



Developing the Police Response to Child-to-Parent Violence

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We defined CPV as any behaviour that could cause physical, psychological, emotional, economic or financial harm. CPV includes coercive and controlling behaviour.

Definitions often include an element of intent, e.g.:

‘Parent abuse is any act of a child that is intended to cause physical, psychological or financial damage to gain power and control over a parent.’ (Cottrell 2001: 3)

The extent of the problem



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In 2018, CPV was described in the House of Commons as ‘a very significant issue’ and ‘a growing problem’. (HC Deb 21 Feb 2018).

In the international literature, estimates of the 12-month incidence of physical CPV by adolescents in community-based samples range from 5% - 21%, whilst comparable figures for ‘verbal, psychological, and emotional’ aggression range from 33% to 93%’. (Simmons et al 2018: 32)

Developing the police response to CPV: The N8 project



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- The research was funded by the N8 Policing Research Partnership and ran from April 2019 – July 2020.
- The research was conducted in collaboration with two northern forces, covering Site A and Site B.
- The research comprised three strands ...

The three strands

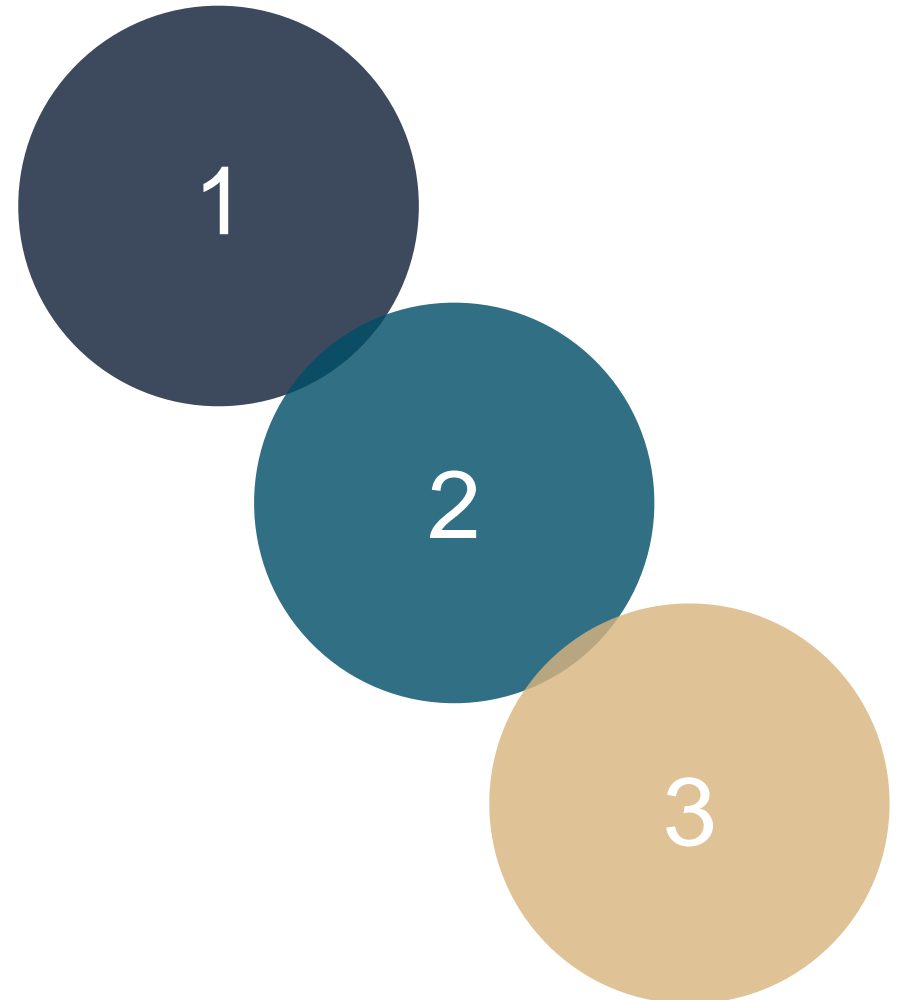


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Strand 1: The collection and analysis of police data on 4,281 cases of CPV (01.01.18 – 31.12.18).

Strand 2: Semi-structured interviews with 36 police officers.

Strand 3: An online survey completed by 41 parents & carers from across E&W.





	Cases of CPV	Perpetrators	Victims
Site A	512	330	367
Site B	3769	2165	2378
Total	4281	2495	2745

- **Repeat perpetration / victimization**
- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Offending behaviour:** Violence against the person accounted for 66% of all cases across the two sites (n=2808), comprising 'violence without injury' (n=1951), 'violence with injury' (n=702), and 'stalking and harassment'(n=155).

Examples of violence against the person



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Violence without injury:

‘During an argument son has assaulted his mother by grabbing her by the neck causing no injury.’ (13 year old boy, ID 91, Site A).

‘Suspect is verbally abusive towards victim and threatens to smash her head in causing fear of violence and escalation.’ (13 year old boy, ID54, Site B).

Violence with injury:

‘...The son has proceeded to ... stab him with a knife in his head, the blade of which has snapped away from the handle. The son has then attacked his father with a pair of scissors, also to the head.’ (17 year old boy, ID 1095, Site B)



- Criminal damage was the second most common offence type, cited in 24% of cases across the two sites (n=1025)
- Theft was also common, cited in 9% of cases (n=376)
- Although rare, sexual violence was present within the dataset (n=7)



- There were known child protection concerns in relation to 74% of the children from Site B, **the most common of which was having experienced domestic violence (57%)**.
- The other child protection concerns listed were having experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, or 'some other child protection issue'.

Police data: CPV and neurological, developmental and MH issues



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Some of the children from Sites A and B were affected by these issues:

‘Mother and 11 year old son had an argument. He then punched her repeatedly to the arm and face whilst she was trying to restrain him, causing minor bruising. Victim believes this happened because he suffers from ADHD and autism.’ (ID 193, Site A)

‘Suspect suffers with various mental health issues and autism. The suspect has had a mental health episode and threw coins at her causing no injury, and threw a wheelie bin at her causing a bruise to the arm.’ (17 year old boy, ID199, Site B)

NB: trauma, and intent



- The majority of cases in Site A (80%) and Site B (90%) resulted in no further action being taken.
- The proportion of cases resulting in 'out of court' resolutions varied markedly between Sites A (13.2%) and B (2.7%).
- 2% of all cases led to a youth or adult caution / conditional caution.
- 4% led to a charge or summons.

Strand two: interviews with police officers (n=36)



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- There is an emphasis on avoiding criminalization where possible.
- ‘Positive action’ means something different in the context of CPV compared to IPV.
- Officers noted gaps in wider service provision, especially children’s social care, CAMHS and the police.
- A lack of available alternative accommodation might mean that children are held at the police station overnight (IV7) or ‘are back at their home address within a few hours’ (IV20).
- Vulnerable children or DV perpetrators?
- None of the interviewees were aware of any guidance for practitioners.

- Many officers cited factors known to be linked to CPV, e.g. MH issues, drug / alcohol use, etc.
- Others reiterated common perceptions (e.g. poor parenting, peer influence).
- There was limited awareness of the relationship between trauma / family violence and CPV.

‘I think they are probably brought up in a non-violent environment and they ... get in with a crowd of people who are violent and take that home with them ... because the homes that you go into, they are not violent homes, they’ve not got a history of violence.’ (IV20)

- Why do police perceptions matter?



'I have gone to a couple of cases recently where I have sat down and spoken to Mum, and that is fine, but then the son is going to Dad, and Dad thinks it is great that the son has hit Mum ... And it is all a big joke to Dad because Mum and Dad are in a constant battle anyway ... If ... the son has assaulted Mum and the son can go to Dad and Dad is like "good lad" ... it doesn't seem to resolve anything.' (IV8)

'If I go to a job where a child has hit a parent, I like to arrest them because ... they might have a bit of worry or reflection time ... They don't know their parent hasn't given a statement, and I don't like to tell them, and I'd probably be a bit harder on them than I would be on anybody else in an interview to ... try to hammer home that they need to stop their behaviour.' (IV20)

Strand 3: Online survey



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- 41 parents (54 children) from across England and Wales
- Most respondents were female (n=38)
- Over half were adoptive parents (n=26)
- Some described positive interactions with the police. Others raised concerns.



- Data on CPV are vital (e.g. flag in police databases; Crime Survey for England and Wales);
- Practitioners need accessible guidelines (e.g. a 7-minute briefing, or an app on their phone);
- Guidelines need to be promoted by professional bodies;
- Multi-agency working is vital, and only possible with better knowledge and more resources;
- More research is needed to identify different patterns of behaviour and target resources.



Thank you for listening.

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