalence

The evidence suggests that high numbers of children experience domestic abuse, with the British Crime Survey estimating that 750,000 children in England and Wales live with domestic abuse, usually this is violence/abuse perpetrated by men against women (Walby and Allen, 2004).

Legislation in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 which amended the Children Act 1989 adds a new category of “impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another” within the definition of harm in civil proceedings.

Recent government initiatives and practice guidance have sought to address the impact of domestic abuse for victims, perpetrators and children. Working Together (2006) is clear that a multi agency partnership model for addressing domestic abuse should be adopted to ensure that the needs of the perpetrator, non-abusing parent and child are met and safeguarding issues identified.

The Department of Health “*Improving Safety, Reducing Harm, Children Young People and Domestic Violence*” (2009) is a toolkit promoting good practice initiatives. It details the importance of multi agency working, the need for safety planning work with children and the potential value of working with violent and abusive fathers.

The toolkit highlights the work of Respect organisation¹, whose aim is to increase the safety of those experiencing domestic violence by promoting effective interventions with perpetrators. Respect’s standard for accredited perpetrator programmes includes a standard relating to children, which states: “*The needs of children affected by domestic violence are considered at all levels of the organisation....The child’s safety is paramount and will take precedence over the safety of others.*” The main aim of perpetrator work is, therefore, to protect the safety of victims, by attributing the

¹ www.respect.uk.net

violence to the perpetrator and encouraging him to take accountability for his behaviour.

The Department of Health toolkit also highlights the Caring Dad's² programme which originated in Canada and is designed for men who have abused or neglected their children or exposed them to abuse of their mothers. The therapeutic goals for Caring Dad's focus on increasing men's awareness of child centred fathering and improving skills in parenting.

Government policy contained in The Home Office National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan annual progress report 2008-09 has four objectives, namely:

1. To increase the early identification of, and intervention with, victims of domestic violence by utilising all points of contact with front-line professionals.
2. To build capacity within the domestic violence sector to provide effective advice and support to victims of domestic violence.
3. To improve the criminal justice response to domestic violence.
4. To support victims through the criminal justice system and to manage perpetrators to reduce risk.

This suggests a holistic and integrated approach with the needs of victims and perpetrators both being addressed. However, the outcomes for perpetrator programmes focus on offender attitude and behaviour towards adult victims and are heavily influenced by the criminal justice agenda, rather than the child protection perspective.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to_ obtain the views of approx 10-15 children and young people who had experience of domestic abuse, perpetrated by their father/male carer, and where the father/male carer was on or had attended a recognised perpetrator programme for violent men. The programmes included were either

² www.caringdadsprogram.com

Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) or IDAP related as defined by the Probation Department, or Caring Dad's. All perpetrator programmes followed the guidelines as laid down by Respect Organisation for safe practice.

To gain the views of the children a questionnaire was constructed which contained closed questions with yes/no answers response categories. Additional comments were collected via a few supplemental qualitative questions (see appendix for details of the questionnaire). A laminated sheet with the question headings was given to the child at the beginning of the interview, enabling them to follow the process (see Appendix One). The questionnaire was completed by the children who were attending National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Domestic Abuse services with the help of their key workers to who written guidance was provided (see appendix).

As I am employed by the NSPCC in a national post as Learning and Development Advisor with responsibility for practice learning regarding domestic abuse, I had access to projects within the NSPCC who worked with children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. I obtained my sample from these teams.

Prior to bidding for the funding for this research, I gained the consent of six teams within the NSPCC to assist me in undertaking this work. All teams provided direct services for children and young people within a safeguarding context, and some also provided direct services to perpetrators of abuse and their children. All six teams identified a practitioner who would assist by facilitating the questionnaires.

In the event four teams actually took part in the research, in order not to identify any of the participating children, these teams are not identified in this report, but operate across England and Wales.

Ethical approval was sought and granted from the NSPCC Research Ethics Committee. The proposal agreed to follow professional guidance on professional integrity and research ethics contained in the Economic and Social Research Council Framework 2006, NSPCC Research Ethics Policy and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989.

The sample of children and young people who took part in this research were identified within their projects by their key workers and deemed suitable and interested in taking part. Written guidance was provided to the key workers who facilitated the completion of the questionnaire with the children and young people (See Appendix Two).

Written consent was obtained from the child or young person concerned, their mother and also from the perpetrator of the domestic abuse, if he was resident with the child taking part. The parents were made aware that confidentiality for the child would be maintained, and the child's completed questionnaire was not shared with either parent, although it was agreed to share general findings of the research with those who took part if they requested this. This will be facilitated by the child's key worker who will ensure any safeguarding issues are addressed prior to sharing any information.

Only children and young people who were in receipt of direct support services have taken part in this research, in order to ensure both safeguarding and emotional support was in place for the participant children and young people.

As I was reliant on the teams identifying the research sample, I had little control over the participants that were selected, other than to say that it was open to those who had the ability to understand the questions and the context in which the questionnaire was presented. The gender of children taking part has been captured in the research findings, but was not specified for the research sample.

Facilitators of the research were required to make it clear to all participants that their right to direct services was not compromised by their agreeing or not, to take part in the research.

Any child protection issues identified in the course of undertaking this research were to be addressed by the child's key worker.

Literature Review

The adverse impact of domestic abuse on children and young people is well documented with an abundance of literature emerging over the last 10-20 years (Mullender, 1994; Hester, 2000; McGee, 2000; Calder, 2004; Humphreys 2006,). The research shows that children living with domestic abuse have much higher rates of depression and anxiety, feel traumatised and are more likely to have behavioural and cognitive difficulties, than do those who have not witnessed such abuse. Research also shows that children who live with domestic abuse, especially those who both witness and are directly physically abused themselves have poorer developmental and behavioural outcomes than children who do not live with domestic abuse (Kitzmann, 2003; Edleson, 1999; Kelly in Mullender, 1994; Hester 2000).

Numerous studies have also shown the correlation between domestic abuse and direct child abuse, with research showing between 30 per cent and 66 per cent co-occurrence (Edleson, 1999; Mullender, 1994)

Much of the qualitative research undertaken has been directly informed by children's views and experiences (McGee 2000; Mullender 2002; Humphreys, 2006) and clearly evidences that children are acutely aware of what is going on within their homes, and that 90 per cent are in the same or next room when the violence is taking place.

This extensive knowledge base has increasingly led to a practice perspective that recognises that living with domestic abuse is harmful for children.

Limited research exists regarding the parenting of men who are domestically abusive. Peled (2000) states *"literature on intervention with abusive men with children of abused women has, with only a few exceptions, ignored the role of abusive men as fathers."* (p 26) Peled (2000) also suggests that holding such men accountable for their children's well being may contribute to the healthier emotional development of their children.

Hester and Radford (1996) found that men who were violent to their partners had little interest or concern for the care of their children. Bancroft and Silvermann (2002) found that they were likely to be rigid and authoritative in their parenting style. Holden and Ritchie's (1991) study (of mother's self reports) suggests that men who perpetrate domestic abuse towards partners are also more likely than non abusive men, to use physical punishment, but not be as physically affectionate with their children.

Evaluations of the perpetrator interventions appear to be defined in self-reporting measures completed by perpetrators and adult victims with no direct reference to the views and experiences of their children, regardless of their objectives to promote safe parenting or consider the needs of children.

Houghton (in Humphreys, 2008) explores the importance of children participating in the development of policy and practice relating to domestic abuse, and building on Mullender's work (2002) which first promoted the idea of children who had lived with domestic abuse being "active participants." This notion is informed by the view that children who live with domestic abuse should have their views listened to and taken seriously, *"that their views on involvement in finding 'solutions' for their own family are explored and respected"* (Houghton, 2008). The argument put forward is that literature, research, and policy about children from an adult perspective is not the same as that which is directly informed by children's views where they are seen as "experts" in their own lives.

Houghton's comparison of the literature regarding mother's and children's qualitative research using self reports, and the quantitative reports using psychometric tests *"reveal differences between maternal and child 'reports' in relation to the child's experiences of domestic abuse. This supports the young people's view that their perspective is different and adults do not know what they (the young people) think and feel."* (p4-5). This is not to underestimate the importance of the mother's views, but suggests that children's views are unique, partly because of the individual meaning they attach to their experiences and partly because they may act to protect their mother from their distress by not disclosing it, and also as McGee's (2000)

research points out, mothers may not be aware of any direct abuse experienced by the child from the perpetrator of their own abuse.

Following separation in families many children who have lived with domestic abuse remain in contact with their fathers, either through legal orders or unregulated parental agreements. Research around contact issues is extensive and supports the view that contact is likely to be a positive experience only if the child actually wants it (Morrison 2009). Earlier research by Hester and Radford (1996) found that children continued to be abused during contact visits, either directly by the perpetrator, or by witnessing further domestic abuse and harassment of their mother, or through neglect of the child's needs. Feelings of fear and anxiety linked to the impact of domestic abuse remain for many children following parental separation, and are maintained during contact with abusive fathers.

Safety planning is promoted as a means of ensuring that children and young people have considered the potential risks and have strategies in place for coping if they feel unsafe (Calder 2004).

It seems from a limited examination of available literature, that the views of children and young people with regard to work being undertaken with their father's/male carers has been overlooked. This is in spite of the overall aim of perpetrator work being the promotion of safety for women and children. The Government National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan (2007/08) makes explicit reference to "Women safety work is an integral part of the accredited perpetrator programmes" p 6, sadly there is no explicit reference in this or the 2009/10 plan to integrate safety work with children into perpetrator work.

This small scale research study therefore seeks to begin to expand our knowledge in this area.

Findings

Sample

| 16 participants | | |
|-----------------|------|-------|
| Ages | Boys | Girls |
| 8-10 | 4 | 3 |
| 11-13 | 4 | 2 |
| 14-18 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 9 | 7 |

Table 1

| Ethnicity | | |
|---------------|-------|--------------|
| White British | Welsh | Mixed Origin |
| 11 | 3 | 2 |

Table 2

Contact with Perpetrator.

Three participants reside with their father/male carer

Thirteen do not reside with father/male carer, but only four don't have any contact.

Details of the 9 children who have contact are as follows:

| Face to Face | Telephone Contact | Daily Tel Contact | Face to Face 1 x weekly | Face to Face 1 x monthly |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 66% N=6 | 44% N=4 | 33% N=3 | 33% N=3 | 33% N=3 |

Table 3

One child has face to face and telephone contact. No child said they had contact via letter or e-mail. Three children live with the perpetrator and nine have on-going contact in this sample.

Status of Perpetrators

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Currently attending programme | 56% N=9 |
| Completed programme | 19% N=3 |
| Started but didn't finish programme | 25% N=4 |

Table 4

Of the four who left prior to completing, only two children thought they knew the reason for this, namely:

“Because he couldn’t be bothered. He never thought he needed to go on it because he didn’t accept what he had done”. (boy, 13 years)

“He couldn’t be bothered to complete it”. (boy, 14 years)

Of their thinking about these reasons, one child stated *“he wasn’t mature enough and didn’t accept what he had done”*, the other said *“nothing, don’t think about it”*.

Child protection concerns - Four children were subject to a child protection plan, but of these only two were residing with the perpetrator, therefore, as there are three children resident with a violent father/male carer, one child resided with violent father/male carer and was not subject of a plan. The father of this child had completed the programme. Only the four children subject to a child protection plan had a social worker, therefore, none of the other children were identified as “children in need” of services at the point the research took place.

Of the three children resident with a violent perpetrator, two had fathers who had completed perpetrator programmes (one Caring Dads and one an IDAP compatible programme). The father of the other child was currently on a programme and this child was subject to a child protection plan.

Knowledge of Perpetrator programmes

Five children knew the name of the perpetrator programme attended, eleven did not. Of the five who knew the name, one child knew the name only and said no one had talked to him about it (boy 11 years).

As well as not knowing the name of the programme, five children had never had anyone talk to them about the programme at all. Of these, four have no contact with the perpetrator, and of these three had perpetrators who had started but not finished the programmes. One perpetrator was currently attending, however, the child only

found out as a result of taking part in this research (boy, 10 years). One child knew nothing about the programme his dad had completed yet he has face to face contact with him on a monthly basis (boy, 8 years). It would appear that children who do not remain in contact with their violent father are, therefore, less likely to know whether he is completing or attending a programme.

Although they didn't all know the name of the programme, ten children had had a conversation with an adult about the perpetrator programme their father/male carer was attending. Of these one didn't specify who had spoken to him about it, five had been spoken to by their key workers, three by CAFCASS worker and one by key worker and CAFCASS worker. No one identified as having been informed by a parent, and those children who had been informed of the programme appeared to know only very general information; namely

"He's doing it because of his behaviour" (boy, 11 years)

"Sorting dads out, so that they can talk with their kids. To stop dads from getting drunk, swearing at other people, being naughty, and learning to respect their kids" (girl, 9 yrs)

"...trying to teach him how to behave" (girl, 11 years)

"Cafcass worker said that dad is doing well and making some progress" (girl, 10 years)

"The programme was about how my dad could control his temper" (girl, 18 years)

"I was told by my worker that my dad would be talking about his behaviour and what he should do differently/change about how he behaves" (girl, 14 years)

"Men go there because they have been abusive to their wife or children. Cafcass worker said that dad is doing really good on it and that normally men stop coming after three weeks, but dad is still going (girl, 10 years).

All 16 participants believed they knew why their father/male carer was on or attended a perpetrator programme, and all thought that their father/male carer had a problem with their anger or violent behaviour.

This research shows that children and young people have some limited knowledge of the perpetrator work undertaken by their father/male carer. Some children had a greater knowledge than others, but this was not related to living with, or being in contact with the perpetrator. Children do relate the perpetrator intervention to issues regarding anger and violent behaviour by their father/male carer and see that the intervention is meant to effect change in this behaviour.

There is no consistency around how and by what process children and young people are informed about the perpetrator work being undertaken.

Views of Children and Young People

| | Yes | No | Not sure |
|---|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Do you think the programme will help or has helped your dad/male carer stop being violent to your Mum? | 56% N=9 | 25% N=4 | 19% N=3 |
| If your dad/male carer had hit you or your siblings do you think the programme will stop or has stopped him from doing this again | 36% N=5 | 36% N=5 | 28% N=4 |
| Did you feel unsafe before your dad/male carer went on the programme | 63% N=10 | 37% N=6 | 0% N=0 |
| Do you feel safer now | 36.5% N=6 | 36.5% N=6 | 25% N=4 |
| Do you feel your mum is safer now | 81% | 6% N=1 | 13% |

| | | | |
|--|------------|-------------|-----------|
| | N=13 | | N=2 |
| Has the programme meant that your dad/male carer has talked to you about his violent behaviour | 25% N=4 | 75% N=12 | 0% N=0 |

Table 5

Safety Issues

Eighty-one per cent of the children felt their Mum was safer now that their dad/male carer was on or had attended a programme, but this number drops significantly when considering their own safety, with only 36.5 per cent stating they felt safer now. This may be linked to separation of parental relationship and on-going contact for the child, however, interestingly, the three children who remain living with the perpetrator all indicated they felt safer, although this research has not examined the processes by which this has occurred.

Of the ten children who felt unsafe before their father/male carer's attendance on a programme, five remained feeling unsafe and one said he wasn't sure whether he felt safer. Of the four who felt unsafe before, but safer after attendance for perpetrator on programme, two said this was because they no longer had contact.

There were no significant differences regarding gender and how safe children felt.

In relation to themselves or siblings being hit, 14 out of 16 children answered this question and only two indicated this was not applicable, supporting previous research which demonstrates a clear correlation between partner abuse and direct child abuse.

It is concerning to note that only 36 per cent of children in this sample felt that the perpetrator programme was likely to stop their father/male carer from physically abusing them again, which links to on-going feelings of being unsafe as indicated earlier.

Given the levels of children continuing to feel unsafe whilst their father/male carer attended a perpetrator programme it is of concern that the findings indicate that 69 per cent (N=11) of the children did not have a safety plan. Of the 31 per cent (N=5) who did, only one had been completed with a child resident with a violent perpetrator, two had on-going contact and two had been completed with children who had no contact. Of those who did not have a safety plan, two children are resident with their violent father, six have on-going contact and three have no contact. This paints a picture of inconsistency in safety planning work which echoes previous research (Calder, 2004).

What comes across clearly in this research is the lack of communication between perpetrators and their children about the violent behaviour exhibited by fathers/male carers, which may be symbolic of a lack of integrated practice and accountability between perpetrator programmes and children and young people. Further research would be required in this area, considering the benefits and challenges of engaging perpetrators in the healing process for children and in the services and resources that would enable violent fathers to talk more openly to their children about their violent behaviour. If this gap remains in practice then we allow violent men to ignore some of their parenting duties; and leave women and social care agencies with the responsibility for socially framing the perpetrators behaviour for the child.

How has attendance on a programme impacted on the father/carer child relationship?

This relates only to those children who either live with (N=3) or have on-going contact with their father/male carer (N=9).

If your dad/male carer is on or has completed the programme:-

| Question | Live with | Live with | Live with | Contact | Contact | Contact |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|----------|
| | Yes | No | Not sure | Yes | No | Not sure |
| Has your relationship with your dad/male carer improved | 2 | | 1 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| Do you think your dad/male carer is sorry for his behaviour? | 2 | | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Has it led to you and your dad/male carer spending more time together? | 2 | | 2 | 3 | | |
| You and your dad/male carer talk more about his past violent behaviour? | 1 | 1 | | 2 | 3 | |
| You and your dad/male carer doing activities together | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 3 | |
| You feeling safer to be with your dad/male carer | 1 | | 1 | 3 | 2 | |
| You feel happier to be with/see your | 2 | | 3 | 2 | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| dad/male carer | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Table 6

These findings are somewhat inconclusive, however, of significance is that some children struggled to answer the above questions leaving them blank. Some children may have felt unsafe to answer these questions. Over half of children either felt that their relationship had not improved, or they weren't sure about this, suggesting that there is some confusion about the impact of perpetrator work regarding the child/parent relationship.

Most believed that the perpetrator was sorry for his violent behaviour, but similar to the findings mentioned earlier, attendance on a programme has not seemed to have led to children and fathers talking more, so it may be that this belief is an implicit feature, rather than an explicit one in the relationship. One child having taken part in this research expressed to the worker her wish for her dad to say sorry to her directly and the worker reported later that this was subsequently achieved. Direct communication between parent and child regarding perpetrator work may achieve this for more children and additional research would show whether this improved outcomes for both.

One child who did not have contact and whose view isn't included in the above statistics, considered his dad was sorry on the basis that "he wants to see us" (boy 10 yrs).

Do children consider the programme to be a punishment or a help for their father/male carer?

Overwhelmingly children in this sample think the programme to be of help – 75 per cent N=12 indicated this view, with only 19 per cent N=3, thinking it was a punishment. One child thought it could be both (6 per cent N=1).

Asked whether they thought this was the right thing for their father/male carer, the positive view was even greater, with 87 per cent N=14 thinking it was right, and only 13 per cent N=2 thinking it wasn't.

There was no significance in the gender patterns re above, with as many boys as girls thinking the programme was helpful, although the two who felt the approach wasn't the right one were both boys. Of these, one viewed the programme as a punishment and the wrong approach, stating "there should have been a more severe punishment for him i.e. prison" (boy, 13years). One thought it was a help and a punishment but was the wrong approach stating he wanted "for somebody to remove him from our home" (boy 14 years). All three children who reside with the perpetrator thought the programme was a help and the right thing for their dad.

Children thought it was the right thing because:-

"...to stop his anger from getting really bad". (boy, 10 years)

"...I thought it would help him". (boy, 8 years)

"...he needed to go, but he didn't take it seriously or pay attention. (girl, 11years)

"...when we did something wrong dad punished us too much. He needs to learn not to be angry for no reason and not to be grumpy". (girl, 10 years)

"...they will try to help him see what he has done wrong and put a bit of pressure on him like he did on us". (girl, 12 years)

"...because his temper was really bad and he needs to control it better". (boy, 13 years)

"...it was the right thing to do because he had a bad temper and now he has changed and now spends more time with us". (girl, 18 years)

"...because he was violent to us and being mean and he might make an improvement". (girl, 10 years)

“...because he always shouts, and this makes me feel sad. I try not to cry but sometimes I do”. “I think he will do what he is told and if he does, it will make me happy to have a “proper” dad” (girl, 9 years)

“...dad is not shouting so much since being in the group and the social worker being around” (boy, 11 years)

“...because his behaviour was not so good”. (boy, 10 years)

“...because he deserved it”. (boy, 11 years)

Additional comments regarding their relationship with their dad/male carer:

“it would be good to talk with dad about how he had behaved, I still think about it a lot and it would mean a lot to me to have him say sorry about this.....” (girl, 9 years)

“he’s got better since the programme as he is less angry” (boy, 10 years)

“I like to talk to my dad on the phone, but I don’t want to go to his house. I wouldn’t mind meeting him for coffee for 30 minutes or something only with supervision. I do not trust him. I would be frightened that he would smack me” (girl, 10 years)

“Dad is not a very nice person and we should not be treated like that (girl 12 years)

“I’m glad he went on the programme because he has changed for the good” (girl, 18 years)

“Dad is getting on with Mum a lot and better with my brother” (boy 11, years)

“My Mum and Dad stopped arguing after my dad completed the programme because they realised how bad it had got for us and that it had to stop, which the programme helped them to see this. I just think things have got better and when I come home I’m not worried now” (girl, 14 years)

It seems clear from the above comments that some children have either seen or are hopeful that improvements can take place following attendance for their father/male carer on a perpetrator programme in relation to their dad's behaviour towards both their mother and themselves.

Implications for Practice

- Children and young people in families where domestic abuse has occurred appeared to have little detailed information about the perpetrator programme their father/male carer may be attending and there appears to be no consistent process by which they would be informed. We need to develop systems and resources for informing children and young people, to enable them to have informed opinions and ensure they do not remain marginalised regarding work with their fathers/male carers.
- For perpetrator programmes to evidence their primary objective of safety for women and children, practice needs to ensure that the views of child victims are explicitly sought with regard to their safety. We should seek to establish measures and evaluation tools to capture this information to inform and influence perpetrator intervention.
- Within safeguarding limits, we should look to consider the development of a practice model which meets the “joint” needs of children and violent fathers/male carers.
- Services should be developed which encourage and enable violent fathers/male carers to communicate more openly with their children about their violent behaviour, which helps to address the healing needs of the child victim.
- National indicators for perpetrator work should be extended to include a measure for considering children as victims as well as adult partners, particularly for men who remain in contact with their children or children in a

new family. This would enable the “voice” of the child victim to be explicitly addressed in perpetrator interventions.

Implications for Research

- Further research should be conducted to consider how to consistently capture the views of children and young people whose father/male carer is or has attended a perpetrator programme. This information should be used to inform and influence the development of perpetrator interventions, particularly for perpetrators who remain in contact with their children or those who move to live with other children in new families.
- Further research is required to consider the process by which children are informed about perpetrator programmes, what are appropriate pathways for this to happen. What part should mothers/non abusing carers play in raising their child’s awareness and understanding.
- Further research is required regarding the use of safety planning work and the benefits and challenges of this for children and young people whose father/male carer is attending a perpetrator programme. Would an integrated approach to child safety and perpetrator programmes ensure that safety planning work is seen as integral practice when a father/male carer attends a perpetrator programme.
- We need to understand more about the factors which make a child feel safe/unsafe whilst a father/male carer attends a perpetrator programme.
- Further research is required to determine whether outcomes for children and young people are improved if services are developed which meets their “joint” needs.
- An area of exploration would be to determine the extent to which parents feel able, knowledgeable and confident enough to talk to children about the work undertaken by their father on a perpetrator programme.
- Further study could explore the outcomes for children dependant on which perpetrator programme their father/male carer attends. Would outcomes differ

if attendance was on “Caring Dads” with its emphasis on parenting or on a probation led perpetrator programme?

Conclusion

This research has been a small scale study addressing a gap in the knowledge base, namely children and young people’s views of perpetrator programmes. This study suggests that children and young people have a limited understanding of perpetrator work with their violent father/male carer, despite many of the participants remaining in contact or living with their father/male carer.

Although the safety of the child is an objective of perpetrator programmes, the lack of integrated work in this area means that this objective is implicit to perpetrator intervention, not explicit or informed directly by the views of children and young people.

The children and young people in this research seemed to feel that their mothers were safer now that the perpetrator was on or had attended a programme, but did not equate attendance on a programme with feeling safer themselves.

We need to consider whether perpetrator programmes should be informed and influenced by the views of children and young people, and whether this integration would impact on child safety, as well as their future understanding of violent behaviour and its consequences.

The lack of explicit measures regarding child safety within perpetrator work and the lack of integrated practice with perpetrator work and their children may stem from the definition of domestic abuse which excludes children as victims and focuses only on adult harm. This marginalisation of children seems to continue in practice with perpetrator work lacking an integrated approach which seeks to include children of violent fathers/male carers.

We need to build on this research and seek more in depth data of children’s views regarding perpetrator programmes. The participants in this research were all children

in receipt of support services and therefore the views of children outside this group may not have been represented.

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Appendix 1

Research Questionnaire

| 1. About You | | | |
|---|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Are you a girl or boy? | | How old are you? | |
| Are you <i>Please tick</i> | 1. White | | 6. Pakistani |
| | 2. Black African | | 7. Bangladeshi |
| | 3. Black Caribbean | | 8. Chinese |
| | 4. Black other | | 9. Asian other |
| | 5. Indian | | 10. Other |
| | | 11. Mixed origin | |
| | | 12. Refusal | |
| | | 13. Not known | |
| | | 14. Welsh | |
| Do you still live with your violent dad/male carer? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| If No do you still have regular contact with him? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| Do you have contact | Face to face? | | |
| | By letter or card? | | |
| | Via e-mail or internet? | | |
| | Telephone? | | |
| How often does this take place? | Once a day | | |
| | Once a week | | |
| | Once a fortnight | | |
| | Once a month | | |
| | 3-4 times a year | | |
| | Rarely | | |
| Do you have a social worker now? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| If Yes , do you have a child protection plan now? | | | |
| <i>Your key worker will be able to explain this to you if you are unsure.</i> | | | |
| Yes | | No | Don't know |
| Is or has your dad/male carer: | | | |
| <i>Please tick</i> | | | |
| Waiting to begin a programme | Yes | | No |
| On a programme now | Yes | | No |
| Completed the programme | Yes | | No |

| | | | |
|---|-----|--|----|
| If he started but didn't complete it, do you know why he didn't finish? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| What reason was given for him not finishing? | | | |
| What do you think about the reason given? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----|--|----|
| 2. Your Views | | | |
| You have been asked your views because your dad/male carer is or has been on a programme for his violent behaviour towards your mum. | | | |
| Do you know what the programme is called? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| What is the name of the programme? | | | |
| Has anyone talked to you about the programme? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| Has anybody talked to you about the work your dad/male carer will be doing or has done on the programme? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| Who talked to you about it? | | | |
| What did they say to you about the programme? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----|--|----|
| 3. Safety Planning | | | |
| Did anyone make a safety plan with you while your dad/male carer was on the programme? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |
| Who did this with you? | | | |

| | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 4. We would like your views about your dad/male carer's behaviour | | | |
| | Yes | No | Not Sure |
| Do you know why your dad/male carer is on or has been on the programme? <i>See Guidance Notes</i> | | | |
| Do you think your dad/male carer has or had a problem with their anger or violent behaviour? | | | |
| Do you think the programme will help or has helped your dad/male carer stop being violent to your Mum? | | | |
| If your dad/male carer has hit you or your brothers/ sisters too, do you think the programme will stop or has stopped him doing this again? | | | |
| What changes do you hope will happen when your dad/male carer goes on the programme or have you noticed any changes in your dad/male carer since he started or completed the programme? | | | |
| Did you feel unsafe before your dad/male carer went on the programme? | | | |
| Do you feel safer now your dad/male carer is on a programme? | | | |
| Do you feel your mum is safer now your dad/male carer is on a programme? | | | |
| Has the programme meant that your dad/male carer has talked to you about his violent behaviour? | | | |

5. We would like your views about your relationship with your dad/male carer

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| If your dad/male carer is on or has completed a programme | | | |
| Has your relationship with your dad/male carer improved? | | | |
| Do you think he is sorry for his violent behaviour? | | | |
| If your dad/male carer has completed a programme, do you think the programme has led to: | | | |
| You and your dad spending more time together | | | |
| You and your dad talking more about his past violent behaviour | | | |
| You and your dad doing activities together | | | |
| You feeling safer to be with your dad | | | |
| You feel happier to be with / see your dad | | | |

6. General views

| | | | |
|--|------|--|------------|
| Do you think that the programme was or is a help or a punishment for your dad/male carer? <i>Please tick</i> | | | |
| | Help | | Punishment |

| | | | |
|--|-----|--|----|
| Do you think this was the right thing for your dad/male carer? | | | |
| | Yes | | No |

If **No** what else do you think should have happened?

If **Yes** why?

Is there anything else you would like to say about the programme of work that your dad/male carer went on?

Do you know anything about any other programmes of work with violent men?

Is there anything else you would like to say about your relationship with your dad/male carer, or his relationship with others in your family? *Please continue on a separate sheet of paper if you wish.*

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3. Safety Planning

4. We would like your views about your dad/male carer's behaviour

5. We would like your views about your relationship with your dad/male carer

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THANK YOU

Appendix Two: Guidance Notes for Researchers

- This questionnaire is to be administered by a practitioner/key worker known to the child/young person.
- It is suitable for children aged 8-17 years. They will have experienced domestic abuse and have a father/male carer who is waiting to attend a perpetrator programme, is attending a perpetrator programme, was on or has completed a perpetrator programme.
- The child must be informed that their right to services for themselves will not be adversely affected by their decision to participate or not, in the research.
- The child's views will remain confidential to the research team at all times. No content of individual questionnaires will be shared with parent or male carer. A summary of the overall research will be available on request to both children and parents/male carer if requested. Researchers are asked to keep a note of requests made for future dissemination of the research summary.
- Researchers should explain the above to the child prior to obtaining consent to participate in the research, so that informed consent can be given. Researchers will need to carefully consider whether the child may be put at risk by inclusion in the research. No child should be exposed to the risk of being put under undue pressure to disclose their views to a perpetrator. If this is likely to take place, researchers should consider ruling out a potential participant.
- Any disclosures made within the research process which highlight child protection concerns, should be addressed by following NSPCC policies and procedures regarding child abuse.
- Researchers should not keep copies of completed questionnaires, and all documentation which could identify a child and their views should be returned to the lead researcher (Gwynne Rayns, York NSPCC) for safe, secure storage. Please attach a compliments slip with the name of your service and the name of the practitioner/key worker involved. A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.
- The questionnaire takes approx 45 minutes to complete. The researcher should give the child the child friendly headings list on the laminated sheet, so that the child can follow the process, but the researcher asks the questions directly and completes the questionnaire, writing down the answers given by the child.
- The researcher may need to explain what is meant by a child being subject of a child protection plan as existing research suggests children may not be fully aware of this system and its terminology. (part of question 1)
- The researcher may also need to explain what is meant by a safety plan as a child may not be aware of what is usually covered in safety planning work (Question 3)
- The researcher may need to give prompts to enable the child to answer question 4. The prompts could include a range of behaviours/idea's including the following: because he was angry, upset, drunk, hit my mum, shouted at mum, don't know etc. The researcher should take the answer from the child without challenging attitudes, but this may be something that would be noted for further discussion with child via on-going involvement.
- The child will receive a small token of reward for taking part in the research and a thank you certificate. The child should only be informed of this at the conclusion of the research. On receipt of a completed questionnaire the lead researcher will arrange for the certificate and reward to be sent to the researcher, for onward delivery to the participant.
- Researchers are asked to keep a record of their time spent and expenses incurred in facilitating this research. This should be recorded on the relevant form included in the research pack and returned to the lead researcher. Time spent will include preparation for and administration time incurred in undertaking the research. Expenses incurred will

include telephone calls, postage, transport costs or mileage incurred in undertaking the research. Please return the expenses sheet to the Central Executive Support Team, fao: Vivienne Ross, 1 Sickle Street, Manchester. M2 1DL

The above may seem fairly onerous or challenging, but it is necessary in order to protect the children who take part in this research, and also to support you as researchers. An initial literature search suggests that nothing is yet known of children's views in this area, so you are taking part in truly groundbreaking research. I hope that the work we do can improve our understanding, and can assist in the future development of work with perpetrators and the child protection remit. It is intended that this research will be published in 2010 and all researchers will be sent a copy of the final report.

Gwynne Rayns, Lead Researcher
York Domestic Abuse Service

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