

From Boys to Men Project



FROM BOYS TO MEN: PHASE THREE KEY FINDINGS

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The *From Boys to Men* Project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council to explore why some boys become domestic abuse perpetrators when others do not. In so doing, it sought to establish what more could be done to reduce the number of young men who become perpetrators. The study involved three phases of data collection including: Phase 1 - a survey of school children aged 13-14, Phase 2 - focus groups with 69 young people aged 13-19, and Phase 3 - life history interviews with 30 young men, aged 16-21, who had experienced domestic violence as victims, perpetrators or witnesses.

Reports on all three stages of the project are available on our website

www.boystomenproject.com.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the third phase of the *From Boys to Men* study. The aim of this phase of the research was to understand the experiences of young men affected by domestic abuse. We were specifically interested in how some young men become victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse. In-depth interviews were undertaken with 30 men, aged 16-21, who had been affected by domestic violence, having experienced it as either a victim, witness or as a perpetrator. Participants were recruited through youth offending services, probation, an alternative education programme and family support services. Accounts were sometimes guarded, though most participants provided detailed accounts of violence, in some cases despite the discomfort this caused them. Most disclosed a range of personal vulnerabilities and multiple forms of social disadvantage, including:

- Histories of institutional care;
- Poor mental health and alcohol and substance misuse.
- School exclusions, learning difficulties and attention deficits;
- Involvement in crime, periods of imprisonment, community based supervision and electronic surveillance.

Domestic Abuse in the Family Home

Over two thirds of the young men interviewed offered accounts of violence perpetrated by fathers, stepfathers, and boyfriends against their mothers. Some had seen violence that looked potentially lethal, involving strangulation or their mothers having been knocked unconscious. Others knew their mothers had been sexually assaulted by a male partner. The research found that:

- Those in our sample who witnessed family violence during teenage years described feelings of powerlessness, insecurity and helplessness. They often resolved to protect females and challenge bullying male aggressors in the future.
- Murderous feelings were commonly expressed towards fathers and other adult men who had abused mothers. But vengeful violence was also threatened and enacted against mothers who were seen as neglectful, to blame for violence, or behaving in hurtful ways.
- Though many had had to care for siblings in the context of abuse, neglect or economic hardship, some adopted the role of family disciplinarian after abusive fathers left.

Domestic Abuse in Intimate Relationships

Over two thirds of participants reported having perpetrated abuse against a female partner, the majority of cases involving at least one physical assault upon a girlfriend. Many of these also reported having been a victim of partner abuse, though none claimed to have lived in fear or to have experienced life-threatening forms of violence from a partner. The research found:

- That potentially lethal violence was sometimes perpetrated by young men in the context of ‘fighting’ with partners over more trivial matters, especially sexual jealousies.
- That some men, between the ages of 16 and 21, are relatively accomplished in the use of threatening behaviours to control partners, while others have limited insight into why they behave as they do.
- That not all of the domestic violence described was instrumental in nature. Some participants were struggling to contain difficult emotions and felt alone, angry and betrayed, having experienced multiple losses, endured periods of neglect, and having few sources of support to which they could turn.
- Some of those who had grown up in violent homes viewed themselves as having demonstrated restraint by hitting walls as opposed to their partners, or because on most occasions their use of violence fell short of completely ‘losing it’.

Responses to Violence

Over half of the sample had been arrested for domestic violence offences that included criminal damage to the family home and assaults on family members and female partners. Many were known to social services because of the violence they had grown up around and/or because of the risks to women and children they now presented. The research suggests that:

- Constructive and containing responses to violence were rare in participants’ lives, although efforts by grandparents, counsellors and criminal justice workers sometimes helped young men to redress their violence or work through difficult emotions.
- Many young men had little recollection of service providers talking to them about the ‘fights’ and ‘arguments’ they had had with partners, ex-partners, parents and step-parents.
- In this respect, critical opportunities to prevent subsequent generations of young men becoming domestic abuse perpetrators are still being missed.

Method

The Study

The third phase of the study sought to elicit life-story accounts from young men who had been affected by domestic violence, having experienced it as either a victim, witness or as a perpetrator, although, the research evidence revealed that these categories were rarely exclusive enough to enable meaningful differentiations to be made between groups of participants. Recruiting participants proved to be a much more protracted process than had initially been envisaged, the fieldwork for this phase of the project commencing in June 2011 and not concluding until over 18 months later in December 2012. In total, over 70 organisations were contacted in an effort to recruit participants. The organisations contacted included both national and local groups working with young people and families. They included organisations with domestic violence as a specific remit as well as criminal justice agencies, family support services, youth services, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) support groups, mental health groups, counselling services, universities, schools, colleges, alternative education

programmes, care leaver support groups, accommodation providers, hostels and services for the homeless. The majority of practitioners contacted were positive about the research and expressed a willingness to aid research recruitment, in some instances supporting us through further rounds of ethical review and advertising for participants through their own networks. Ultimately, however, only nine organisations were able to arrange research interviews with young men. These included five youth offending teams, two regional probation services, one alternative education programme and one family support service. Consequently, the majority of participants (23 out of 30) were contacted through criminal justice agencies. Specialist domestic violence services, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, victim support services, and relationship counselling services routinely reported that they had no or very few contacts with young men aged between 16 and 21 known to have experiences of domestic violence. The sample we secured was, therefore, primarily one of convenience skewed more towards young men in trouble. To the extent that it is possible to generalize from the data we collected, our findings apply more directly to the subpopulations of young men known to criminal justice practitioners to have had experiences of domestic violence than to the wider population of young male victims, witnesses and perpetrators who hail from backgrounds that are not exclusively disadvantaged.

The Interviews

Each potential participant was approached by an agency contact already known to them to alert them to the study and to share with them an information sheet that detailed what taking part in the research would involve. The researcher then met with the potential participant to fully explain the aims of the study once again, ensure they understood what taking part involved, and secure consent to be interviewed in those cases where potential participants were still willing. All interviews took place within the agencies that facilitated contact with participants. Interviews were recorded with the consent of all participants and transcribed verbatim, with all self-evidently identifying information removed from interview transcripts. Participants were assured that what they said would be treated confidentially by the research team except where they indicated that they, or someone else, were at risk of imminent harm or danger. The interview protocols used are provided in Appendix 1 of this report. Any information that could be easily used to identify participants has been excluded from the report. All participants were given pseudonyms. A £10 gift voucher was offered to most participants to compensate for the time, inconvenience and any expenses they incurred. It was not permissible, however, to offer such compensation to the majority of participants on probation as this was regarded as ethically problematic by some managers within the service given the risk of appearing to reward convicted offenders for describing their crimes.

Young men were asked to participate in one in-depth interview expected to last about 60-90 minutes and ‘about people who have been involved in domestic abuse or violence either as victims, witnesses or because they have been accused of doing it’. In the event, some interviews were very short, one lasting just twelve minutes, but most lasting between 45 and 90 minutes, and the longest over two hours in duration. At the outset of each interview, participants were invited to tell their life-story using a set of biographical interviewing techniques that include active listening, reflection and the formulation of narrative-focussed questions. Participants were reminded that the aim of the research was to try to ‘understand the experiences of people affected by domestic abuse and how that fits into their life story’. They were advised that they could take as much time as they needed to tell their story and they could include anything that they wished. Following on from this opening question, the interviews focussed on eliciting stories from participants using follow up and probing questions, requesting them to elaborate on the experiences they shared in their opening ‘story’, aiming to follow the sequence of events as presented by participants and reflecting their own use of language and terminology. The interviews focussed on exploring how young men have come to understand violence through the examples they recall and describe. They also focussed on young men’s feelings towards their own parents and partners, the contingencies that make them feel sad, angry, defensive and fearful, and their expectations about relationships with partners and children. In the few cases where young people were not forthcoming with an opening story, the interview followed a number of questions which asked the participant to ‘tell me about any times’ they had witnessed, been a victim of, or perpetrated, domestic abuse and physical violence. All participants were also asked if ‘sexual aggression’ had ‘impacted’ on their lives in any way and were asked to recount any times where violence away from relationships or the home had impacted on their lives. Finally, participants were asked about their experiences of seeking help in relation to the violence they had experienced. Once the interviews had been transcribed we attempted to construct ‘pen portraits’ of each participant that reflected the complexity of the stories they told, before undertaking the more thematic analysis that informs this report. Coding across the pen portraits was undertaken using a table, a much simplified version of which is presented as Appendix 2 in order to give the reader the opportunity to learn more about each participant at a glance.

The Participants

Participants were aged between 16 and 21, with two thirds aged 16-18 and a third aged 19-21. Twenty-six young men were White, with three of these also reporting having traveller ancestry. Three young men were Black and one young man was of mixed (White-Asian) ethnic origins. Four young men were Christian and one young man was Muslim, the remainder not identifying with any religion. All participants reported being in heterosexual relationships. Participants typically reported a range of personal challenges linked to insecure housing, problematic alcohol and/or drug use and a range of

mental health issues. Housing instability was a feature for many young men, with nearly two thirds having lived away from home at some point in their lives, either in care placements or in alternative living situations such as with extended family, siblings, friends, in the homes of their girlfriend's parents, the YMCA and homeless accommodation. Eleven young men had a care history that ranged from relatively short to long-term arrangements. Some were placed in the care of other family members, typically grandparents, while others were placed in foster care or residential placements. Just over half of the young men we interviewed appeared to now have alcohol and substance abuse problems. Many had also lived with a parent who was an alcoholic and/or drug user. Around a third mentioned mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, panic attacks and paranoia and six young men had previously attempted suicide or engaged in self harming. Additionally, seven young men reported having ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), problems with 'attention' or autism.

Not surprisingly given the study's recruitment sites, nearly all participants, including those recruited through the alternative education programme, reported involvement in crime, which ranged from 'anti-social' or disorderly behaviour in the local neighbourhood to serious assaults on other individuals. Around a third of participants reported involvement in theft and burglary and four young men reported drug dealing activity. Around two thirds recounted fights with other men in the street, often involving grievous and, in some cases, potentially murderous violence. Nearly half had been assaulted in the streets themselves. A third reported having carried weapons – such as knives and knuckle dusters and a couple were known to handle guns – sometimes on a regular basis. Five were, or had been, members of gangs, and another had been taken under the wing of a local drug dealer he regarded as a 'father figure'. Arrests, convictions, and conflicts with the police, together with the imposition of ASBOs (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders) and restraining orders, often restricted participants' movements, some confined to certain parts of town away from friends, families and partners. Some young men were the subject of stigma and abuse from local residents who regarded them as 'trouble'. Eight participants had previously been incarcerated.

All young men recruited to the study had been identified by agency contacts as having some experience of domestic abuse in their lives. Additionally, when describing the focus of the research, participants were reminded that we were interested in talking to young men who had previous experiences of domestic abuse and all agreed that they had a story to share. While most participants were then able to provide an account of the abuse they had experienced or perpetrated, three refused to do so or said they had no such experiences, despite opting into the research and referrals from practitioners confirming their suitability for it. Among those who did tell a story, multiple experiences of domestic

abuse emerged in their accounts. Twenty-five young men had witnessed some form of domestic abuse within the family home including abuse between adult carers, from an adult carer towards a young person or vice versa and/or between other members of the family. In most cases, however, ‘witnessing’ abuse referred to abuse between participants’ mothers and their husbands and/or boyfriends.

Twenty-one young men reported having perpetrated abuse against a female partner, at least 16 of them having physically assaulted a girlfriend, and 15 young men reported having been a victim of partner abuse, all of them having been physically assaulted by their partner. Thirteen participants reported having experienced abuse in all three forms – as a witness, victim and perpetrator. Only one participant, Travis, reported having perpetrated abuse without having witnessed it or been a victim of it. Travis had, however, experienced considerable disruption at home, his father having spent many years in prison and his mother dying of a drug overdose soon after his father’s release when Travis was 12 years old. Fifteen young men had been arrested for domestic violence offences which included criminal damage to the family home and assaults on family members and female partners. In a number of cases charges were dropped, but at least one third of the sample had been convicted of a domestic violence offence. At least one third also came from families known to social services, and six were currently involved in relationships with women where social services had intervened out of concern for the safety of those women and/or their children.

Findings

Home Lives

Inevitably, given the number of participants who had been in care or prison, most of the young men in our sample had childhoods that were characterized by highly disruptive home lives. For example, over half of the sample had at least one parent or stepparent that was either a drug user, a drug dealer or an alcoholic. Half had endured the prolonged absence of, or lack of contact with, one or other parent. Six had fathers and stepfathers who had served time in prison. Only three had grown up in the home of parents who were still together, though the most positive account of childhood life came from a young man, Spencer, who described ‘a good upbringing’, a ‘brill’ life, in which he was ‘spoiled’ by a mum who remained single after his dad left. Most had less stability, having to move house on various occasions, or live between different properties while separations and divorces were negotiated. Their parents typically entered relationships with new partners, not all of whom were willing or able to take care of, or in some cases even live alongside, children. For some, the distinction between formal separations and ongoing ‘break-ups’ was hard to discern, children often unsure about whether a parent who had left in the heat of an argument would come back.

Jez: *I used to stand on the stairs and listen like... There was just too many arguments to talk about... Everyone she [mother] has been with there's been massive arguments like... literally screaming, slamming doors and smashing plates. Walking out the house, slamming the door again, going missing for about three hours, coming back.*

Reunifications could also be distressing. When he was 14, Lewis had struggled with his parents 'bickering and shouting' before they separated, but was also unsettled when they got back together just as he was getting 'used' to it.

In many cases, grandparents, aunts and uncles had stepped in: sometimes as an alternative to formal care; sometimes as an interim arrangement while foster carers were found or children were put up for adoption; sometimes as simply an informal arrangement for teenagers when neither parent was willing or able to provide a home to their child; and in a few instances following the death of a parent. Four young men in the sample had parents or stepparents who had died: one of cancer, another of a heart attack, another of a drug overdose and one cause unknown. Some had also lost the extended kin who had acted as guardians when parents were either physically absent or emotionally unavailable because of the troubles in their own lives. Scott, for example, was placed in care and then finally allowed to live with his aunt because his parents, who were both heroin addicts, 'could not cope'. When his aunt died suddenly and his great grandmother – who had always been 'the one' to give him a 'hug' also passed away – Scott was saddened and angered, one day finding himself 'gripping' a friend in a headlock, after the friend jested that he was going to 'shag' Scott's 'auntie or nan'. Now it is not uncommon for Scott to 'hit', 'punch' and 'headbutt' the wall. This is certainly 'horrible' for Scott's other grandparents who have had to accommodate him and could be regarded as a form of domestic abuse. However, Scott's family see the problem more as one of 'anger' to be contained through the use of relaxation exercises. Scott finds this helpful, but also tries to alleviate his anger by playing violent video games.

Perhaps because there was nearly always someone who had attempted to provide love and care at some point, most young men were hesitant to condemn home situations that 'weren't that good'. Sam described having to leave his drug-using parents' home to live with an aunt and her 'pissed up' boyfriend 'who would just kick off'. Others, like Andrew, sought permission to speak about 'all the bad' and 'dodgy stuff' that both preceded and followed the day, aged five, he saw his father, having lost custody of the children, try to run their mother over. And there were also those, like Gareth, who regarded child abuse and neglect as 'normal'. Gareth's alcoholic father would 'tie' him and his brother up and 'put' them outside in the 'cold' in their bed clothes as punishment for naughty behaviour. Others had greater perspective, highlighting from the outset that it was not right that 'mum wouldn't

feed us anything' (Rory) or that dad or mum's boyfriend would regularly 'batter', 'beat' 'punch' and intimidate mum and the children (Ray, Richard, Keith, Simon), or that they had to feed, clothe and care for fathers who were cruel, negligent and mentally ill (Ian, Lee). In addition to this domestic violence – to which we return – at least eight participants were raised by men who had quite public reputations for violence outside of the home. Witnessing their fathers beating other men in the street, and sometimes seeing their fathers beaten too, could have profound effects. Some like Tim, suggested it had cultivated in them a desire to 'win' 'battles' through competence in fighting. Others, like Ian, suggested they had become insensitive to the risks involved having overcome fear at a very young age.

Tim:	<i>But the things I do is because I've seen my dad do it... I want to win cos I've seen my dad do it... winning battles by doing what he's doing. So I'll do it.</i>
Ian:	<i>When you're nine and your dad gets beat up by a six foot six Black geezer and then he's looking at you and he's saying 'you're next'... Once you get bit older it [the threat of getting hurt in a fight] didn't bother me that much then.</i>

Domestic Violence in their Childhood Homes

Around two thirds of the young men interviewed offered accounts of violence perpetrated by fathers, stepfathers and boyfriends against their mothers. Three knew their mothers to have been sexually assaulted by a male partner, one having heard it happen. At least five had seen violence that looked potentially lethal, involving strangulation or their mothers having been knocked unconscious. Only rarely was this behaviour described as domestic violence or abuse, and then typically following the lead of the interviewer. References to 'fights', 'hitting', 'battering', 'losing it' and men that just 'snapped' were much more common. Memories of such violence from younger years often revealed an acute sense of powerlessness. Ben, for example, recalled how he had felt 'hopeless' when his stepfather would hit his mother, getting his arm broken when he 'tried stepping in', and then a visiting uncle leaving without realising what had gone on: 'I wanted him to stay as long as possible', to 'please realise what happened'. When no-one did notice the abuse, Ben was left feeling 'bitter... I just started... hating the world... hating everybody'. Likewise, Carl recalled how, from the age of six, his parents would 'come up arguing' from the pub they ran, his father 'hitting' his mother in the children's presence, his mother putting her 'head over the sink, pouring with blood', Carl trying to help her but cutting himself on the debris as his dad 'pushed' or threw 'him out of the way'. Some were still stuck with feelings of helplessness. Elliot was the only child in a family of 10 to be taken into care (aged nine) after he alerted social services to the violence and drug dealing going on at home. Now he was routinely treated by his parents and siblings as an outcast. Nine years on, he had lost six stone in weight worrying about his mother's last child, who was born with pneumonia and only one lung. Elliot is visibly upset when he

recalls this and how the NSPCC are only now investigating allegations of child sexual abuse made against his father.

A number of those who had developed tough public reputations for violence explained how they buried their feelings of powerlessness by swearing they would never be beaten again. Duane, for example, revealed how ‘mad’ he had been the day he saw his grandmother hit by her boyfriend, while his uncle did nothing but leave the room.

Duane: *I was so mad at myself that I couldn't fight my gran's boyfriend... he was a grown man... Sat over there crying and there was nothing I could do about it. From that day, I promised myself I'd never, ever, ever, ever put myself in that situation again. Never.*

Many of the young men we interviewed revealed they had thought – or still thought – about killing their fathers or other men who had abused their mothers, and/or that they had physically confronted them. Several young men mentioned bringing in cousins or friends to physically throw out their mother's boyfriends once they decided they were strong enough to do so. Gavin recalled how, when his father had completed his prison sentence for stabbing his mother and threatening to douse her in petrol, he ‘lost’ his ‘head’: ‘I wanted to batter him. I wanted to kill him’. Gavin only stopped assaulting his father when his younger step-siblings appeared at the door, then realising ‘they shouldn’t be seeing this’. Others had also tried to instil the same fear in their fathers that their fathers had instilled in them. Having caught his father threatening his brother, Nigel ‘dragged’ his ‘dad off him... ‘I put my dad up by the wall with the same carving knife and said, ‘how would you feel?... It’s not nice. Is it?’ Some continued to think about exacting some kind of revenge. Having discovered how much his father had lied about his mother’s failings, Andrew ‘hated him so much’ and fantasized about ‘rip[ping] his head off’, only knowing now that his father had actually raped his mother.

Andrew was, nonetheless, most unsettled by his mother’s tendency to call him by his dad’s name when he has misbehaved. Four other men commented that awareness of father-son likenesses – behavioural and in terms of appearance – had encouraged them to reflect on their own behaviour, but also that, when pointed out by others, these similarities ‘hurt’ and ‘proper wound’ them ‘up’. Ian’s arrest for domestic violence, for example, occurred after he overheard his mother describe him as ‘nothing but a prick... just like his fucking dad’. Enraged, Ian ‘barged’ down their front door, a fragment cutting his mother’s eye, before his stepfather grabbed him by the throat and the two men exchanged blows. Many evoked the experience of seeing their mothers battered as reason for their own protectiveness towards women and children; protectiveness that could also be used to valorize the use of violence in

certain circumstances. Sometimes this valorized violence was directed at men who presented a threat to their mothers. For Tim, like a number of men who had at some point feared their mothers would be murdered, it justified a vigilante state of mind: 'next person who hits my mum, I'll kill them'. Having overheard his mum's boyfriend threatening to kill her, Tim decided to 'lock' his sister 'in the bedroom' before chasing the boyfriend 'down the street... swinging for him with a bat': 'he starts, like, 'Get here. I'll kill you'... I said 'Am I dead, am I?'... I smashed all his car windows with a bat [and] said to him 'next time you are going to kill my mum, think again'. Nigel told us how he heard his mum telling her boyfriend that she did not want to have sex, to 'pack it in now, don't want to' and him being 'really, really nasty and forced himself upon her and stuff'. Unable to discuss this with his mother, Nigel had to 'reassure' his brother that their mum was not being hurt: 'I had to stay strong for my little brother'. This staying 'strong', later transmuted into taking a disciplinary 'father role', something Nigel's brother now 'hated' him for. Similarly, Richard, whose father was a highly sadistic man – who intimidated his children by urinating on his son's bed, stabbing their cuddly toys, offering his daughter money for sex, and forcing his son to point a loaded gun at the family dog – became the 'alpha male' in his house once his father was finally 'out of the picture'. Those on the receiving end of such brotherly paternalism often experienced it as oppressive and erratic. Glen, whose older brother used to masturbate in front of him and once hospitalised him by punching and kicking him so badly, 'nearly' killing him, would 'boss' him around, telling him to assault strangers in the street after their father went to prison.

Those who took on father roles in households vacated by violent men did not always treat their brothers and sisters in the same way. When fights broke out in Andrew's home, he felt a need to console his older, but more vulnerable, brother who had learning difficulties, was deaf and suffered from epilepsy. Andrew construed his obligations towards his sister somewhat differently. She blamed their father's violence on Andrew's conception – 'You're the reason that dad's not here now; you made dad start hitting mum... You've just fucked everything up'. Meanwhile, Andrew felt it was his business that his sister was accruing a reputation as a 'slag'. Exchanges of views had culminated in them both being arrested for offences of domestic violence on separate occasions, their brother having become 'hysterical' and calling the police because he was so distressed. Likewise, Rory and his brother had found their sister giving a man a 'blow job at a bus stop' when Rory 'lost the plot', thinking that 'he's taken advantage of her [while] drunk': 'I ran at him, shoved him against the bus stop, started laying into him so much... I just left him there unconscious'. Rory's sister stopped speaking to him thereafter. Establishing motive in cases like this was nevertheless difficult. While Rory had used extreme violence to 'defend' his mother against the aggression of a violent partner, she had also drawn his attention to the connections between his rage and the 'grief' he still felt regarding the death of her former partner, a

psychotherapist, who had been a father figure to Rory up until the time of his sudden death, five years prior.

Antipathy was also directed, sometimes forcefully, at mothers, and even grandmothers, who were deemed negligent in providing care and protection. Ray was quick to condemn his grandmother, who had thrown the family out, leaving them with 'nowhere to live and no money', at a time when his father was already being violent to his mother. According to Ray, his grandmother was a 'dead evil', 'little slut' and 'prostitute'. He said he was 'made up' 'the old cunt' was now dead. Lee said only that he felt 'abandoned', aged 12, when his mother fled his father and is still unable to tell her so lest she feels 'guilty'. Jez, recalling life after his father went to prison, ruminated that his 'mum was always out... with different men... like the whole way through... six different men... most of them were... muppets'. Jez's mother's house had burnt down inexplicably at a time when Jez was home alone, feeling he had 'just had enough', and 'obviously' downstairs when the fire began in his bedroom. Likewise, Carl said that when he was ten years old, his mother would disappear for 'days and days on end', leaving him to care for his younger sister, and not caring at all when Carl was 'battered and left for dead', having been 'jumped' by a group of 'Pakis'. Seven years on, Carl feels he has tried to build bridges with his mum by assaulting her 'idiot' 'crack' smoking boyfriend who 'beats her up'. But Carl's mother has responded by 'kicking' him out, even though he was only 'trying to protect her'. Carl now shares his father's assessment of his mother: 'a poisoned bitch ... just evil'; Carl had severely assaulted her on a recent occasion when she had called his girlfriend a 'slag'.

Carl: *I told her to shut up and called her a slag... so she jumped over the settee at me and as she jumped... I punched her. So she hit the floor and then I started stamping on her. I was literally trying to kill her.*

In other words, protectiveness towards women often emerged out of experiences of powerlessness in the face of adult men's domestic violence. This protectiveness was liable to shade into controlling behaviour that was also intimidating, humiliating, and damaging in certain quite predictable family circumstances. For some participants, rage at having been abused by men their mothers had dated was played out some years later. Simon confessed to hitting and punching his mum 'proper on the lip'. He also smashes his room when 'angry', memories of the time his mum's boyfriend taped up his mouth and nose with duct tape, trying to 'kill me off', still 'locked' in his head despite counselling. Such violence could lead to fighting between mothers and adolescent sons. Gavin who had been sexually assaulted by a male carer when his mother was giving birth to his brother, and who was later physically reprimanded by his mother when he unwittingly revealed her husband was having affair, now routinely gets into arguments and fights with her. Gavin was arrested for criminal damage on his 16th birthday

after his mother ‘swung for him with a hammer’ before he took it off her and ‘smashed the wall’, kicking the garden gate off when his mother refused to let him back in the house. Others appeared to be simmering with resentment, though this was perhaps more evident in the interviews than in the transcripts. For example, Gareth, whose mother had seen his father banging his and his brother’s heads together, had given her an ultimatum: ‘choose me or him’. To Gareth’s dismay, she chose ‘him’. His brother had since tried to kill himself, while Gareth himself had a conviction for sexually harassing a female train passenger, described in the penultimate section of this report. Others, like Duane, drew inferences about all women from shortcomings they attributed to their mothers. Duane’s father, a man with a reputation for violence to women, had died when he was just four, his mother – ‘the woman who gets’ him ‘the most angry’ – then allowing a boyfriend who would take her money and prevent her from consoling his younger brother when upset, to move in with them.

Duane: *It made me realise that any woman can be manipulated to set me up. Any woman can be manipulated to cheat on me. Any woman can be manipulated to want to hurt me or whatever.*

But not all of those who assaulted their mothers, continued to blame their mum’s entirely for inciting their violence. Jon, for example, explained how things turned ‘bad’ between him and his mother, once she realised how much trouble his drug use was getting him in, as it had done his brother.

Jon: *I can remember one time when she was nagging me and nagging me and I don’t know something just clicked in my head, them times I weren’t even thinking, I didn’t even think and I had, I had like a can in my hand... I just swiped it down and it hit her on her hand... and she had a big lump on her hand and when, like after, after I done that I seen what I’d done and then I felt proper bad, do you know what I mean, I felt, it made me feel sick what I was doing.*

Memories of Schooling: Problems Exposed

Interrupted patterns of schooling were the norm, as one might expect among a sample drawn from criminal justice agencies and providers of alternative education programmes, with one notable exception, that of Lee, who was now studying for a degree in Law. Only eight of the 23 young men (Richard, Lee, Travis, Nigel, Rory, Peter Scott, Duane) who were aged 17 and above claimed to have secured GCSE level qualifications, although few knew how many or in what subjects. Instead, most were now, or had recently been, enrolled on vocational courses – typically for trainee car mechanics or aspiring chefs – provided to redress their exclusion from mainstream schooling or as part of a package of rehabilitation post-conviction for various crimes. What many participants said about their schooling, however, suggested a complexity of processes in which learning difficulties and ‘attention deficits’, possibly arising out of disrupted home lives, were detected late or misconstrued as disobedience. Some

participants in this study recounted how they either responded to challenges by teachers with such misbehaviour that they were excluded from school or chose to truant in order to avoid the humiliation of appearing to be a 'slow learner'. A minority, however, also noted how teachers had helped them, either by providing a listening ear, or by referring them to other service providers.

A few participants remembered that there had been problems during their primary or junior school years: Ray 'hated' primary school; Sam 'got in trouble a lot' for 'fighting and being naughty'; Carl for losing his temper, smashing up the school, going 'completely mad'; and Keith for behavioural problems that were severe enough for him to be sent to a secure unit, counselling having failed to resolve them sufficiently. Conversely, many of those who had been in and out of care or prison seemed to have very few memories of school at all and at least a third said they truanted for long periods of time, some 'never going' to school, during their secondary years. Those who did attend secondary school struggled both to accept the 'authority' of teachers, as Jon put it, and to keep up with the work set. Many belatedly discovered that they had learning difficulties of some kind, having been identified as 'dyslexic', illiterate or 'slow-learners' (Travis, Carl, Ben, Richard), prone to severe speech impediments (Gareth, Nigel) or otherwise unable to sustain sufficient attention, diagnoses of ADHD having been proffered in a number of cases (Tim, Glen, Phil, Elliot, Carl, Andrew) and one young man being diagnosed with autism. Such learning difficulties were often identified as the source of behavioural problems, those who could not keep up in class often playing the 'class clown' or easily angered by teachers who wanted to know why school work had not been completed. Within our sample at least eight had assaulted teachers and an additional eight were either routinely disruptive in class or abused teachers verbally. Eight participants also said they had been in trouble for assaulting or bullying other pupils while at school. Ultimately, half the sample had been excluded, some repeatedly, with at least six referred to Pupil Referral Units, or other secure educational facilities.

In some such instances, the stories young men told suggested that tell tale signs of abuse, violence and neglect at home were sometimes missed by teachers who failed to ask the right questions of those misbehaving. Some of those with learning difficulties (Carl, Ben) smashed up their schools – or went 'mad' – when presented with work they could not understand, or threatened female staff members in ways reminiscent of the violence they said adult men in their homes had perpetrated. Lewis, for example, was in trouble for terrifying a female teacher by slamming a door onto her, much as he slammed doors at home when angry with his mother, following her separation from his father. Other young men (Andrew, Glen) who had been arrested for offences involving domestic violence suggested they had learnt to 'terrorise' teachers, as did another man (Kirk) who refused to talk about domestic abuse in his own life despite indicating that there was sometimes 'sexual aggression' between him and

his girlfriend. A number of those who were living with abuse or neglect described starting fights with those they perceived to be judging them. Some teachers, for example, wittingly or unwittingly touched raw nerves in ways that many of our participants regarded as provocative. Tim was kicked out of school for assaulting a teacher soon after his parents – who used to ‘fight’ – divorced.

Tim: *He told me to ‘shut up’ and I was angry and I said to him ‘shut up or I’ll get my dad to punch your head in’. And he said to me ‘you haven’t got a dad’ and, and I didn’t see my dad for like six months so I threw a chair at his head and I got kicked out of school for it.*

Tim’s dad was most likely in prison at this time, having served at least seven sentences. Keith, who had been placed in care after his mother’s boyfriend got her ‘hooked’ on drugs, recounted similar events at school, once having hit his teacher when he said to Keith ‘at least I’ve got a nice home to go to’: ‘that just got me going... I just hit him and broke his glasses and hit him in the jaw and he got me arrested.’ Mark, too, argued that his teacher had goaded him by calling him a ‘stupid prick’ and then threatening him and other pupils with violence: ‘He got me wound up and then he was like saying ‘hit me, hit me’ so I went to hit him and then all the teachers jumped on me’. Being treated like ‘scum’ by a teacher was why Simon said he would ‘kick off... I’m not a muppet off the street you know’.

Goaded by other pupils often produced similar results among boys only too aware of their own vulnerabilities or their parents’ failings. Gavin, a victim of child sexual abuse, was excluded for fighting a boy who told him to ‘go shag his Granny’. Having heard these words, Gavin said he had just ‘flipped’. Sometimes pupils in trouble for racism also had reasons to be hateful. Gareth was excluded from school after he called a black teacher a ‘Paki’, explaining he had come to ‘hate’ Pakis after he was kidnapped by a group of Asian adults who bundled him into the boot of a car, having already given him a ‘kicking’ and assaulting him with a screwdriver. Jez, too described fighting with school children who were recent immigrants to Britain, putting a ‘stocky’ ‘Czech Republican’ boy who ‘barged’ him in hospital by going ‘crazy’.

Interpreting this behaviour as evidence of difficulties at home would nevertheless have been difficult for teachers, as some young men were simply not prepared to tell.

Andrew: *I know they warn you about stuff in school and that but... I’d never tell the teacher anything about my life... because teachers don’t listen to you so you feel, you think if the teacher’s not going to listen to you no one else is going to listen to you.*

In a number of instances, teachers had nevertheless picked up on some of these warning signs, though not in a consistent way. Lee, who had to care for his father rather than vice versa, was bullied for being 'scruffy' and 'dirty' at school, but teachers did at least notice the bruises inflicted at home. The teachers were ultimately persuaded by Lee's father's account of what had caused the bruises and 'nothing more was done of it'. Likewise, when Carl turned up for school with a black eye and no shoes, his teachers succeeded in getting social services to investigate and he was taken into foster care, though eventually returned to his family home. Quite a few young men hinted that referrals to 'counselling' services or 'anger management' had also come via schools; reactions to which varied, as we describe in the penultimate section of this report. Finally, a few participants had benefitted from the support and encouragement of individual teachers who saw beyond their aggression. Travis said that after his mother's death one female teacher had made herself available to him to talk 'any time' he was feeling upset: 'I would just go speak to her, have a cup of tea, biscuit, cup of soup, something like that. [We] just bonded from there'. Likewise, Keith, having worked things through with the teacher who goaded him for not having a 'home to go to', said he had now 'learned' from his 'mistakes' and was hence better able 'to control' his anger when provoked: 'I'll just man up and say 'look I'm not bothered''. Now Keith's teachers encourage him to find strength in adversity, asking him to act as a 'peer mentor' to other young people in trouble by sharing his experiences.

Love, Sex and Emotional Well Being

All of the young men who took part in the research had had some form of intimate or dating relationship with a female partner. Most said they had had a girlfriend or were currently seeing someone, though some like Duane were perhaps better described as 'sexually active' and uncommitted to any particular relationship. While some relationships were perhaps little more than 'dating', six participants (Carl, Glen, Ian, Lee, Nigel and Richard) had cohabited or were currently cohabiting with a partner in their own accommodation. An additional two (Daniel, Jon) had lived with their girlfriend's family while still in a relationship. Four had children with their partner or ex-partner (Lee, Nigel, Phil and Wayne) and one (Richard) was expecting their partner to give birth imminently. Three (Carl, Phil and Spencer) had partners who had previously been pregnant but one lost the baby and two had an abortion. Five (Carl, Phil, Richard, Spencer and Wayne) were, or had been, dating partners who already had children from previous relationships. Five said their relationships suffered from the strain of having partners with mental health and addiction problems and four young men had partners who admitted to having been raped or sexually assaulted in previous relationships.

Many described relationships that were initially regarded very positively, often because they provided some solace from negative experiences of family life and institutional care. Elliot, who had become the

outcast in his family after he reported his parent's violence to a teacher, described his fiancée and girlfriend of four years as one of few people who 'make him feel safe talking to', the two of them having been in care together:

Elliot: *She's been a great help to me and she always will be a great help to me at the end of the day... I love her to bits... I would do anything to help her and she would do anything to help me.*

A number of other participants also described longer-term relationships with some level of commitment in positive terms. Keith, another care leaver, whose mother was an alcoholic and whose boyfriend used to beat the children, said that what he liked about his girlfriend was:

Keith: *Being with her, everything. It's good having a girl with you, next to your side who you know you can trust.*

Scott, who suffered anger problems after the deaths of the relatives who had cared for him when social services removed him from the home of his drug using parents, explained that his girlfriend of two months had 'made [him] so happy so [he'd] never been angry and that':

Scott: *I never really showed that anger side to her, to her so. Really she didn't have to see it. When I was with her I wasn't angry and that and then after we split up I did get angry a bit but I stayed in a lot so, I didn't go out that much but.*

While some, like Jez, described relationships in which there were arguments from the 'get go', most remembered that there had initially been good times. Spencer, whose relationship finally ended when he punched his girlfriend while they were having sex, described initially being 'dead happy', unable to believe that he had 'got a girl like that' with whom he 'fell in love'. Likewise, Ian, who described a turbulent and physically violent relationship, was nonetheless able to identify times when he was happy in his relationship, moving in with his girlfriend when he was 18.

Ian: *I was in love with her... it wasn't so much she was the fittest looking girl I've ever been with or anything like that but we really got on... I'd never lived with a girl before and like, I don't know, I just, I like the part of getting in bed, cuddling up... I used to just like wrap around it sort of thing. And like I say it was good.*

Others, like Wayne, conceded that they had been 'obsessive' or became 'really attached' in the early stages of relationships, often by way of explanation as to how they had been oblivious to the extent to which former partners had controlled or duped them. .

Wayne: *I seen her for about six months... first love and all that. It's obsessive... she'd ring me up at like two in the morning saying 'Can you come down here and give me some of your money'... Or 'we're finished'. And, you know, me being obsessed with her thinking 'oh it's the first person I've ever had sex with... I love this person'... I would do it... She'd cheated on me a couple of times... I would consider her as a dirty person... a slag... I've always been 'you don't sleep with more than a couple of people'... probably from my mum filling me with that. So knowing that she'd like slept with fifteen, twenty people, ultimately I knew that she was not the person for me.*

Wayne's responses to this ex, whom he was to call 'a fuckin black bastard' and a 'whore', is documented in the next section of this report.

Others, like Lewis, said they now avoided getting involved in relationships that would become too serious too fast. After a girlfriend of several weeks had told Lewis she 'loved' him, what for him had been a 'bit of fun' suddenly felt 'too much' and seemed too 'clingy':

Lewis: *I'd argue and say 'do one' like. Then she'd mail me on Facebook 'Oh I'm sorry babe' and... I'm like, just sitting there taking deep breaths like, 'Do I really want this?'*

While some young men, like Duane, suggested they tended to pursue sex without commitment as a matter of course, such assertions could not always be taken at face value. Another man, Carl, ultimately let slip that one girl, who had been 'just a fuck buddy really' was actually someone he 'quite liked': 'I didn't want it to be just sex... I didn't know how to tell her. She lost her virginity to me. I know she wasn't a slag'. When Carl's mother lied to the girl, telling her Carl was seeing someone else, he was so distraught about the loss of the relationship that he stamped on his mother's head, the police then pursuing him for making threats to kill. Other men had ended up in altercations with the fathers of girlfriends who had warned them about hurting their daughters. Andrew, for example, had 'battered' a girlfriend's father who had called him a 'dirty prick', leading to the break-up of the very relationship he was seeking to defend.

Violence and Abuse Against and By Partners

Leaving aside three participants who chose not to talk at all about these matters, there were only four young men in the sample who said they had no experiences of intimate partner violence – conceived *narrowly* in terms of assaulting or being assaulted by a partner, sexual aggression, or other threatening behaviour such as damaging property or hitting walls in a way that was frightening in the context of a dating or intimate relationship. At least 16 participants had assaulted or behaved in a physically

threatening way to a partner. Half of the participants said that a partner had assaulted them too, though in all but a few cases, the men's own accounts suggested they were the primary aggressors.

In a few cases, the abuse described, as some of the examples in the previous section also reveal, was limited to one or two discrete incidents that were relatively inconsequential. Elliot, for example, had once put pressure on his partner not to go out with her friends, but this was in the context of severe financial hardship. She had once 'slapped' him too, for pulling down the trousers of another girl in a party game. Perhaps because their relationship was otherwise respectful and free of threat, Elliot and his partner were soon reconciled. Other young men, by contrast, described aggression and hostility that occurred with little forethought, in the heat of the moment, when relationships were breaking up. Andrew, who was appalled by his father's violence and hated people 'hitting girls' had only 'pushed' his girlfriend away when she accused him, without foundation, of infidelity for failing to reply to her text messages, him calling her 'cheeky' and ending the relationship a week later. Travis and his girlfriend, who had argued about his use of Facebook and her going out wearing 'low tops' ended up shouting at each other, him denying he had been unfaithful, her wanting the relationship to end, until he 'grabbed' her in order to make her 'listen', leaving bruises on her arms and her insisting he 'get off'. Indeed, instances where violent reactions were preceded by discoveries of infidelity, or suspected infidelity, by partners or, in some instances, ex-partners, were among the most common.

Such discoveries could lead, as Jez described it, to one partner 'getting in' the 'face' of another, or hitting or pushing them first, although in his case it was he who confronted his *ex*-partner when she started seeing someone else. Jon, who admitted that drug-induced 'paranoia' fuelled his jealousy, explained:

Jon: *We both liked to control each other... Obviously, I've always got more girls than I have got boys just cos I'm like... So I used to delete all her boys and that... and then when she wanted my phone to delete my girls I wouldn't give it to her you know what I mean.*

Arguments like this had ended either with Jon throwing a phone at his girlfriend, and it hitting her, or her hitting him as he snatched her phone and refused to return it.

Enraged by another young man who was 'proper all over his girlfriend', Simon 'punched' his girlfriend, albeit unintentionally, when she got caught in the crossfire. How innocent this was, however was hard to judge, as on another occasion he had 'lobbed a glass' and thrown a 'knife over [the] head' of a girlfriend he suspected of cheating on him, before telling her to 'fuck herself off'.

While it was not uncommon to hear men refer to ex-partners – where infidelity, whether the woman's or the man's, had been the source of conflict – as 'bitches', 'slags' or 'rats', not everyone we spoke to used such sexist language. Indeed, some men had managed to contain themselves – verbally and physically – when confronted with considerable provocation. Ian's girlfriend, for example, had threatened to make up false allegations about him touching two girls in their care, while at the public swimming baths. Having asked her the next day why she did this, the girlfriend threatened Ian – 'I'll fucking bang you out, you little prick' – but he was persuaded by an uncle to just 'leave it, let her get her stuff and go'.

Where both partners fought over a longer period the pattern was usually a steady escalation of violence, culminating in a grievous assault perpetrated by the man. Spencer described a relationship like this. Despite overwhelming evidence littered throughout his account, Spencer seemed unable to accept that his partner was prostituting herself to finance a drug habit. After a series of break-ups and reconciliations, two suicide attempts on her behalf and repeated criminal justice intervention – when the two of them had been caught 'proper hitting each other', her 'biting' and 'pinching', him 'punching' her, when they were both drunk – matters had come to a head when Spencer realised during intercourse that his partner had only moments before been having sex with someone else.

Spencer: *I went nuts. I was going to super glue her fanny up and everything I was that, that, that off my head... I just smacked her straight in the middle of the nose, blacked both her eyes... and she hit me back so I knocked her clean out, punched her dead hard, knocked her clean out.*

Ray also described a relationship in which there had been mutual fighting, he ultimately having 'battered' his girlfriend after she 'bit' him and tried stealing his things. Likewise, Rory responded in the following way to an 'overreaction' by a girlfriend who tried to hit him with a rolling pin after discovering that he had cheated on her.

Rory: *She's going sick and she got a rolling pin, tried to hit me with that but I just, all I did, I bit her but not hard, so I went like that on her wrist so she'd open her hand to drop the rolling pin. It was a defence move. She dropped the rolling pin, [I] grabbed both her wrists, lay her on the sofa and just pinned her down and went 'you're not moving until you calm the fuck down'.*

Knowing what such threats meant and how they were received by women who had been 'pinned down' was not always easy to discern from the men's accounts. Richard, in complaining that his girlfriend had 'hit' or 'kicked' him 'down below' while he was on top of her, he having first hit her in the face and resting his arm across her throat, revealed the relevance of what he was only later to mention: namely

that this partner was a victim of rape who must surely have anticipated that sexual violence could follow, and that the rumours circulating around Richard's estate to the effect that he was a 'rapist' may well have had some foundation in incidents like this. Indeed, the contexts in which some women were violent appeared genuinely tragic. Nigel, for example, described how a fight ensued after his partner began to deny that she had been raped in a previous relationship and 'pimped... out' by her mother. Why she was insisting this disclosure was now a 'lie' was unclear, but elements of what Nigel depicted as his reaction might well have encouraged the woman to change her story: him querying whether she was to be trusted, and then asking if she might 'call' him a 'rapist'. Nigel's girlfriend then started throwing plates, knives and a lamp at him, fracturing his knuckle before he started hitting her back. Subsequent assaults had involved Nigel throttling his girlfriend, busting her nose, and giving her a black eye, before he threatened to kill her in a phone call made at the police station when he was finally arrested.

The potential for denials, minimization and rationalizations to complicate accounts in which participants are striving to present themselves as victims despite evidence of their own aggression is acute. Only rarely were seemingly unguarded accounts of abusive behaviour offered. The case of Wayne – a young man who had been diagnosed with autism, introduced to the reader in the previous section – was perhaps the only exception. When he got 'set on something' he had 'to do it'. For this reason, Wayne appeared to lack the foresight that other participants had. For example, on one occasion when he slashed a man who had taunted him in the face with a Stanley knife, Wayne could not fathom why, in the aftermath, the local community did not come to regard him as some kind of heroic 'Al Capone' like figure. Wayne had dated many women. He dated: a girl of mixed ethnic origins despite his 'racist opinions'; a 'weirdo' who had been previously 'raped'; a much older woman with three children; an 'autistic' girl who self-harmed, a 'proper retard'; and most recently a 'nice' but 'snotty' girl. In none of these relationships did Wayne consider himself to have been abusive, having 'never really experimented with domestic violence as in like lock the door, beat the shit out of them and rape them'. But the detail of the stories that Wayne told, with no hint of irony, suggested otherwise. For example, there were stories about: 'snapping' and hitting an ex-girlfriend who ignored him in college; another woman who had to move house after he continued to intimidate her despite a court order; and, most disturbingly, an account of threatening to set the 'first love' he was 'obsessed' with on fire.

Wayne: *I pulled out a lighter out of my pocket and I said 'I'm going to burn you, you black bastard if you don't give me my jacket back'... And I pinned her up against the fence and I lit this lighter and I thought 'you either give me the property back or I'll burn it whilst it's on you. It's my property. I'll burn it, I'm allowed to'... 'It's your choice if you take it off or not'... 'I'm going to burn you, you're going to die'.*

Wayne regarded his terrorising of this woman – whom he now regarded as ‘a slag’ because of her sexual history – as entirely justified. He was thus unapologetic about it, and had consoled himself that ‘stupid’ women who ‘push’ men’s ‘buttons’ should expect to be ‘hit’.

In rare cases, the denial of the intention to harm was so vociferous that the logic of the violence remained obscure. Phil would interrogate his pregnant partner as to her whereabouts when he had been on remand. While he now knew she had actually been with her mother, the interrogations had angered his partner. Despite having been convicted of the assault described below, Phil’s reconstruction of a kick to his pregnant partner’s stomach continued to involve an implausible denial.

Phil: *She come up to attack me and that’s when I put my foot up and then just like, my foot ran into, her stomach ran into my foot so I just got out of there cos she said she phoned the police on me.*

Even more perplexingly, Gareth’s eight month relationship came to an end when he told his girlfriend how he had had sex with her the previous night while she had been too drunk to know. This, he regarded as the first time he had had sex. Subsequently, Gareth had been convicted of sexual harassment for slapping a female train passenger on the bottom, engaging her in conversation while two of his mates tried to burn her hair. Gareth insisted it was ‘not as bad’ as it sounded, though he has not a ‘clue why’ he ‘did it’.

Most men had some understanding of their behaviour, however. In one of the more reflexive accounts, Lee revealed how he would call his girlfriend ‘scum’ – as he had been called at school – when he returned home from university to find the house untidy and ‘nothing had been done’. Arguments about domestic chores, like who was supposed to be putting the dustbin out, would culminate in Lee getting ‘angry’ because he was himself ‘angry’ – with life in general – even though he knew he ‘shouldn’t be’. When excessive drinking followed, the arguments escalated, on the last occasion Lee claiming he ‘blacked out’ only to discover:

Lee: *I’d punched her about three times and I’d actually hit her across the back with a metal bar and then as she tried to leave, em, I’d actually em strangled her as well but released her. And then I... followed her outside. So it was a very serious assault... a really despicable one... I carry a lot of guilt for it and too right.*

Others seemed to be grappling for a socially acceptable explanation for behaviours they could not quite admit to themselves. Rory, for example, described seeing ‘the red mist’ before losing his temper, while still denying he had ever assaulted a girlfriend. In such circumstances, Rory ‘loses control’ of what he

does, only later realising: 'it's only after I'm done I sit back and think 'shit, I've just done that...' One day I know I'm going to do something stupid if I don't calm myself down'. Conversely, a few of the older men in the sample who were more routinely involved in violent crime showed little compunction about their violence, instead suggesting they had become skilled at intimidating people. Glen, a 21 one year old with a track record of violence (that included robberies, and arson, assaults on the police) and eight prison sentences behind him, described three relationships in which his own 'paranoia' got the better of him. In these relationships his violence had been repeated – headbutting, punching in the face, strangulation – coupled against public humiliations, such as pouring drinks over partners and rubbing food in their faces when out. When one woman threatened to leave Glen, having overheard him telling an ex-girlfriend he still loved her, he throttled her, before taking her hostage, and instructing a cousin to bring some petrol so he could kill her.

Glen: *I jumped on top of her, put my arm like that on her neck although I moved it straight away then... and I smacked her in the face and goes 'fuck off now... you're pissing me off'... And I went into like the hallway and she followed me in and she [hit] me straight in the back so I turned around, I've put her arm up her back and I pushed her on the floor and I hit her five times in the back and I goes 'now fuckin stay down'.*

Others like Ben, Ray and Duane were implicated in forms of gang violence that were meted out against women. Women that Duane knew were not only being 'spat at' and 'slapped', but 'beaten up' and 'set up' in ways that 'got at' rival gang members. This, according to Ben, could entail shaving off the hair of the girlfriends of rival gang members, gang rapes and kidnappings. Duane explained how in this context he would work himself up psychologically, putting himself in a mindset in which he convinced himself that the women he was seeing deserved violence. Attacking them was a means of 'safeguarding' himself lest they be tempted to betray him to one of his rivals.

Duane: *I told myself that I had reason to do it or I told myself they give me a reason. They deserved it.*

On occasion Duane would also damage property with the explicit aim of intimidating a girlfriend.

Duane: *I went outside to hit the bins for the simple fact that I know that she would hear the bins being hit. She would hear the force that I was hitting the bins at and I think that would scare her more than me hitting her... The fear that I seen in her eyes was like [pause] it was, it was more than if I would have hit her anyway.*

Sometimes this kind of striking out at bins, walls and doors was a deliberate attempt to intimidate. Gavin explained how he would punch the wall 'next to the head' of his girlfriend, on one occasion

because she had also hit him. In calling her a 'slag' and then 'punching the wall' Gavin reminded his girlfriend of what he is 'like', she having previously seen him take a knuckleduster out of his pocket in order to knock 'clean out' a stranger who had wolf-whistled at her. Several other men (Ben, Daniel) in the sample talked about this kind of controlled loss of control as evidence of just how much restraint they could muster. For some then, 'snapping' but still knowing 'the limit', i.e. not actually striking a partner, was becoming a means of distinguishing oneself from fathers and stepfathers whose uncontrollable violence they had earlier condemned. In such instances, explosive reactions that had materialised during earlier personal crises appeared to have become a little more rehearsed in subsequent relationships.

Differentiating these men from those who were less calculating was nevertheless a question of interpretation that may well have seemed academic to the women involved. Amongst those whose abusive behaviour could arguably be considered mild and confined to relatively isolated incidents, were young men who were known to be capable of considerable violence. These included those mentioned at the start of this section: Jez, who before he had ended up 'slapping' his ex-girlfriend, had tracked down her new boyfriend and, with some assistance from his mate, set about the boy 'whacked him in the face, gripped him, butted him ... clear in the nose ... pushed him up against the face'; Elliot, who had narrowly escaped a conviction for murder, his friend having pushed an Asian man they had been fighting into the river, after he had been knocked unconscious; and Andrew who had also severely 'battered' an ex-girlfriend's father who had called him a 'dirty prick', leading to the break-up of the very relationship Andrew was defending. Missing from our discussion here were also those who said there had never been any intimate partner violence in their relationships. This did not always mean that partners had nothing to be afraid of, for it also included participants like Carl who, as we have already documented, had made threats to kill his mother and had seriously assaulted her. Carl's most recent partner had been warned by social services that if she continued to have a relationship with him, her child would be taken into care; a warning, which according to Carl, his girlfriend was willing to ignore, but he was not, hence his decision to end the relationship.

Responses to Violence: Official, Familial and Personal

As is apparent from the disclosures documented above, relatively few men in the sample regarded their own violence, whether perpetrated against partners and ex-partners, or other family members, as an enduring problem that they alone were responsible for. Violence against fathers and their mothers' partners could be justified as revenge for previous harms or a means of protecting their mums. Violence against mothers, some of whom were abusive and neglectful, was often described as retaliatory. Violence against siblings was often construed as a form of protective paternalism, directed

at brothers who needed disciplining when abusive fathers were absent, or sisters deemed ‘slags’ because sexually active. Against this backcloth, many young men regarded themselves as demonstrating considerable restraint in their relationships. Rather than hit their partners, as their fathers and stepfathers had hit their mothers, they had hit the wall instead. If they had hit their partner it was because of things she had done or said. In some such cases, there was, it was argued, no problem to be solved once a decision had been made never to date that particular woman again. As Jez surmised:

Jez: *No-one else except that one girl can make me slap them. Trust me. I can never slap another girl, just her. I hate her with a passion... a big, big passion... She's just a rat.*

This attribution of violence incitement to the victim was why some participants, like Spencer, dismissed groupwork programmes for domestic abuse perpetrators, like IDAP (Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme), as only really relevant to those who are ‘still with the exes’, and why he regarded ‘keeping single’, or at least avoiding getting close to another partner, a better long term solution. Others simply thought that finding the right woman and/or avoiding criminalization was the answer, Daniel explaining how his current girlfriend, unlike his ex, succeeds in stopping him getting into fights with other men because:

Daniel: *She just begs me not to... If someone says something to me and I... say 'I'll fuckin' have him' like she begs me not to like and I just give in to her... Cos I don't want to end up locked up...*

Conversely, others, like Richard, who had partners with children, or who were currently pregnant, were positive about the capacity of such interventions to reduce their risk levels. For him ‘going over things’ and ‘positive self-talk’ were a means of preparing to take on responsibility for children: ‘it has made a really big difference and, to me it has anyway’.

Only three men in the sample were currently engaged in IDAP, such programmes usually only offered to adult male offenders. At younger ages around a third of the sample had been offered anger management or counselling, the latter universally regarded as more helpful than the former. Counselling and other mental health services were frequently valued as providing an opportunity to have someone to ‘talk to’ if not necessarily to facilitate psychological change. Anger management was commonly dismissed as unhelpful, ‘crap’ or ‘just a game’, in part because of the difficulties of talking alongside other young men who did not take it seriously or who could not be trusted.

Contact with the police in relation to domestic and family violence had been rather erratic in most participants' lives. Some, like Jez, who had grown up in turbulent homes but where there had been no criminal justice intervention were surprised when the police were called for what they had regarded as rather minor assaults on their partners. Fifteen others had been arrested for crimes of domestic violence, though typically after a succession of conflicts. Ten of these 15 had ultimately been prosecuted – three (Andrew, Ian, Jon) relating to violence to a family member and seven (Lee, Nigel, Phil, Richard, Spencer, Travis, Wayne) relating to violence towards a partner – though not necessarily in every instance where the police had been called. In some instances, where arrests were for assaults on mothers and step-fathers, police intervention was regarded as unjustified, the young men themselves having often been assaulted too by parents, or responding to ongoing forms of exclusion, neglect and marginalization. In such instances, the imposition of curfews and electronic tags was sometimes sanctioned alongside youth offending team supervision or probation orders. These kinds of monitoring arrangements were sometimes exploited by abusive parents and step-parents who knew those sanctioned had a lot to lose if they retaliated against further taunting. Jon explained the difficult position he felt his mother put him in when she requested continued contact while he lived with his brother and after a restraining order had been placed put him in.

Jon: *Cos she, she'd tell me to come to the house for whatever reason to get money or to get clothes... she'd start nagging me and I'd throw things or be violent towards her and then. Obviously I shouldn't be putting my hands on my mum but she'd call me round to the house when she knew I weren't allowed in the house... I was wrong, wrong for doing what I was doing, she was in the wrong for calling me round to the house.*

Jon was ultimately imprisoned for breaching his restraining order. Elliot was also returned to court after his father assaulted him and smashed up the electronic tagging equipment installed in their house.

Where the police were called because participants had assaulted partners or ex-partners the outcomes varied; in some cases no further action being taken because both partners had assaulted each other; in other cases arrests were made and prosecutions pursued resulting, in at least seven cases, in convictions for violence towards a girlfriend. In at least three instances, restraining orders that had been imposed proved hard to comply with: Spencer having breached his when he and his ex decided to pursue a reconciliation in a local hotel; Nigel struggling to ignore the text messages from an ex he had assaulted but who nevertheless wished to still see him; and Wayne continuing to 'hang around the corner' to 'intimidate' his ex-partner. Among the sample, four (Nigel, Wayne, Richard and Travis) had received probation supervision for assaulting a partner, combined in one case with a fine and restraining order and another with a fine and community service. Two (Lee and Spencer) had received a suspended

sentence both combined with probation supervision and Spencer also being on electronic tag for three months. Phil was the only young man who had been sentenced to custody for assaulting a partner.

With regard to youth offending team supervision, very few of the young men suggested this had helped them redress their violence. In many cases few participants subjected to youth offending team supervision had any recollection of the topic of partner violence being broached. This is not to say it was never helpful. Lewis, for example, recollected how an inspiring YOT worker helped him realise he was taking out his annoyance with other people on his mother:

Lewis: *I started realising then and like I was taking it out on my mum and she was getting upset and that was upsetting me then... My dad doesn't really... show emotion as much. So when I started seeing it getting to my mum and I just broke down once like, I had a big cry in my room and I just dried my eyes and... thought 'that's it, I'm not doing it no more'. Went down, gave my mum a hug and said 'I'm so sorry like [for] taking it out on you'. I can feel the hair standing up on the back of my head now talking about it. But I'll never do it again. It's not my mum's fault.*

Only a minority of participants conceded that they felt 'guilty' – as opposed to having 'pled guilty' – about violence inflicted on a partner and other family members, but in a few of these cases the criminal justice process had played some role. Lee, for example, said it was evident to the judge when he went to court that he was 'riddled with guilt'; and Jon, noting that he felt 'bad, proper bad, proper guilty', his mother having taken out a restraining order against him, after he assaulted her.

In other cases, however, young people's achievements, for example, with regard to reducing their drug use appeared to have been celebrated in the absence of any discussion of domestic violence offences which had been grievous and for which no regret had been expressed. Phil, for example, told us that he had been singled out as an exemplar of rehabilitation to other young people because he had stopped using drugs after he had been released from custody, but he had no recollection of anyone talking to him about domestic abuse, despite his continued insistence that his pregnant partner was to blame for running her stomach into his foot and that he was not the sort of man to abuse a woman: 'I wouldn't do that, I'm not like that.'

This is not to say that young men in these situations did not need opportunities to recognise that they themselves had something positive to give back to the world, only to point out that such denials need redressing. Having failed at school, many had valued experiences of community re-education programmes where they had learnt new skills. For some, this had enabled them to anticipate a future in which they could work and thus live independently, whether of families that had not treated them well or the care system. For Nigel, being referred to a Pupil Referral Unit was a positive step in his

education. Only once he was ‘treated... like a person and not a child’ was he able to attain his GCSEs. In one exceptional case, that of Lee, education appeared to have become a salvation. Now studying Law at university, and having received help from a range of professionals – his probation officer, his doctor, a university therapist and his mum and her new partner – Lee had come to realise that he could have been sentenced much more harshly, that he had been ‘sexist’ and that the ‘fatalist attitude’ he had adopted, from ‘being abused’ to becoming ‘a perpetrator’, was ‘rectifiable’.

Indeed, in some cases challenging drug and alcohol use had probably had to take precedence over redressing violent behaviour.

Rory: *I ended up in hospital because I'd stopped eating. I was doing drugs... cocaine... My body started shutting itself down, I ended up in hospital for three weeks... on a drip and all these protein milksbakes to get my body up and running again... It scared me because I almost died, so. I'm just trying to change now.*

Nevertheless, it was evident among a number of participants that the capacity to relate to partners and other family members in non-threatening ways would remain lacking post-punishment. Noting that they were no longer with women whose behaviour they regarded as provocative, and having ‘sorted’ their ‘head’ out by exiting prison, probation or youth offending team supervision less dependent on drugs, redressing previous violence towards a partner or other family member was not regarded as pressing by many.

In this context, support offered by partners and other family members could be similarly double edged. There were positive cases such as Scott’s, whose family were trying to help him contain his anger following a number of painful losses. Scott now genuinely enjoyed spending time with his younger cousins who have ‘been like two little brothers’, so much so that he could see himself adopting other children who had been in care when he was older. Indeed, many young men talked about caring grandmothers and aunts who had genuinely been there for them when they were most upset, distraught or traumatized, often in contrast to parents who were regarded as abandoning or teachers who were regarded as goading, as we described earlier. Whether or not this support contributed to situations that also left some young men’s own violence unchallenged, or helped sustain family situations in which abuse or neglect remained unreported, we cannot say, though it is a possibility. Conversely, when professionals had intervened in families where there was violence, some young men had come to the conclusion that there was no-one there for them. Andrew, for example, pointed out that social services had tended to focus firstly on his mother and then his disabled brother, it not being until his enrolment

on a 'knife crime programme' for convicted young offenders that he was finally able to 'get stuff off his chest'.

Andrew: *[When] you get help is when you've been arrested and you've been put on something like this. Then you get all the help that you've needed... But then when you're just a normal kid... like me or any other lad... that comes to YOT, ask any of them... 'have you had any help before you got put on YOT?' they'd say 'no'... You can't exactly talk to your mum about it if it [violence in a relationship] happens.*

This kind of listening work could be especially important for young men who blamed their mothers or women in general for their own misfortune. It was through one-to-one work with a youth worker that Ben, for example, had come to the realisation that his mother, whom he had never respected and often intimidated, had been extremely courageous when she had chosen to go 'homeless' – as 'a single mum with kids' – rather than continue in an abusive relationship. While they were still not on talking terms, Ben could now perceive how much his mother had had to cope with and hence what she had had to overcome:

Ben: *It took a bit of confidence out of her. Like every single punch... to the point that she was just drained and like didn't care how she looked. She didn't care whatsoever what anybody thought and... basically she lived for him to abuse and stuff.*

In more exceptional cases this listening work was undertaken in the context of religious conversions consolidated during prison sentences. Wayne, always 'fascinated' with religion, praised the Catholic priest who did not prejudge him to be 'scum' and made him a 'trustee' within the prison Church. 'Conversations' with this priest helped Wayne to formulate strategies to contain his anger, though not necessarily ones that had challenged his justifications for violence. Jon similarly had converted to Islam while in prison and was now aiming to 'practice that properly' in order to become a 'better' or 'new person', though in his case as in others previously mentioned, addressing alcohol and drug use was conceived as the route to reducing violent behaviour. Jon had also become close to his girlfriend's mother – the girlfriend's mother herself a youth offending team worker – after his relationship with his own mother deteriorated: 'She knew where I was coming from and she tried to help me'. But matters became complex as Jon and the girlfriend's relationship became conflicted and he began 'arguing' with the girl's mother 'all the time', the mother not wanting to cast Jon out, but also needing to keep him and her daughter apart.

Moving on from violence was thus difficult for many, those who perpetrated it, those on the receiving end of it, and those who tried to help. Some of our participants felt unable to change or feared they could not do it, and that crucial opportunities had been missed when they were younger.

Duane: *I'm not saying that I can't learn new things and I can't take opinions on board, but as for anyone being able to change my opinion... It's more difficult now than then.*

Some, including two of those where social services were supervising the men's access to children because of the risks they presented (Lee, Richard), were also bitter that they had been made by abusive fathers to turn down support opportunities that were made available to them as young teenagers. More exceptionally, some still lacked perspective on the relationship between their pasts and presents. Post-imprisonment and despite the support of the prison priest, Wayne, for example, still idolized a father who regarded him as a 'retard' and who was prohibited from living with his children because of the risks he posed. Now an adult, Wayne himself was only dimly aware of how sadistic his feelings were towards children.

Wayne: *I took him [ex-girlfriend's son] to a park one day, you know, the climbing frames and he said he couldn't climb it and I went 'you can' and I encouraged it and he climbed up to the top and I walked off and I left him, thinking 'go on fall you little bastard, I hate you'. Em, bearing in mind this is a four year old you know it's a bit sick you know.*

Conclusion

This report has provided an overview of the life history accounts of 30 men, aged 16-21, who had experiences of domestic abuse. Participants in the study revealed a range of personal vulnerabilities, a considerable number describing mental health problems, learning difficulties and attention deficits, amidst illicit drug use, excessive alcohol consumption, and multiple forms of social disadvantage. These social disadvantages included homelessness and other acute forms of housing instability, living in homes where parents were involved in crime or addicted to drugs, the absence of stable parental care, being subject to imprisonment and institutional care, exclusion from school, low levels of education and underemployment. Witnessing violence at home or between family members was evident in most participants' accounts. For those who had experienced this violence in pre-teenage years, recollections of family life were frequently characterised by feelings of acute powerlessness. Resolutions to never appear vulnerable to victimisation again or to let their siblings or mothers be abused by an adult man were not uncommon. Such resolve was often linked to participants' assertions of protectiveness towards women that, in turn, was used to explain confrontations with violent men. Consequently, protectiveness towards women was often implicated by participants in their accounts of family violence against abusive fathers, stepfathers, and other men who had dated their mothers, as well as against sisters who were perceived to be sexually promiscuous and mothers who were regarded as failing to

provide appropriate care, put them first, or otherwise to blame for their problems. Many participants had, from a young age, to care for siblings in the context of another adult's violence or neglect. A few had also had to care for violent fathers after their mothers had moved away.

It was in these contexts that many young men valued the solace and closeness intimate relationships with women promised. Such new relationships were often negotiated in the context of continued dependence on parents who had separated, foster carers, extended kin or their partner's family. While many were relatively brief dating relationships, others had begun cohabiting and starting families. Violence took many forms within these relationships and was sometimes perpetrated against young men by partners as well as by them. While abuse and/or controlling behaviour was a common response to relationship breakups that followed in the wake of accusations of infidelity, some relationships became violent on a much more enduring basis. While many participants described 'fighting' in which they themselves had been hit or slapped by partners or ex-partners, some men described how they won such fights by battering their partners. None of the participants described living in fear of their partners or being at the receiving end of violence that they perceived as life-threatening, though many had claimed to have seen their mothers badly beaten or strangled, and some knew that their mums had been sexually assaulted. Being on the receiving end of other men's violence, and/or having seen their fathers badly beaten had also been traumatic for some.

In some accounts, particularly those offered by older participants, it was evident that the capacity to use violence, or the threat of it, to control and intimidate a partner had gradually developed over time. This development had not only taken place through witnessing violence between adult carers. It had also occurred in the contexts of: schooling where teachers were terrorised; in the streets where fights were won and lost against other men; and at home where outbursts of anger had frightened a parent or other relative unexpectedly. Not all of the violence perpetrated against partners was quite so calculated, however, and in some instances its logic had not always been apparent to those who had perpetrated it. How much insight they had into their own behaviour varied considerably between participants, as did levels of denial and rationalization. While few said they felt guilty, participants clearly had good reason to feel ashamed or embarrassed about what they had done. Many of the young men who took part in the study also had reason to feel angry and betrayed. Some had experienced multiple losses, including the deaths of a parent or estrangement from them. Others had endured periods of neglect, sometimes as one parent fled the abusiveness of another. Few had stable sources of support they could turn to. It was against this backcloth that ex-partners, some of whom had been deemed worth 'fighting' with other men over, were often recast as 'slags', 'rats' and troublemakers, who had brought the worst out in them. Discerning whether participants' sexism motivated the violence or was more generally post hoc

rationalisation either for abusive behaviour or for coming to terms with the termination of relationships they had not wanted to end is a question of interpretation. That said, expressions of misogyny, murderous fantasies of exacting retribution on fathers and mothers, amidst occasional expressions of racism and/or self-loathing can be read as evidence of the strength of the hatred that was felt, sometimes only temporarily, towards those on the receiving ends of a 'battering'. Amongst the younger men outbursts against parents, teachers and partners often appeared to reveal deeper hurts, the meaning of which was only just becoming apparent and hence had been missed both by victims and professionals with duties of care. Incomprehensible violence whether at school or at home often precipitated an escalation of punitive and exclusionary official responses that saw participants leave mainstream education, exposed to community based supervision, electronic monitoring arrangements, or sentenced to imprisonment.

More constructive and containing responses to violence were perceived as a rarity in the lives of most participants, though there were isolated examples of such efforts. Grandparents who provided care, a home and someone to talk to, counsellors who listened, teachers who endured and overcame confrontation without retaliation and, occasionally, criminal justice workers with foresight and strong mediation skills were sometimes able to help young men redress their violence even if only temporarily. Efforts to demonstrate to young men that they could contribute to the world through developing their skills or by assisting them to gain educational qualifications were valued, as was recognition of evidence of desistance from alcohol and drug use. But a few young men also commented on the effects of being moved emotionally by support that had enabled them to recognise that the people they were hurting were not necessarily the real source of their anger, that mothers who had endured abuse had sometimes demonstrated considerable strength in the context of adversity, and that similarities between their own behaviour and that of abusive fathers and stepfathers was not necessarily a damning indictment of the kinds of men they were destined to become. What tended to mark these men out from those who were less able to reflect upon abuse they had perpetrated was the strength of the relationships they had formed with significant others; a strength needed to withstand the potential backlash challenges to their worldviews sometimes evoked.

Even amongst 16-21 year olds who have grown up in family homes where there has been abuse, many struggled to recognise that threatening or violent behaviour in their own relationships as domestic violence. This lack of understanding was certainly compounded by the many personal vulnerabilities and social disadvantages with which participants in this research had had to contend. It was probably also compounded by the absence of contact with service providers who explicitly address the 'fights' and 'arguments' that young men have with partners, ex-partners, parents and step-parents as potentially

domestic abuse. Providing such service provision is likely to be a challenge given the diversity among young men who are being violent in family contexts. As the stories we have documented here attest, teenage boys who are encountered on some occasions as witnesses to domestic violence, or co-victims alongside their mothers, are also liable to being identified on other occasions as another victimizer within the family home or a threat to young women with whom they are intimately involved, as well as their children, or even their partner's parents. At what point and in what contexts we tell young men such as those in this sample that they are 'perpetrators' needs to be the subject of greater reflection. As we have shown in this research, some of those known to service providers for domestic violence offences are routinely involved in using a range of threatening and violent behaviours to intimidate partners. A minority seemed also to get sadistic enjoyment from this abuse of power and some were implicated in the perpetration of violence against women with whom they were either not intimately acquainted, for example, in the context of gang rivalries, or who were complete strangers to them. The majority were not involved in this kind of violence, though they occasionally acted in ways that intimidated parents, partners and other family members, with varying degrees of awareness and/or self-justification. At least some of the time, however, most were keen, and occasionally desperate, to develop an understanding of why they had started to behave in abusive ways. Sadly, few had talked to anyone in any depth about what they had done or why they did it. In this respect, critical opportunities to prevent subsequent generations of young men becoming domestic abuse perpetrators are still being missed.

Appendix 1: Interview Protocols

From Boys to Men: Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study about domestic abuse. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the research about?

The main aim of the research is to understand why some boys grow up to carry out domestic abuse when others do not. We want to learn more about what young men have to say about domestic abuse and what can be done to prevent it.

Why have I been chosen?

We are asking 30 young men who have experienced domestic abuse in their lives to take part in one-to-one interviews. Those invited to take part may be people who have either been victims of domestic abuse, those who have been accused of doing it, and/or those who have witnessed it.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

The interview will be conducted either by David Gadd or Mary-Louise Corr who both work at the University of Manchester. If you would prefer either a male or a female interviewer please let us know.

The interviewer will help you to talk about your experiences using a 'life history' approach. The interview is an opportunity for you to tell your story without being interrupted. The interviewer will help you identify which things you most want to talk about. The interviewer will be interested in hearing whatever things you think are important about your experiences of violence.

The interview will usually take about 90 minutes but if you need longer the interviewer will be able to listen to you for as long as you need. The interview will take place in a room where other people cannot hear what you are saying and in which you feel comfortable. This will usually be a place where you meet with the worker who has given you this information sheet.

The interviewer will need to record the interview so that they have an accurate record of what has been said. The interviewer will show you how to stop the recorder and you can ask for the recording to stop at any time during the interview.

How is confidentiality maintained?

After the interview, a member of the research team will listen to the recording and type up what was said – the interview will then be deleted from the audio-recorder. All recording equipment and typed up versions of the interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or on a password secure computer that only the research team can access. We will make sure that your responses cannot be traced back to you by giving you a "fake" name.

What you say to us in the interview is **completely confidential**. This means that whatever is spoken about in the interview will not be communicated to other people **except** where you tell us that you, or someone else, are at risk of harm or danger. If an interviewee did say that they or anyone else were at risk of harm or danger the interviewer would tell a project worker about this. The interviewer would talk to the interviewee about how best to pass this information on before doing so.

What happens to the data collected?

Once the interviews are over the researchers will look at all of the interviews they have conducted. They will want to use quotes from interviews in the reports, books and articles they will write about this research. When they do this, they will remove any information (names, place names etc.) which could be used to identify you or anyone else you have mentioned in the interviews. The research reports will be used to help those who work in the area of domestic abuse to better understand the perspectives of young men affected by violence.

At some point in the future the anonymised transcripts of what interviewees have said will be made available to other researchers so that they can also study young men's perspectives about domestic abuse in more detail.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

You do not have to take part in the research if you do not wish to. Feel free to ask the interviewer any questions that you have about taking part. If you do decide to take part, you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. If you change your mind about being involved in the research you can stop the interview at any time. You can do this without having to explain your reasons for doing so.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

You will be offered a £10 Amazon voucher to compensate you for your time and any travelling costs you have incurred.

Criminal Records Check

All members of the research team carrying out the interviews have undergone a criminal records check.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the research team by phone, writing or email: David Gadd, The School of Law, The Williamson Building The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL; Tel: 0161 275 5621 ; Email: david.gadd@manchester.ac.uk
Mary-Louise Corr, The School of Law, The Williamson Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL; Tel: 0161 275 0347; Email: mary-louise.corr@manchester.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong?

At the end of the interview, if you feel upset or need further help or advice please let the researcher know and they can advise you on who you could contact.

If you are unhappy about the conduct of the research and would like to make a formal complaint you should write to: Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

Background Data

Before we begin the interview I would like to collect some background data from you:

Identifier Code:

Age:_____

Place of Birth:_____

Religion:_____

Nationality: _____

Ethnicity:_____

Are you in any education/training? _____

Highest Educational Qualification:_____

Do you have any kind of employment? _____

Do you have a regular income? _____

Are you in a relationship? _____

Current Living arrangements:

living on your own ☐

living with partner/spouse ☐

living with children ☐

in residential care ☐

with foster carers ☐

living with friends ☐

living with parents ☐

in custody

other (please state)_____

Interview Schedule

1. As you know this research is about people who have been involved in domestic abuse or violence either as victims, witnesses or because they have been accused of doing it. The aim of the research is to try and understand the experiences of people affected by domestic abuse and how that fits into their life story.

With this in mind, the first question I would like to ask you is if you could tell me your life story. Feel free to say whatever you would like, whatever comes to mind, take as much time as you need and I will just take a few notes so that I get down the important points.

[The role of the interviewer is to facilitate the interviewee's response and to probe for more detail/explanation when required.]

2. Domestic abuse can be 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.
 - Can you tell me about the times you have seen other people do this in their relationships?
 - Can you tell me about the times when it has happened to you?
 - Can you tell me about the times when you've done it to someone else?
3. What about physical violence? Perhaps when you've seen someone hit, kicked or beaten by their partner, boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife?
 - Can you tell me about any times when this kind of violence has impacted on your life? As witness, victim or perpetrator?
4. What about sexual aggression? Can you tell me about any times when this has impacted on your life? [As witness, victim or perpetrator?]
5. Can you tell me about any times when violence that happened away from home or outside of relationships impacted on your life? [As witness, victim or perpetrator?]
6. Can you tell me about any times in your life when someone has been able to help you come to terms with the violence that you told me about?
 - What about the help you are getting at the moment from X?
 - What sort of help did you/do you need, from whom?
 - Can you tell me about times when someone has been aggressive, but you have managed to avoid being violent?
7. Is there anything else you want to ask me or tell me before I turn off the recorder?
8. If I have further questions, would you mind if I call you?
 - Or would you rather I didn't contact you again?

Appendix 2: Sample Overview

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Care History	Recruiting Agency	Witness to domestic abuse within family ¹	Perpetrator of partner abuse	Victim of partner abuse	Arrest/ conviction for domestic violence offence	History of Imprisonment
Ben	20	Black	No	YOT	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Duane	18	Black	No	YOT	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Andrew	17	White	No	YOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Jez	18	Mixed Race	No	YOT	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Daniel	16	White	Yes	YOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Carl	17	White/ Traveller	Yes	YOT	Yes	No	No	No	No
Elliott	18	White	Yes	YOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Gareth	17	White	Yes	YOT	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Gavin	17	White/ Traveller	No	YOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Keith	16	White	Yes	Alt. Educ. (also on YOT)	Yes	No	No	No	No
Kirk*	17	White	No	Alt. Educ. (ABC)	No	No	No	No	No
Mark	16	White	No	Alt. Educ.	Yes	No	No	No	No
Lewis	16	White	No	Alt. Educ. (ASBO)	Yes	No	No	No	No
Scott	17	White	Yes	Alt. Educ.	Yes	No	No	No	No
Ian	20	White	Yes	Probation	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Phil	18	White	No	YOT	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Glen	21	White	Yes	Probation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lee	19	White	No	Probation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Richard	20	White	No	Probation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Travis	19	White	Yes	Probation	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Simon	16	White	No	Alt. Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Spencer	20	White	No	Probation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ray	17	White	No	YOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Peter*	17	White	No	YOT	Possibly	Possibly	-	-	Yes
Nigel	19	White/ Traveller	No	Probation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rory	17	White	Yes	YOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sam*	16	White	No	YOT	Possibly	No	No	No	No
Tim	16	White	No	Family Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Wayne	20	White	No	Probation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jon	18	Black	Yes	YOT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹ This includes domestic abuse between adult carers, from adult carer towards young person and vice versa and between other members of the family. The majority of cases, however, relate to abuse between adult carers.

* Young men who refused to tell their story of domestic violence.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-062-23-2678)

Published by University of Manchester School of Law, M13 9PL
March 2013

ISBN: 978-0-9927008-2-9

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