Challenging the ‘public story’ of domestic violence and abuse: understanding, identifying, and responding to adult family violence.

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This PhD was funded by the Doctoral Training Centre for Industry and Collaboration. As part of this funding, the research was required to work in partnership with two police forces. However, the project, the data collection, the data analysis and the written work within the thesis are entirely the students own, independent work. The two police forces have acted in supporting roles in relation to facilitating data collection e.g. providing access to data and/or participants.

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Abstract

Fully nuanced understandings of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) are crucial for preventing harm. Whilst substantive literature exists, much of this is focused on intimate partner violence (IPV). There is a lack of research exploring DVA between adult family members, defined as 'adult family violence' (AFV).

This thesis explores how AFV is understood, identified and responded to in policy, policing and multi-agency practice. The research adopts a feminist-interactionist framework to understand how policy shapes the way AFV is understood, recorded and risk assessed as well as how the police and multi-agency professionals support victim-survivors. This approach uses multiple methods, incorporating a qualitative documentary analysis of governmental guidance, a mixed-methods analysis of police case-file data and semi-structured interviews with police staff, practitioners and victim-survivors.

The findings indicate that policy constructions of DVA frame this as an imbalance of power between two people, assumed to be intimate partners. This reinforces a 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) which excludes AFV. Representations of AFV are comparatively conflated with so-called honour-based abuse and vulnerability. This results in the creation of an 'ideal DVA relationship' (Christie, 1986), further reflected in narratives of risk and response within the documents, whereby risk factors associated with heterosexual IPV and responding to these are emphasised. In comparison, the police data and interviews highlight that relationships of AFV often involve multiple people, familial loyalties, overlapping vulnerabilities and intersections with the wider context. This conflict with the 'ideal DVA relationship' results in AFV being othered. Theoretical understandings, risk assessment tools and current legal

and support options presume IPV. Consequently, understanding, risk assessing and responding to AFV within the framework of DVA is often inconsistent and can be difficult. Professionals and victim-survivors lack the space to problematise and effectively respond to AFV.

This thesis demonstrates the current systemic incompatibility between AFV and the framework of DVA in England and Wales. The importance of complexity, context and curiosity is subsequently emphasised. Conceptualisations of DVA must incorporate complexity to better reflect experiences of AFV. Embracing complexity allows for practice to embed professional curiosity and contextual safeguarding (Firmin, 2020). These approaches benefit a more informed response to the currently marginalised, and often complex, experiences of AFV. However, may also support DVA practice more widely.

Contents

RESEARCH STUDENT DECLARATION FORM 2
Abstract 3
Contents 5
List of tables, figures, and graphs. 8
Acronyms used 9
Funding acknowledgement 10
Acknowledgements 11
Chapter One: Introduction, background, and context. 12
1.1. Introduction. 12
1.2. Research context. 12
1.3. Research problem. 16
1.4. Rationale. 17
1.5. Research questions and aims. 20
1.6. Methodological overview. 21
1.7. Overview of the thesis. 21
1.8. Key terminology. 22
Chapter Two: Literature Review – Understanding and explaining AFV. 28
2.1. Introduction. 28
2.2. Current literature on AFV. 28
2.3. Understanding AFV within the legal landscape of DVA. 33
2.4. Understanding AFV in DVA theory. 38
2.5. Conclusion. 47
Chapter Three: Literature review - Identifying and risk assessing AFV. 48
3.1. Introduction. 48
3.2. Understanding risk. 48
3.3. Assessing risk in DVA. 54
3.4. Conclusion. 58
Chapter Four: Literature Review – Supporting victim-survivors of AFV. 59
4.1. Introduction. 59
4.1. Legal protections for victim-survivors of DVA 59
4.2. Roles and responsibilities of professionals. 63

4.3. What works for AFV? 72
4.4. Conclusion. 74
Chapter Five: Theoretical Framework. 76
5.1. Introduction. 76
5.2. Feminist-interactionism. 76
5.3. Defining and applying feminist-interactionism. 83
5.4. Conclusion. 87
Chapter Six: Methods and methodologies. 88
6.1. Introduction. 88
6.2. Methodology. 88
6.3. Methods and data collection. 93
6.4. Analysis and integration. 108
6.5. Ethical reflections. 114
6.6. Reflexivity. 121
6.7. Conclusion. 126
Chapter Seven: Findings – Understanding AFV as DVA. 127
7.1. Introduction. 127
7.2. The 'policy story' of AFV. 127
7.3. Understanding AFV in police data. 141
7.4. Navigating AFV in professional practice. 154
7.5. Conclusion. 172
Chapter Eight: Findings – Risk and risk assessment in the context of AFV. 174
8.1. Introduction. 174
8.2. The 'policy story' of risk. 174
8.3. Police records of AFV and risk. 186
8.4. Conducting risk assessment for AFV on the frontline. 201
8.5. Conclusion. 223
Chapter Nine: Findings – Supporting victim-survivors of AFV. 225
9.1. Introduction. 225
9.2. The policy frame of DVA response. 225
9.3. Outcomes and trajectories for AFV relationships in police data. 240
9.4. Supporting victim-survivors of AFV on the frontline. 249
9.5. Conclusion. 270

Chapter Ten: Discussion. 273
10.1. Introduction. 273
10.2. Embedding complexity: conceptualising AFV as a form of DVA. 273
10.3. Operationalising curiosity: risk assessing AFV. 280
10.4. Centralising context: supporting victim-survivors of AFV. 287
10.5. Conclusion. 294
Chapter Eleven: Conclusion. 296
11.1. Introduction. 296
11.2. Summary of the research. 296
11.3. Limitations. 300
11.4. Recommendations. 304
11.5. Concluding remarks: more questions than answers. 308
Bibliography. 310
Appendices. 355

List of tables, figures, and graphs.

Figure 1: Ecological model of DVA (Heise, 1998) 45
Figure 2: Web model of DVA (Chowdhury, 2021) 46
Figure 3: Theoretical framework (a visual example) 85
Figure 4: Theoretical framework (applying the research problem) 86
Figure 5: Theoretical framework (applying the methods) 93
Figure 6: Mixed methods decision tree. 94
Figure 7: The complex experience of AFV. 278
Figure 8: Questions to help explore risk in the context of AFV. 285
Figure 9: Things to consider when supporting victim-survivors of AFV. 294

Table 1: Selected policy documents 98
Table 2: Quantitative datasets (an overview) 100
Table 3: Interview samples (overview). 105
Table 4: Gender data by police force 144
Table 5: Ethnicity data by police force 146
Table 6: Age data by police force. 147
Table 7: Outcome data by police force. 240

Graph 1: AFV relationship data by police force. 144
Graph 2: Gendered direction of perpetration by police force. 145
Graph 3: Risk grading by police force. 187
Graph 4: Recorded crime by police force. 190
Graph 5: Police Force 1 – recorded crime by risk grading. 191
Graph 6: Police Force 2 – recorded crime by risk grading. 191
Graph 7: Police Force 1 – outcome by risk grading 243
Graph 8: Police Force 2 – outcome by risk grading. 243

Acronyms used

AFV	Adult family violence
DVA	Domestic violence and abuse
IPV	Intimate partner violence
CPV	Child to parent violence and abuse
GBV	Gender-based violence and abuse
HBV	So-called honour-based violence and abuse
DASH RIC	Domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based violence risk identification checklist
DARA	Domestic abuse risk assessment
SPJ	Structured professional judgement
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
MARAC	Multi-agency risk assessment conference
DHR	Domestic homicide review
DVDS	Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme
DVPN	Domestic Violence Protection Notice
DVPO	Domestic Violence Protection Order
DAPO	Domestic Abuse Protection Order

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Chapter One: Introduction, background, and context.

1.1. Introduction.

This thesis explores the understanding, identification and response to domestic violence and abuse (DVA) between adult family members, defined as 'adult family violence' (AFV). This exploration is situated within the context of gaps in legislation, research, and practice. Whilst DVA has been a prominent public issue for a considerable amount of time, this thesis proposes that much of this attention conflates DVA with intimate partner violence (IPV). Despite the legal incorporation of abuse by family members within the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), there are significant gaps in literature and practice regarding AFV. Therefore, this thesis illuminates AFV as a form of DVA and envisions what effective support for victim-survivors may seek to incorporate.

This first chapter serves as the introductory chapter and provides a contextual overview. The scale and impact of DVA in England and Wales is discussed as well as an overview of the legislative and practice landscape developed to address DVA. This allows the thesis to then establish the research problem, namely that DVA in England and Wales is perhaps conflated with a 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) pertaining to IPV. The chapter subsequently discusses the rationale for the research, drawing on research pertaining to adult family homicide reviews (Bracewell et al, 2022; Bates et al, 2022) as well as the symbolic benefits of naming (Arnull & Ryder, 2025). Aligned with feminist epistemologies, the rationale also outlines the relationship between the research and the researcher. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the methodological approach and a summary of key terminology.

1.2. Research context.

1.2.1. The scale of gender-based violence (GBV).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive global epidemic which affects individuals, communities and societies (WHO, 2002, 2021). The United Nations defines GBV as any behaviour that "results in or is likely to result in 'physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty" (1993:3). Whilst men can be victims of violence, certain forms of harm disproportionately impact women, girls, and gendered minorities (ONS, 2023).

GBV takes many forms, including, femicide; DVA; forced marriage; so-called honour-based violence and abuse (HBV); female genital mutilation; stalking and harassment; economic abuse; rape and sexual violence; online and technology facilitated abuse. Often, these forms of violence are experienced simultaneously and throughout the life course (Holt & Lewis, 2023). These harms can occur in the home, the workplace, public spaces, online, across borders and within relationships, social norms, and language.

1.2.2. The impact of domestic violence and abuse (DVA).

The prevalence of GBV within personal relationships, defined as DVA, is of particular significance. In 2020, 47,000 women globally were killed by an intimate partner or family member (UNODC, 2021). In the UK, on average, two women each week are killed, usually by male partners, because of DVA related homicide or suicide (ONS, 2022). However, DVA is often not reported to the police or other professional agencies due to stigmatisation, the impacts of coercive control, and systemic barriers. Therefore, these statistics likely do not represent the true pervasiveness of DVA.

DVA has profound impacts on the lives of individuals, families, communities, and wider society. There has been a wealth of research that has documented the detriments of abuse on women's physical health, such as neurological and brain damage; hearing

and vision impairment; physical trauma; chronic pain; miscarriage and baby loss; gastrointestinal consequences amongst others (Campbell & Lewandowski, 1997; Campbell, 2002a). These are often exacerbated by the dynamics of coercive control inflicted on victim-survivors, such as the prevention by perpetrators from accessing medical care (Stark, 2007).

For many victim-survivors, the psychological and social consequences of abuse have a significant effect on daily lives (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Trauma, self-harm, suicidal behaviours, substance and alcohol misuse, anxiety, depression, and other mental health needs are prevalent amongst victim-survivors (Campbell & Lewandowski, 1997; Oram et al 2017; Spence et al, 2019). Exacerbating this, victim-survivors are often further isolated from social support networks by perpetrators or because of resettlement. DVA is a leading cause of homelessness (Malos & Hauge, 1997) and victim-survivors often face financial hardship due to economic control, legal costs, and absence from work (Sharp-Jeffs, 2015; Bowstead, 2015). These experiences impact not only on individuals but also public services, resources, and expenditure (Walby, 2004, 2009; Oliver et al, 2019).

Whilst DVA can happen to anyone, experiences of abuse are compounded by other systems of oppression, such as race, class, sexuality, and ableism (bell hooks, 1989; Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). For some migrant women, the ability to leave an abusive relationship or seek support can be impacted by hostile immigration policies (Gangoli et al, 2018) as well as the risk of deportation or destitution. In addition, women of colour may be prevented from pursuing prosecution due to systemic discrimination. For women with additional needs or for members of the LGBTQIA+ community, research has indicated that victim-survivors experience an increased risk of violence within personal relationships (Plummer & Findley, 2012; Amos et al, 2023).

1.2.3. Responding to DVA.

Whilst historically concealed as a 'private' matter (Thaller & Cimino, 2016; Carrillo, 2021), DVA came to public attention in England and Wales in the 1960's. Much of this was resultant of the efforts of the 'battered women' and refuge movements as well as feminist scholarship which scrutinised the legal systems which upheld and normalised male violence against women. For example, The Law of Coverture (Ireland, 2022) permitted husbands to inflict physical punishment on their wives, and the criminal defence of provocation allowed men to 'justify' such punishment (Section 3, Homicide Act, 1957). Since the initial naming of DVA in the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976, there have been continued amendments to the legislative representation of DVA in England and Wales. This can be evidenced by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, the criminalisation of coercive control under the Serious Crime Act 2015 and the recent introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. These legislative developments are discussed in further depth within the literature review.

Alongside legal developments, there has been a sustained effort on improving the response to DVA on the frontline, often through multi-agency working. The multi-agency response is often driven by the desire to prevent significant harm and homicide through identifying abuse early, pursuing perpetrators and reducing the risk of harm. This has led to the development of tools, such as the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based violence risk identification checklist (DASH RIC) (Richards, 2009) and the establishment of victim-support, such as the use of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) (Steel et al, 2011).

1.3. Research problem.

1.3.1. The 'public story' of intimate partner violence (IPV).

Whilst conceptualisations of DVA have shifted considerably from that of being a 'personal matter' towards being treated with appropriate concern, much of the existing evidence base is concentrated on IPV (Standing Together, 2021). This can be traced back to the battered women's movement and the significant advancements made in linking DVA with the disproportionate victimisation of women and girls. Therefore, a gendered narrative has long underpinned DVA. However, Pan et al, (2006) remind us that many of the voices which shaped policy at the time were white, upper and middle class, heterosexual and cisgender women experiencing DVA in *marital* relationships. Similarly, whilst Stark's (2007) 'coercive control' perspective is, as the first literature review chapter will explore, now deeply ingrained in criminal justice policy and practice, this framework further locates 'the problem' of DVA "inside *heterosexual* relationships" (Donovan & Hester, 2014:9, emphasis own).

Donovan and Hester (2014) use Jamieson's (1998) 'public story' literature to term this conflation as representative of a 'public story' of DVA. Donovan and Hester (2014) highlight 'public stories', whilst discursive, have real world consequences, especially when they "coalesce into official news, shaping public policies, laws and the distribution of resources" (Jamieson, 1998:11). Therefore, this image of what DVA is, and who is impacted, may shape how services, policies and individuals are organised to understand, identify and respond to harm. Consequently, whilst some groups are represented, others are "silenced, and ideas and data may be partially considered, manipulated and even ignored" (Hearn & McKie, 2008:75).

1.3.2. Consequences for adult family violence (AFV).

This ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) is problematic given DVA often differs from this image. Whilst Donovan and Hester (2014) discuss that this ‘public story’ is based on a cisgendered and heterosexual IPV, and thus excludes LGBTQIA+ relationships, Donovan et al (2024) highlight that familial abuse is also “rendered invisible” (pp. 1). Holt and Lewis (2021) echo this, identifying that in academia, policy and support services, DVA is often used as “synonymous with violence by men towards female *intimate* partners” (pp. 798, emphasis own).

Whilst IPV is a significant form of abuse, arguably there has been an unproblematised conflation that all relationships of DVA constitute IPV. The impact of this conflation is unclear, and it is unknown if AFV is sufficiently understood as a form of DVA, if these relationships are identified effectively and whether current support options address the needs of victim-survivors. Given the discursive power of public stories (Jamieson, 1998), it is suggested that a vicious cycle is created. AFV is currently underexplored in research and practice. Therefore, it is concealed in official statistics, tools or literature on DVA. This absence impedes the ability to adequately identify relationships or risks associated with AFV, further compounding the invisibility of AFV.

1.4. Rationale.

1.4.1. Adult family homicide and the scale of harm.

Whilst Robinson et al (2025) highlight that reports of familial violence are potentially increasing in policing (pp. 17), much of what is currently known about AFV exists within the context of domestic homicide reviews (DHR) (Bracewell et al, 2022; Bates et al, 2022; Ngyuen-Phan et al, 2022; Benbow et al, 2023). These studies indicate that adult

family homicide is often gendered (Sharp-Jeffs & Kelly, 2016; Holt, 2017; Bows, 2019; Bates et al, 2022; Bracewell et al, 2022; Gunby et al, 2025), with male sons frequently responsible for killing their mothers. These relationships are characterised by vulnerability with Bracewell et al (2022) finding that the mental health of perpetrators, criminal histories, childhood trauma, financial issues and caring dynamics (pp. 5) were prevalent dynamics. These findings are echoed by Benbow et al (2018, 2023) and Bates et al (2022).

Bracewell et al (2022) note however that many cases of adult family homicide were not recognised by professionals as DVA, leading to life-saving information failing to be shared (pp. 9). This is also discussed by Benbow et al (2023) who highlight that a review by the Home Office of DHR's excluded adult family homicide from the dataset (pp. 2). Furthermore, Cook et al (2026) and Miles et al (2025) highlight that family homicides are often included within data on stranger violence. This demonstrates how adult family homicide is not currently understood, recorded or responded to as form of DVA – a limitation that must be addressed to prevent further harm.

1.4.2. Symbolic naming power.

The lack of public knowledge surrounding AFV prevents experiences from being articulated within legal structures, and thus being afforded legal protections (Hearn, 2012; Kelly et al, 2014; Sharp-Jeffs & Kelly, 2016). This is further significant as legal recognition may support to signify the immorality of AFV and justify professional intervention. Furthermore, being able to problematise experiences of abuse have been linked to feelings of catharsis for victim-survivors (Donovan & Hester, 2010; Rogers et al, 2023). Therefore, providing a 'name' for AFV is important.

1.4.3. Researcher motivations.

Whilst there is therefore an established need to research AFV, research motivation cannot be separated from the researcher (Stanley & Wise, 1993). As a person who was assigned female at birth and continues to identify as a woman, the threat of GBV is intrinsically woven into my everyday life. This proximity to 'the problem' shapes my determination to conduct research which aims to disrupts the harms of GBV. Although I am a cis-gendered, heterosexual, white woman, and therefore acknowledge my privilege regarding systemic discrimination and interlocking oppressions (Collins, 1990), my commitment to intersectional feminism shapes my desire to critically examine systems of power and find space for improvement.

Alongside my personal motivations as a woman and a feminist, I also hold previous professional experiences in working in safeguarding and DVA advocacy. My experience working in DVA advocacy directly influenced the decision to explore AFV. I was incredibly proud to work within an explicitly feminist organisation which worked tirelessly to support victim-survivors. However, often, the resources, tools and support options, created with the intention to support victim-survivors, reinforced the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014). This was echoed back to me in client evaluation, where it was lamented that group work, and other resources assumed experiences of IPV. Although many organisations do offer by-and-for services (e.g. Women's Aid Federation, Southall Black Sisters, Galop, Refuge), this signified that the default assumption is often the heterosexual, cis-gender 'battered woman' model (Walker, 1979).

Despite these limitations and wider systemic disparities in resources and funding, I continually witnessed professionals going above and beyond to navigate systems on behalf of victim-survivors across the spectrum of DVA. This influenced the theoretical

framework and methodology used in this thesis which places the agency of victim-survivors and professionals at the forefront of recommendations.

1.5. Research questions and aims.

To address the research problem, the following questions and aims were devised.

1.5.1. Research questions.

How is AFV understood, identified and responded to within the framework of DVA in England and Wales?

a) How is AFV understood as a form of DVA in policy, policing and practice?
b) To what extent do current understandings of AFV shape the identification and assessment of risk within these relationships?
c) To what extent do current understandings of AFV influence the support provided by the multi-agency team to victim-survivors?
d) To what extent do current responses to AFV meet the needs of victim-survivors?

1.5.2. Research aims.

- To explore what is understood and experienced within the term AFV.
- To interrogate current definitions and recording practices for DVA and their effectiveness in reflecting AFV.
- To understand how relationships of AFV are identified and risk assessed within current practice.
- To examine current intervention and prevention approaches used for responding to DVA and determine their appropriateness for AFV.
- To spotlight best practice regarding what may work for identifying and supporting victim-survivors of AFV.

1.6. Methodological overview.

Given the status of DVA as a ‘wicked social problem’ (Devaney & Spratt, 2009), this thesis asserts that research must critically examine the representation, understanding and response to AFV across policy, policing and multi-agency practice ‘planets’ (Hester, 2011). As major systems of response, they thus play a significant role in addressing and preventing harm.

The empirical research subsequently incorporates multiple methods to reflect these three systems of response. Firstly, the research explores the representation of AFV as DVA in policy, using a qualitative, documentary analysis of policy guidance pertaining to DVA. Subsequently the research employs a mixed-methods analysis of police case-file information and qualitative, semi-structured interviews with police staff, practitioners and victim-survivors. This allows an exploration of how current understandings of AFV in policy may influence how relationships are recorded, understood and risk assessed by professionals and how victim-survivors are supported.

1.7. Overview of the thesis.

Following this chapter, Chapter 2, the first of the three literature review chapters, highlights key definitions and theoretical frameworks which have been used for explaining DVA. This chapter discusses the implications of these for understanding AFV as well as outlining what is currently known in the field regarding AFV. Chapter 3 provides an overview of criminological discussions on the identification and risk assessment of DVA. This chapter discusses the development of risk assessment tools and queries whether these tools adequately identify harms associated with AFV.

Chapter 4 addresses the response to DVA in policy, policing and practice, questioning the appropriateness of these ‘planets’ (Hester, 2011) for supporting victim-survivors of AFV.

Chapter 5 comprises of the theoretical framework. In this chapter, the thesis outlines the cruciality of exploring the different ‘planets’ (Hester, 2011) of response to DVA. The use of 'feminist-interactionism' (Stanley & Wise, 1993) is seen to allow for an examination as to how these planets interact. The theoretical framework also allows the methodological design to be outlined in Chapter 6, which also discusses the ethical and reflexive journeys experienced in the research journey.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 represent the findings chapters and are presented thematically. Chapter 10 comprises the discussion, bringing the findings together and Chapter 11, the concluding chapter, addresses the key limitations and recommendations generated by the research.

1.8. Key terminology.

This chapter concludes by outlining some of the terms used in this thesis. Language is crucial for understanding a social problem and therefore it matters.

1.8.1. Adult family violence (AFV).

Whilst the first literature review chapter addresses the academic and policy landscape pertaining to AFV, this section briefly outlines what is meant by 'AFV’. A clear definition is fundamental for disrupting the conflation with IPV. As raised by Holt (2016):

> Our definition and measurement of the problem shape how individuals understand their experiences and respond to them. It also shapes our

> responses to the problem, whether as researchers, policymakers and/or practitioners. (pp. 491)

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 relies upon the Family Law Act 1996 to outline the relationships included within DVA. As well as intimate relationships, familial relationships such as those between siblings, parents and their children, grandparents and their grandchildren and extended family members (e.g. cousins, aunts, uncles or other relations) are all included. This extends to those related biologically, legally (e.g. in-laws, stepfamily members, adoptive families) or socially (e.g. those connected by another's intimate partnership). This thesis focuses exclusively on these familial relationships where both the victim-survivor and perpetrator are aged over eighteen. As will be expanded upon in Chapter 2, this is due to criminal justice and DVA responses often being precipitated around this age threshold.

The following definition for AFV is provided to guide the thesis:

> Adult family violence (AFV) refers to any act or pattern of verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or physical abuse, including neglect, coercive control, stalking and harassment, occurring between biologically, socially or legally related family members aged over 18. AFV can include multiple victims and perpetrators, may take place within a wider network of abusive relationships and across households, borders and over time. AFV may include child to parent/carer abuse, parent to adult child abuse, elder abuse, the abuse of vulnerable adults, sibling violence, HBV, or extended family violence.

Whilst HBV is included, due to the research being focused on exploring AFV as an encompassing category, rather than nuancing individual relationships, HBV is not the focus. It is important to note that HBV is a complex form of violence which often

involves actors and motivations from beyond the family (Khan et al, 2018). Consequently, it has been questioned whether HBV should be examined as DVA or as a distinct category of GBV (Gill, 2010; Idriss, 2017). These complexities are considered beyond the scope of the thesis. Furthermore, despite some literature discussing the experience of HBV within LGBTQIA+ communities (Rogers, 2016), HBV is disproportionately conflated with South Asian families (Meetoo & Mirza, 2007; Gill & Brah, 2013). This thesis therefore seeks to avoid conflating all familial abuse with HBV, to avoid the racialised 'othering' (Gill & Brah, 2013) of familial abuse.

1.8.2. Domestic violence and abuse (DVA).

This section outlines the author's decision to use 'domestic violence and abuse' (DVA) as opposed to the legally acknowledged 'domestic abuse' (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021). DVA has progressed a long way since the original usage of terms such as woman or wife 'battering' (Donovan & Hester, 2014). The movement towards 'domestic violence,' as exemplified by legislation such as the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976, was an important symbolic acknowledgement of non-cohabiting or married partnerships. The term domestic violence was used until 2013 where following consultation, the term 'domestic violence and abuse' was adopted (Home Office, 2013). The inclusion of 'abuse' was considered to better represent emotional, financial, sexual, and verbal abuse (Stark, 2007; Stark & Hester, 2018) and reflect patterns of abuse (Home Office, 2013).

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, as Aldridge (2020) raises, drops the term 'violence' completely with no expansion as to why. Whilst violence can be insidious, non-physical and subtle, Donovan and Hester (2014) argue that 'violence' helps to demonstrate "the impact of the experiences and keeps in mind the extremity of fear and risk" (pp. 6). As

further raised by Mulvihill and Wicky (2024), abuse “may not capture and convey to the public and to policy makers it’s serious nature and impact” (pp. 6). Aldridge (2020) asserts that the removal of ‘violence’ is “representative of a simplistic kind of reductionism or semantic surrogacy whereby ‘violence’ must make way for the a priori language of ‘abuse’, as if both should not, or cannot be included” (pp. 1823), thus is representative of a ‘watering down’ (pp. 1823) of victim-survivor experiences (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016).

Furthermore, the removal of ‘violence’ ostracises ‘domestic abuse’ away from international frameworks of violence against women and girls (VAWG) or GBV (Dragiewicz & DeKeresedy, 2012; Aldridge, 2020). Consequently, the thesis opts to use DVA to acknowledge the range of physical, emotional, and social behaviours of DVA and emphasise the severity of these behaviours. This term also asserts DVA as GBV and calls upon state responsibilities (Libal & Parkeh, 2009).

1.8.3. Gender-based violence (GBV).

The use of ‘gender-based violence’ (GBV) recognises the disproportionate victimisation of women and girls, and minoritised gendered communities by male violence (ONS, 2023). Gender is considered as a constructed set of social and cultural norms, applied to embodied presentations (West & Zimmerman, 1989; Butler, 1990), rather than a biological, fixed state. Therefore, this thesis is inclusive of all gendered identities when discussing GBV, including those assigned female at birth, trans-women, gender-fluid and non-binary identities amongst others.

Within the construction of gender, masculinity is often perceived as a hegemonic aspiration (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). As a result, violence is concentrated on gendered identities that are seen as ‘other’ or inferior (Marcus, 2014). Whilst this

results in women and minoritised gendered communities being disproportionately impacted, this also enables a recognition that men can experience harm because of gendered, patriarchal expectations. This is additionally beneficial from an intersectional framework as it allows an analysis of interlocking systems of oppression such as race, class, sexuality, and ability (Collins, 1990).

Adopting the position that the perpetration of harm is irrevocably related to gender inequality asserts the need for a human-rights based approach, given it contradicts the protection against discrimination (Article, 14, Human Rights Act, 1998). This again demands the state to be responsive (Libal & Parkeh, 2009). Positioning DVA and AFV within this framework therefore justifies governmental action and thus creates space for a discussion on creating, maintaining and funding resources.

1.8.4. Victim-survivors and perpetrators.

This concluding section addresses the terms of 'victim-survivors' and 'perpetrators' used in the thesis and presents an 'imperfect solution' (Bower, 2025). To refer to those who have experienced or are experiencing DVA, the term 'victim-survivor' is used by the author. Whilst criminal justice systems often use 'victim,' this term conjures images of passivity and helplessness (Papendick & Bohner, 2017; Boyle & Clay-Warner, 2018). There are further critical questions over whom is included within images of 'victims' (Christie, 1986; Duggan, 2012), with it being highlighted that women of colour are disproportionally excluded (Wallace et al, 2024; Bower, 2025). Whilst 'survivor' has been used to counteract these critiques (Boyle & Clay-Warner, 2018; Boyle & Rogers, 2020), this assumes people will and should move past the experience of 'victim' (Rutter & Barr, 2021; O'Shea et al, 2024). This neglects the lasting effects of DVA and the unpredictable nature of trauma. Furthermore, victim acceptance of this term remains

disputed (Jumarali et al, 2021). As a result, there has been an increased use of ‘victim-survivor’ as an “all-encompassing umbrella term to capture the diversity of identities of people with lived experience of violence” (Bower, 2025:12). The use of victim-survivor rather than ‘victim/survivor’ emphasises fluidity (LaFleur, 2024) and choice.

‘Perpetrator’ is equally contested (Adisa & Redgwell, 2023). Whilst the term has increasingly replaced ‘offender,’ concerns have been raised over the racialised connotations of ‘perpetrator’ (Adisa et al, 2021). ‘Perpetrator’ additionally attributes abuse to one person’s behaviour and neglects the wider climate in which patriarchal attitudes and systems may reproduce harm. However, a viable alternative has yet to be suggested. Therefore ‘perpetrator’ is used in the thesis with critical reflection.

Chapter Two: Literature Review – Understanding and explaining AFV.

2.1. Introduction.

This chapter represents the first of three literature review chapters. The research problem at the crux of this thesis asserts that current understandings of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) are conflated with intimate partner violence (IPV). To address this, this first literature review chapter firstly outlines what is currently known about the relationships included in the term of AFV. Subsequently, the thesis then examines how these relationships are represented in current legal frameworks and theoretical perspectives. This allows the chapter to generate an overview of how AFV is currently understood as a form of DVA. The chapter concludes by asserting that much of what is known in relation to DVA is based upon a conflation with IPV.

2.2. Current literature on AFV.

As discussed in the previous introductory chapter, this thesis defines AFV as:

> Adult family violence (AFV) refers to any act or pattern of verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, or physical abuse, including neglect, coercive control, stalking and harassment, occurring between biologically, socially, or legally related family members aged over 18. AFV can include multiple victims and perpetrators, may take place within a wider network of abusive relationships and across households, borders and over time. AFV may include child to parent/carer abuse, parent to adult child abuse, elder abuse, the abuse of vulnerable adults, sibling violence, HBV, or extended family violence.

Therefore, AFV includes a plethora of relationships, such as child-to-parent violence (CPV), sibling violence and abuse, parent to adult child abuse, extended family violence, elder abuse and so-called honour-based violence and abuse (HBV). This chapter firstly examines how these relationships are currently represented in the academic field.

2.2.1. Child to parent violence (CPV).

In contemporary literature and policy there has been an increased focus on abuse towards parents and carers by their children, termed as adolescent or child-to-parent violence (CPV) (Wilcox, 2012; Fitz-Gibbon et al, 2022; Miles et al, 2025). Whilst often grounded in work relating to parricide (Heide, 1992, 2012; Holt, 2017), considerable research exists documenting the empirical experiences of victim-survivors and professionals (Holt, 2012; Holt & Retford, 2013; Holt & Birchall, 2022; Rutter, 2024). CPV is often gendered and involves concerning behaviours (Miles et al, 2022; The Guardian, 2022). Whilst CPV has been discussed as a form of DVA, much of this literature is concentrated around perpetrators below the age of eighteen. This is problematic given the differential responses required for children and adults. For children under the age of eighteen, a safeguarding or social care intervention is mandated for experiences of abuse are disclosed or suspected, however, for those aged over eighteen this would fall within the jurisdiction of criminal justice or advocacy frameworks. CPV is subsequently often framed through a child safeguarding or youth justice lens rather than conceptualised as a ‘problem’ of DVA (Hunter et al, 2010; Condry & Miles, 2012). Less is known about the experiences of CPV between adults as well as the appropriateness of current DVA response frameworks for victim-survivors.

2.2.2. Sibling violence and abuse.

The focus on childhood is however not limited to CPV. Whilst much academic literature exists regarding sibling abuse (Khan & Cooke, 2008; Meyers, 2011; Caffaro, 2014), this usually addresses children's experiences. For example, Meyers (2015) declares that sibling abuse often stops when siblings move out, attend university or enter adulthood due to a decrease in physical proximity. However, this is founded on a normative presumption of the life course and neglects to examine how societal contexts, such the cost-of-living crisis in the UK (ONS, 2024a; BBC, 2025), and other significant life events may also result in family members living together well into adulthood (Prattley et al, 2023). Whilst Perkins and Meyers (2020) recognise that sibling abuse can occur throughout the life span, they also contradictorily state that the lack of research on sibling abuse in adulthood is due to the leaving of the family of origin. This is again founded on the presumption of a normative life course. The lack of exploration into sibling abuse into adulthood is disappointing given these relationships are indicated to be gendered and as having profound long-term impacts for victim-survivors (Elliot et al, 2020; Young et al, 2024).

2.2.3. Parent to child abuse.

A similar trend is observed in the context of child abuse where there exists little literature on the abuse of adult children by parents or guardians. Most literature concentrates on the abuse of under eighteens by parents or carers (Radford et al, 2013), the impact of IPV on under-eighteens (Bishop, 2021; Tsantefski et al, 2021) or the co-occurrence of IPV and child abuse (Featherstone & Fawcett, 1994; Featherstone & Trinder, 1997). Cuadros and Lorente (2023) raise that when the homicide of children by parents is discussed, there exists little data on incidents when

children are over the age of eighteen. When negative parental-child relationships in adulthood are discussed, this is conversely framed as ‘estrangement’ or ‘alienation’ (Carr et al, 2015) rather than as DVA.

2.2.5. Elder abuse and the abuse of older adults.

Similarly, the abuse of older adults or ‘elder abuse’ is divorced from being considered as DVA. Elder abuse is opposingly often considered as a welfare or safeguarding issue rather than a DVA or criminal justice ‘problem’ due to ageist assumptions about vulnerability and capacity (Harbison et al, 2012; Clarke et al, 2016; Robbins et al, 2016; Lonbay & Southall, 2023). Thus, elder abuse is often seen as ‘age related violence’ (Holt & Shon, 2016:921) rather than DVA (Knight & Hester, 2016). This has been raised as an issue by feminist criminology who argue the exclusion of older women from the context of DVA has meant a denial of services without consideration of the specific vulnerabilities, dynamics and barriers faced by older adults (Bows, 2019). By failing to consider elder abuse as a form of DVA this further overlooks experiences of family abuse within this age group. For example, most perpetrators of elder abuse are often male sons and grandsons (Isham et al, 2020, 2021; Holt & Birchall, 2022), therefore, the abuse of grandparents, parents or other ‘older adults’ by family members may be a significant social problem. However, its exclusion from the DVA landscape renders this invisible (Bows et al, 2024).

2.2.6. Extended family abuse.

The abuse by and of extended family members has been highlighted by Shon and Shon (2023) as lacking academic attention due to assumptions of distance (Daly & Wilson, 1997). This reflects critiques made earlier in the context of sibling violence and abuse. Shon and Shon (2023) raise that extended family homicide, when discussed,

is framed as either a collateral product of IPV or in the context of so-called honour-based violence and abuse (HBV). This 'either/or' (Aldridge, 2020) conceptualisation is problematic as it either minimises extended family violence or constructs familial abuse as a 'problem' of racialised families (Thiara & Gill, 2010; Gill & Brah, 2013). Little is known about extended family violence beyond these conceptualisations.

To conclude, the current landscape of knowledge regarding AFV is fractured, with most knowledge existing on familial abuse in the context of childhood experiences. Relationships of AFV are often adopted by different academic camps (Holt, 2021) and there lacks a body of work that explores DVA across all adult family relationships. This is problematic as it prevents us from understanding the prevalence of AFV overall. As outlined by Warren et al (2023):

> The true prevalence of family violence across the lifespan is difficult to determine as different theoretical frameworks and explanations of violence at different ages mean that abuse is not defined and measured consistently across the lifespan (pp. 966).

It is therefore unclear how AFV differs from IPV and how the contexts of adulthood shape experiences of abuse. Whilst the insights from the different relationship types included within the definition of AFV are useful, Holt argues that by "separating out different forms of family violence makes it difficult to identify patterns of abuse" (2021:134). Therefore, it is pertinent to address the overarching category of AFV. A clear conceptualisation of AFV is considered valuable by Arnull and Ryder (2025), who assert that, "praxis is impeded by poorly defined, differently understood or misapplied terminology, bias and discrimination" (pp. 502). To address this, the chapter now

moves to understanding how legal and theoretical discussions of DVA may exclude or accommodate explanations of AFV.

2.3. Understanding AFV within the legal landscape of DVA.

2.3.1. The legal definition of 'DVA.'

Whilst types of AFV relationships lack critical attention in academic research, AFV is included within the legal definition of DVA. Therefore, it is important to examine current legislative definitions and whether they add nuance to the limitations previously discussed in this chapter. This is further helpful for understanding how professionals may understand AFV and therefore respond on the frontline.

As stated in the introductory chapter, as DVA came to public attention it was commonly associated with 'wife battering' or 'wife abuse' (Kurz, 1989). This therefore associated DVA with physical violence experienced in heterosexual, marital relationships and ignored other personal relationships that may become abusive as well as recognising the impact of non-physical behaviours. However, legislative, and linguistic developments, such as the increased use of 'domestic' violence and/or abuse and Starks (2007) coercive control framework, have attempted to address this.

The current definition of 'domestic abuse' in England and Wales pertains to:

> Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if - (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and (b) the behaviour is abusive. (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021, c. 17, p. 1, s. 1)

Within this definition, 'domestic abuse' is predicated on three requirements. Firstly, the presence of abusive behaviour; secondly both the victim-survivor and the perpetrator

being aged sixteen and over and, thirdly the victim-survivor and perpetrator being 'personally connected.' Whilst this thus incorporates AFV, it has not yet been critically assessed whether these stipulations accurately represent all of these relationships. This literature review now reflects on the prerequisites of abusive behaviour, 'personally connected' and the age threshold of DVA to establish the appropriateness of policy definitions for AFV.

2.3.2. Implications for AFV.

As outlined, legal definitions of DVA requires both victim-survivors and perpetrators to be over the age of sixteen. However, this has not always been the case with the age threshold lowered following in 2013 (Home Office, 2013). The lowering of this age was supported by evidence suggesting the significant prevalence of young people experiencing DVA within their intimate relationships (Barter et al, 2009; Fox et al, 2013). This remains a contested discussion, with recent calls to include adolescents under sixteen (Johnson et al, 2024; Weir et al, 2025) as well as an increased recognition of the impact of DVA on children (Holt et al, 2008; Cleaver, 2025).

Whilst this debate is important, this is predominantly concentrated on addressing IPV. For example, most discussion relates to teenage relationship abuse (Weir et al, 2025) or on children witnessing IPV between parents (Bishop, 2021). There has been a lack of focus on the benefits or implications of lowering the threshold of DVA to sixteen for familial violence and abuse. Conversely, it can be argued that the lowering of this threshold produces blurriness for this context. Given the legal definition of adulthood relies on the age of eighteen (HM Government, 2023) and child abuse refers to the abuse of those aged under eighteen (WHO, 2024), it becomes unclear whether abuse perpetrated by a family member against someone aged sixteen to eighteen is child

abuse or DVA. This lack of clarity is representative of the conflation between IPV and DVA, whereby it has not been perceived as necessary to explore this. This builds on the previous section of this chapter which highlighted how familial abuse in adulthood has often lacked nuance.

Compounding this is the lack of clarity regarding what the appropriate pathway of support should be for victim-survivors and perpetrators of both IPV and familial violence when either are aged between sixteen and eighteen. Whilst the third chapter of the literature review discusses this in more depth, it is important to note here that the child abuse framework instigates a children's safeguarding response to children involved in abuse, however, the DVA framework encourages a criminal justice or advocacy response. This results in a 'conceptual confusion' (Holt, 2015) for both defining AFV and for implementing professional intervention.

Furthermore, victim-survivors and perpetrators must also hold a 'personal connection.' Being 'personally connected' is outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as pertaining to circumstances where the victim-survivor and the perpetrator are:

> (a) they are, or have been, married to each other; (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other; (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated); (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated); (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other; (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2)); (g) they are relatives. (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021, c. 17, p. 1, s. 1)

Whilst there is recognition here of ‘they are relatives,’ much of the focus rests on expanding the potential experiences of IPV. For example, as raised by Graham (2023), IPV is nuanced through multiple expansive statements, including reference to civil partnerships, marriages, parental responsibility, intended marriage as well as separated partners, yet familial violence is limited to “if they are relatives”. Again, raised by Graham (2023), it could be argued that familial abuse can be nuanced by explicitly discussing that abuse can happen when the family are estranged, by family members across different international contexts and can occur within care or guardianship relationships. The lack of nuance here further prevents an expansive knowledge of what is understood as violence amongst the family.

The Family Law Act 1996, defines ‘relative’ as follows:

> (a) the father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, grandmother, grandfather, grandson or granddaughter of that person or of that person’s spouse, former spouse, civil partner, or former civil partner, or (b) the brother, sister, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew or first cousin (whether of the full blood or of the half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) of that person or of that person’s spouse, former spouse, civil partner or former civil partner, and includes, in relation to a person who is cohabiting or has cohabited with another person, any person who would fall within paragraph (a) or (b) if the parties were married to each other or were civil partners of each other. (Family Law Act, 1996, c. 27, p. 4, s. 63)

Whilst the Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance (Home Office, 2022a) uses this definition to include a section regarding ‘abuse by other family members’, this is an unhelpfully homogenous conceptualisation which fails to nuance between

relationships or between children and adults. As discussed, this has limitations for how professionals can and are expected to respond. Conflating experiences of familial abuse in childhood and adulthood is furthermore problematic as adulthood may incur differential dynamics that may impact experiences of abuse. For example, changing relationships to employment, legal rights to provision, access to alcohol or expectations in living dynamics experienced in adulthood may all impact family dynamics. However, this is not referred to in current legislation, questioning the appropriateness of a catch-all terms such as ‘abuse by other family members’ or ‘personally connected’.

This raises further critical questions about the reliance in policy on abusive, intentional behaviours. It has been raised that dynamics of power and control are often complicated in familial abuse. Miles and Condry (2013a) for instance raise that the dynamics of CPV invert “traditional familial relationships of power and control” (pp. 1) given parents are normatively expected to hold power over children. This is further discussed by Holt and Retford (2013) who state that:

> Normative constructions of abusive relationships tend to feature a ‘perpetrator’ who is in a position of greater power... in relation to the victim. In a world where parents are assumed to exercise power over their children, these normative constructions make it impossible for parents to occupy the position of victimhood. (pp. 370).

This alludes to the fact that familial relationships are often impacted by complex dynamics of vulnerability and guardianship – which may impact the nature of abusive behaviours. Many have raised caution with defining young people, such as those aged sixteen to eighteen and thus legally cared for by parental figures, as ‘perpetrators’ in

this respect due to their age-related vulnerability, the intersections with trauma and the legal responsibilities of parents (Wilcox, 2012; Arnull & Ryder, 2025). This questions the ability of current legal prerequisites of DVA to adequately reflect abuse within the family.

Warren et al (2023) further highlight that intentional ‘abusive behaviour’ also needs to be interrogated in the context of the abuse of older adults. They state that the motivations for DVA and ‘elder abuse’ often differ. They raise that whilst DVA includes a desire for control, elder abuse may be motivated by financial gain. This is also raised by Robinson et al (2025) who state that data collected on DVA by the police does not adequately differentiate between IPV and AFV. They raise in their data that AFV incidents were often considered one-offs or family arguments rather than an ongoing pattern of power and control. They raise that “the statutory definition of domestic abuse is too broad for effective operational policing” (pp. 19) and leads to, as will be discussed in chapter four, these relationships being responded to in the same way regardless of differing contextual dynamics (pp. 36).

It is therefore unclear if the stipulations for DVA as outlined within the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) adequately reflect the realities of adult families. This demonstrates that the “law itself would also appear to be part of the failure” (Hunter et al, 2010:283) and may signify discursive consequences, such as the exclusion from public conceptualisations of DVA and legal provisions.

2.4. Understanding AFV in DVA theory.

2.4.1. Feminist theory.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, there has been a well-established relationship between feminist theory and DVA. Using survey and interview methods, feminist academic literature highlighted the prevalence of women's victimisation due to male violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) and attributed this to wider patriarchal conditions in society. Violence is theorised as a technique which instils patriarchal gender roles (Walker, 1979) and women's subordination is reinforced through legal structures which both legitimise violence and prevent access to financial and social resources (Mooney, 2000). There have been critiques of early feminist perspectives, namely that it reinforces a universal picture of women and ignores the differential treatment of women of colour or queer women (Renzetti, 1988; Crenshaw, 1991). Furthermore, the influential work by Dobash and Dobash (1979) presumes a central intimate partner relationship and reinforces victims as young, heterosexual wives and partners (Bows, 2019). Original terminology defined this as 'wife battering' (Kurz, 1989) therefore setting a precedent for public understandings. Therefore, AFV is often overlooked within feminist theory.

Despite the concerns raised above, radical feminism continues to be a dominant framework for understanding DVA (Featherstone & Trinder, 1997). Radical feminism relies on gender roles to explain DVA, with the masculine body seen as an instrument of power and control (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This has been popularly discussed through Stark's (2007) power and control theory which highlights how abuse is designed to "degrade, isolate and exploit women" (Thaller & Cimino, 2016:3). Starks work has had huge impacts on policy and practice, such as the criminalisation of coercive control under the Serious Crime Act (2015). Central to Starks power and control framework is the notion that DVA constitutes a series of 'liberty harms' (Stark, 2007:397) in its restriction of women's freedom and life. These harms are gendered

and designed to uphold patriarchal order. Whilst this supports to explain the gendered patterns in AFV, Starks conceptualisation is limited to IPV (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) and there is no nuance of how control is experienced between family members.

Furthermore, Stark's (2007) conceptualisation crucially relies on a notion of one male actor being more powerful, due to structural and physical advantages, and exerting this power intentionally over a female. However, as has been discussed throughout this chapter, and as noted by Condry and Miles (2013b), dynamics of power and control are blurrier in the context of CPV given the parental role typically holds symbolic, social, and financial power. Similarly, the prevalence of so-called complex needs in adult family perpetration (Bracewell et al, 2022) highlight the existence of mutual vulnerabilities. This speaks to the need to look beyond gender and consider other intersecting factors to conceptualise the experiences of AFV.

2.4.2. Family violence approaches.

Whilst feminist literature holds a dominant position in explaining DVA, this was not the only theoretical perspective which emerged following the establishment of DVA as a social problem. 'Family violence' theorists, primarily associated with the work of Straus (1973, 1979) and Gelles (1985), explored the family as "society's most violent institution" (Gelles, 1997:1). The infliction of violence within the family from the family violence perspective was attributed to three reasons. Firstly, as an output related to stress from financial insecurity, socio-economic conditions, and labour conditions (Goode, 1971; Gelles, 1985). Secondly, through norms and media, violence was often normalised to resolve conflict (Straus, 1980; Gelles & Straus, 1979; Gelles & Maynard, 1987). And thirdly, functioned to discipline or promote socialisation into a family hierarchy, thus, "each generation learns to be violent by being a participant in a violent

family" (Straus et al, 1980:121). Therefore, family violence theorists looked beyond gender to see familial violence as intertwined with structural factors and familial norms.

Family violence theorists, whilst their primary lens of study was IPV, often considered DVA across the family, incorporating studies into sibling abuse and child abuse (Straus et al, 1980). This is exemplified through the development of the 'Conflict Tactics Scale' (CTS) tool (Straus et al, 1980) of measurement which found that sibling violence and abuse was the most pervasive relationship typology. The use of this tool also highlighted reduced gender symmetry (Straus, 1999), creating a challenge for the feminist perspective. However, the CTS has been critiqued for failing to contextualise violence (Johnson, 1995, 2006; Dobash & Dobash, 1998). For example, it ignores that acts of violence perpetrated by women are often committed in self-defence (Johnson, 1995). Furthermore, it relies on the idea that violence is incidental (Dobash & Dobash, 1998). This is problematic for forms of AFV, such as CPV, which has been argued to include ongoing patterns of abuse throughout the life course (Coogan, 2011). In addition, AFV has often been indicated to be gendered (Bracewell et al, 2022; Bates et al, 2022) thus an analysis of gender is crucial.

Furthermore, the functionality of violence to assert dominance relies on a nuclear, functional, and heteronormative perspective of 'the family' (Parsons, 1956). For example, if violence is used to establish hierarchy within the home, this does not explain the use of violence by children against their parents, the use of violence in adulthood nor the continuation of violence when family members no longer live together. It may be suggested that family violence theories thus only consider intrafamilial abuse in the context of childhood and socialisation. This lends into limitations discussed within this chapter. Whilst family violence perspectives therefore

help us to look beyond IPV, the lack of attention to plurality, age related transitions, dynamics of control and gender mean it is not suitable in isolation for explaining AFV.

2.4.3. Psychosocial and social learning approaches.

Holt and Shon (2016) argue that familial violence and abuse should be considered from a life course perspective, considering fluctuations in power, significant life events, and contextual dynamics. One theoretical perspective that has considered the life course of abuse is the social learning theory. These perspectives often examine the cyclical relationship between experiences of abuse and subsequent victimisation and/or perpetration. For example, Lenore Walker (1979) constructed the 'battered women's syndrome' which highlighted that women who had experienced DVA often subsequently displayed poor mental health, suicidal behaviours, and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. This was deployed as an explanation for why women may be unable to leave abusive relationships and as a legal defence for women who have killed their abusive partners (Faigman, 1986).

Whilst the 'battered women's syndrome' perpetuates gendered stereotypes of women as 'helpless' (Dutton et al, 2014), the ideas of learned behaviour or intergenerational transmission have been subsequently well-established in the field of DVA research (Markowitz, 2001). Research has often indicated that being exposed or subjected to DVA, especially in formative years, often correlates with an increased likelihood of victimisation and/or perpetration of DVA in adulthood (Desai et al, 2002; Godbout et al, 2017; McMahon et al, 2015). Bates and Taylor (2019) discuss intergenerational transmission in relation to IPV, highlighting how the witnessing of violence impacts upon the ability to form healthy relationships. This has frequently been discussed in CPV where it is argued that male sons are often exposed to DVA between parents and

thus adopt these behaviours as normative ways of acting towards a mother figure (Gebo, 2007; Simmons et al, 2018). However, much of the existing literature focuses on the exposure to and subsequent display of IPV (Peek et al, 1985). Little is known about the exposure to familial violence and then subsequent perpetration or victimisation of familial violence in adulthood.

Furthermore, intergenerational transmission of violence perspectives have been critiqued for reinforcing determinism (Kernsmith, 2006), as Stark and Flitcraft (1985) highlight, “for every abuser that has been hit as a youngster, two have not been hit” (pp. 168). Storkey (2015) further states that “women and men are not influenced solely by what they are exposed to as children but undergo years of learning in a variety of intensely influential cultural settings” (pp. 175). This signifies how the transmission theory risks placing surveillance on individual actors and therefore absenting an analysis of wider structures of inequality. This is significant for AFV where experiences of abuse are gendered. There is therefore a need to look at systems of patriarchy and familial obligation alongside the life course experience of abusive behaviours.

2.4.4. Theoretical integration.

The previous sections have highlighted how whilst there are valuable insights offered by each popular theory for understanding AFV, there are also limitations to each of these. Feminist theory has often failed to account for abuse beyond IPV; family violence theorists neglect gendered experiences of abuse and psycho-social explanations neglect the structural dimensions of power. Whilst the feminist theory would be best suited for AFV given the intersection with gender, as raised by Anglin (1998), social lives are complex and “it is arbitrary and misleading to speak of social

relations as if they revolved around the singular aspect of gender. People live their lives through intersections" (pp. 148).

Recently there has been a move towards integrated explanations of DVA. This can be best exemplified through the work of Lori Heise (1998). She highlights that whilst psycho-social explanations fail to explain why women are disproportionally victims, feminist theory equally does not account for the circumstances in which women are not victimised or why all men do not engage in abusive behaviour. She thus concludes by stating that "male dominance is the foundation for any realistic theory of violence, but experience suggests that as a single factor explanation, it is inadequate" (pp. 263). She favours an ecological approach, drawing on Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Belsky (1980) to conceptualise "violence as a multi-faceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational and socio-cultural factors" (pp. 263-4). Heise draws together individual factors, such as witnessing violence or neglect, situational factors such as male dominance and control (Yllo & Straus, 1990) or conflict and strain (Goode, 1971), exosystemic factors such as socio-economic factors (Straus et al, 1980) and women's isolation as well as macro-system factors such as social norms of masculinity, gender roles and male patriarchal entitlement (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) and the normalisation of male violence.

As can be seen in Figure 1, this theory may be beneficial for AFV as it incorporates aspects from multiple theoretical perspectives:

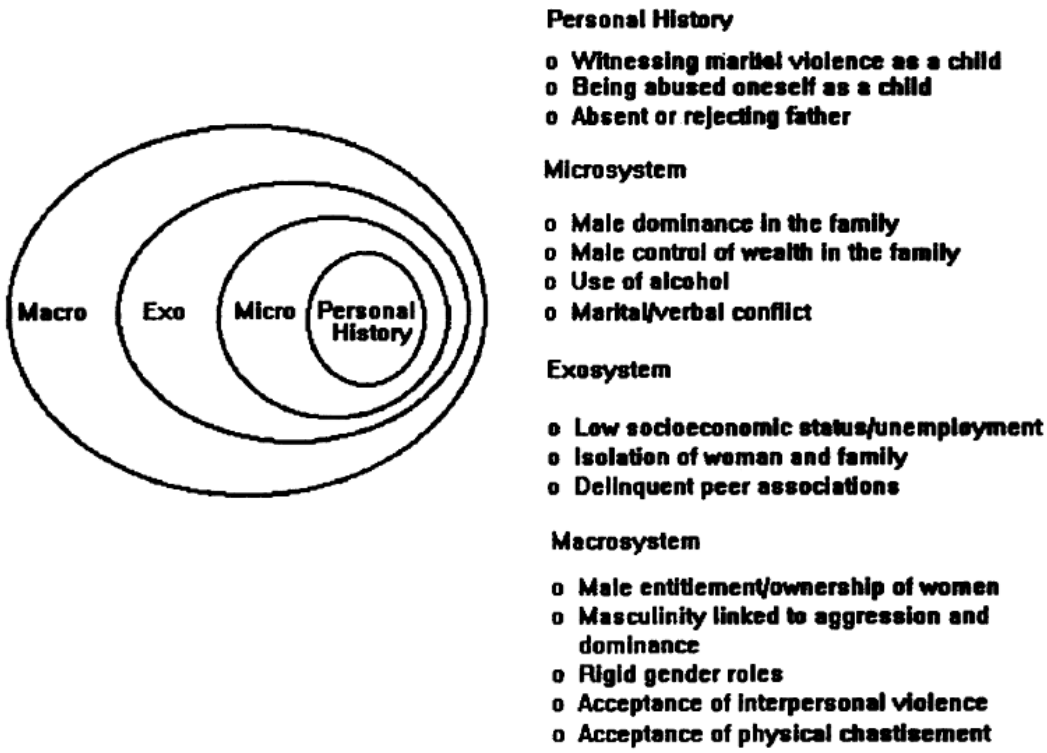


Figure 1: Ecological model of DVA (Heise, 1998)

Source: Heise. L. L., (1998), 'Violence Against Women: An Integrated, Ecological Framework: An Integrated, Ecological Framework. Violence Against Women, 4(3), pp. 262-290, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801298004003002

Holt (2021) argues that ecological theories further "avoid a simplistic focus on 'perpetrators' and 'victims' and extends the analytical lens to consider the interaction of biological, familial, cultural, institutional and legal factors" (pp. 139). Chowdhury and Winder (2022) however argue that the ecological approach risks becoming a one-size-fits all solution. Therefore, Chowdhury and Winder (2022) conceptualise DVA within the family as a 'web', due to the changing, multiple, and complex layers of causation and experience. This perspective is outlined in Figure 2:

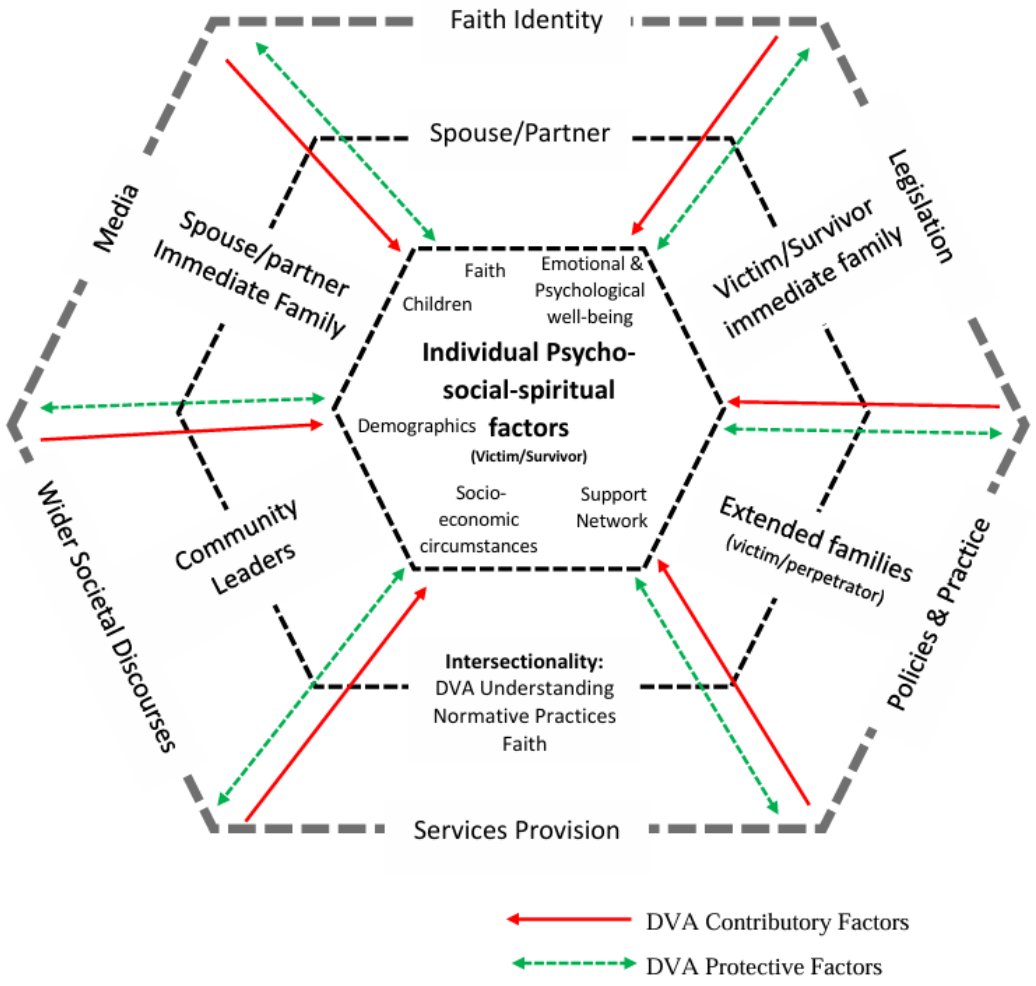


Figure 2: Web model of DVA (Chowdhury, 2021)

Source: Chowdhury. R., (2021a), 'Web model of domestic violence and abuse', Brunel University London. https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.19416452

This model builds on the 'power and control wheel' (Pence & Paymar, 1986) to address and nuance familial abuse. Furthermore, this incorporates intersectionality, with Holt and Shon (2016) for instance suggesting that age and gender in the context of families are "continually evolving axes of power, which are shaped throughout the life course, and which intersect" (pp. 921). However, whilst a recognition of intersectionality, context, complexity, and family has begun to emerge within DVA literature (Anitha, 2019; Southern & Sullivan, 2021; Chowdhury, 2021b; Buchanan & Borgkvist, 2024),

these conceptualisations remain in their infancy and are often small-scale or based on international populations. Therefore, it is still unclear how AFV is understood and responded to within current policy, organisations, and practice as a form of DVA in England and Wales.

2.5. Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has addressed key definitional and theoretical issues in relation to understanding and explaining AFV. This chapter firstly demonstrated that there is a lack of empirical current research on AFV with most research on familial DVA splintered into different academic camps (Holt, 2021). This is concerning as it hinders the ability for frontline practice to accurately equip a coherent understanding. It was identified that most literature on abusive families currently focuses on the contexts of childhood or welfare. There is a lack of research on experiences of familial violence in adulthood within DVA literature. This was considered significant given the dynamics associated with adulthood as well as the differences in service provision.

When assessing the policy and theoretical bases commonly used to understand and explain DVA, this review found a predominant concentration on explaining IPV. Whilst facets of feminist theory, family violence and psycho-social perspectives were beneficial, there were also serious limitations in applying these theories to AFV. The chapter highlights how an integrative model may be useful, but literature is still in its infancy. Therefore, gaps exist regarding how AFV is conceptualised and subsequently how these understandings impact multi-agency practice.

Chapter Three: Literature review - Identifying and risk assessing AFV.

3.1. Introduction.

The literature review now turns to appraising literature regarding risk and risk assessment. This chapter firstly outlines the core criminological perspectives on risk and considers how risk has been discussed in the context of DVA. As will be highlighted, much of the existing literature on risk is concentrated on IPV and there lacks an understanding of how risk is experienced in relationships of AFV. This chapter then examines the strategies and tools developed to identify and assess risk. Professionals in England and Wales popularly use structured professional judgement (SPJ) tools such as the 'Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence' risk identification checklist (DASH RIC) (Richards, 2009). However, there lacks a critical evaluation on the effectiveness of these models for assessing victim-survivors proximity to risk in the context of AFV.

3.2. Understanding risk.

3.2.1. Criminological perspectives on risk.

Defining 'risk' has long characterised criminological thought. Neo-classicist criminology conceptualised risk through an equational cost benefit analysis (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) with the decision to engage in 'risky' behaviours precipitated on this calculation. This was discussed by Lyng (1990, 2004) in relation to 'edgework' whereby the seductive consequential feelings of engaging in criminal activity served as a motivating factor. However, these perspectives focus exclusively on male, white and middle-class 'risk-takers' (Walklate, 2007). This is problematic for

gender-based violence (GBV) as by focusing on the 'seductions of crime' (Katz, 1988) the perspectives of those impacted by risky or criminal behaviours are absented. Therefore, this conceptualisation of risk is not suitable for understanding being 'at risk' of DVA.

The neoclassicist perspective was subsequently replaced in favour of Beck's (1999) 'Risk Society' thesis. Beck argued that instead of a calculated behaviour, risk is a "systematic way of dealing with hazards" (Beck, 1992:21). Here the perception of eventual or "threatening risks determines thought and action" (Beck, 1999:135). Beck theorised that in comparison to the pre-modern world, where harms were explained as the will of God, the development of scientific systems in late modernity led to a subsequent disconnect from traditional belief systems. The inability to explain risk through traditional belief systems and the emergence of technological developments meant that hazards were "unleashed to an extent that was previously unknown" (Beck, 1992:19). Given risk then became part of the everyday, Beck theorised the management of 'risk' was devolved to experts (Giddens, 1990).

Beck hypothesised that society was subsequently organised in relation to risk rather than axes of class, race and gender, which become "zombie categories" (Beck & Beck-Gernsnheim, 2001:27). This is of course problematic for GBV, DVA and AFV as the previous chapter identified the influencing role of gender within these experiences. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) "institutionalised individualisation" (pp. xxii), whereby individuals reject these 'zombie categories', is especially problematic for AFV as gender, race, and class shape experiences of family. Therefore, it can be argued that these factors influence experiences of AFV. Additionally, Beck ignores how risk can be socially constructed (Douglas, 1992). Whilst he recognises the role of 'experts' in governing risk, he neglects to consider who is assigned to be 'at risk' or 'risky,' who

decides this and what knowledge base is used to determine this. In the context of being ‘at risk’ of DVA, knowledge in this regard is usually based on what is formally recorded or reported to the police (Dean, 1998; Ballantyne, 2013). However, many victim-survivors are unable to report abuse, or reports may be inaccurate (Harne & Radford, 2008; Mirza, 2017). Therefore, ‘the risk of DVA’ is a discursive or partial knowledge. This is a crucial critique for this thesis, given much of what is known about DVA currently relates to IPV.

The governmentality thesis alternatively pays heed to how “new forms of knowledge, rationality and technology are invoked to manage this governance, including strategies such as risk screening, case management, insurance and situational crime prevention” (Anderson & Brown, 2010:547). Rather than focusing on risk as a general event, Lupton (1999) asserts that “particular social groups or populations are identified as ‘at risk’ or high risk’, requiring particular... interventions” (pp. 87). Thus, risk becomes a label in which individuals must self-regulate to manage. This relates back to Beck’s discussion on individualism; however, the emphasis on accountability highlights how responsibility is shifted from experts onto individual actors, allowing the state to govern from a distance. As outlined by Castel et al (1991) risk strategies “dissolve the notion of a subject or concrete individual and put in its place a combination of factors, the factors of risk” (pp. 281). Thus, risk becomes a form of power, which sorts individuals and justifies a monitoring of their behaviour.

A key critique for governmentality approaches is that they do not consider “what it is those deemed ‘at risk’ might do in the light of having been assessed as risky” (Walklate, 2018:5). However, the process of attributing responsibility through risk is especially important for understanding how “ideologies of risk and risk management... influence social control” (Anderson & Brown, 2010:547). For this thesis, the

governmentality perspective therefore offers a way to understand what and who is currently deemed to be ‘at risk’ (i.e. IPV relationships) and the consequences for those relationships outside of this construction, such as AFV (Butterby & Donovan, 2024).

3.2.2. Risk in the context of DVA.

The preoccupation with ‘risk’ is however not only present in criminological theory but can be located within criminal justice policy and practice. Especially in probation, there has been an increased focus on risk management, and the systematic targeting, reducing, and managing of risk (Feeley & Simon, 1992). Risk management systems often use ‘risk’ to determine the appropriateness of releasing an offender based on the likelihood of harm to self, others, and society (Kemshall, 2003). Thus, managing risk is synonymous with perpetrator management or the management of ‘risky populations’ (Rose,1998; O’Malley, 2008). Often risk is deduced by specifically looking at ‘risk factors’ i.e. characteristics or behaviours deemed indicative of a likelihood to commit further offences.

This emphasis on reducing the likelihood of a risky event through managing risk factors can be identified in the context of DVA. Responding to DVA is often conflated with preventing significant harm or homicide (Myhill et al, 2023). The prevention of harm and homicide is also often stressed through the timely identification and subsequent management of risk factors (Robinson et al, 2014, 2018; Medina-Ariza et al, 2016). Risk factors which indicate the likelihood of eventual harm and/or homicide for DVA are associated with characteristics of perpetrators, their relationships or their lives which potentially trigger escalations in abusive behaviours. This has often been discussed in reference to a perpetrator’s mental health, use of drugs and alcohol, employment and financial status, criminal history as well as historic violence to other

people (Riggs et al, 2000; Stith et al, 2004; Schumacher et al, 2001; Robinson & Clancy, 2020).

There has also been an established link between certain abusive behaviours and the indicative eventuality of homicide. Non-fatal strangulation (Pritchard et al, 2017; White et al, 2021; Bows & Herring, 2024; Munro & Dangar, 2025) and similarly, stalking, especially in the context of post-separation, have often preceded fatal violence (McFarlane et al, 1999; Bendlin & Sheridan, 2019). Furthermore, the combination of coercive control, stalking and strangulation has been highlighted to contribute to instances of serious harm and homicide (Monckton-Smith et al, 2022; Hoeger et al, 2024). However, this literature is usually focused on IPV and there exists little work which examines how these behaviours contribute to adult family homicide or significant harm in familial relationships. Conversely, Sharp-Jeffs and Kelly (2016) raise that risk was rarely understood or assessed in the context of adult family homicide. They suggest that risk factors for AFV, whilst sharing some commonalities with IPV, are often different. They raise that there is a need to look at family, support needs, addiction, entitlement, and violence to other family members, professionals, and intimate partners as well as traditional risk factors of mental health, offending and substance use.

Furthermore, this ‘power few’ (Sherman, 2007) approach has been critiqued for ignoring both wider societal factors and victim-survivors (Barlow & Walklate, 2021). There is, however, some work which considers risk factors in the context of victim-survivors, including considering the impact of factors such as isolation, barriers to getting support or levels of fear (Jewkes, 2002; Hilton & Harris, 2005; Robinson & Tregidga, 2007) as well relational factors such as separation or other changes in the relationship (Monckton-Smith, 2021). However, this has been argued to perpetuate

what Douglas (1992) refers to as a “common forensic vocabulary with which to hold people accountable” (pp. 22) and for rendering individuals as responsible for their own risk factors. This is demonstrated through an emphasis on women's responsibility to leave abusive relationships, to report abuse and to undertake safety planning (Hoyle, 2008) without an appreciation of the impacts of coercive control or systemic barriers. This aligns with the critiques of accountability (Renehan et al, 2023) raised in the governmentality perspective and alludes to wider critiques that have been made regarding conceptualising risk as an attribute or characteristic associated with an individual or a relationship (Walklate & Mythen, 2011). Notably this conceptualisation is static, overlooks ‘wildness’ (Walklate, 2011) and reproduces a structurally neutral conception of risk of harm which fails to consider gender within analyses of risk (Barlow & Walklate, 2021; Hannah-Moffat, 2010).

For this thesis, it is especially concerning that the literature regarding risk factors is focused on risk factors of significant harm and homicide in the context of IPV. For example, Monckton-Smith’s (2021) ‘homicide timeline’ focuses only on the triggers of IPV. It is important to therefore consider risk factors through a discursive lens. Risk factors are based on what is currently considered and known to be ‘risky’ through evidence collected from specific systems. From this perspective therefore, ‘risk factors’, and therefore the meaning of being ‘at-risk’ or ‘risky’, are conflated with IPV (Turner et al, 2019; Standing Together, 2021; Weir, 2024) and there is little research exploring risk factors for relationships of AFV. Significantly, there is little research exploring the impacts of this conflation for either victim-survivors or professionals conducting risk assessment.

3.3. Assessing risk in DVA.

3.3.1. The development of risk assessments for DVA.

Despite the critiques of the preoccupation with individualistic 'risk factors,' developing approaches to identify these have been increasingly popular. Again, in probation, there was an initial proliferation of actuarial assessments of risk "based on mathematical modelling... and... a quantitative estimate of probability" (Sebire & Barling, 2016:352). These approaches often used retrospective predictive calculations to consider an individual's prior offending, behaviour, vulnerabilities or 'risk factors' (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985). Risk factors were quantified to allow a categorisation of offenders based on a numerical level of risk (Kemshall, 2003). These actuarial approaches had a subsequent influence on DVA praxis, particularly in the 1990's and early 2000's (Medina-Ariza et al, 2016). This was especially the case in the North American context, with the development of the Danger Assessment (Campbell et al, 2008), the Spousal Risk Assessment (SARA) (Kropp et al, 1995) and the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) (Hilton et al, 2010).

Actuarial tools operate by 'counting' of risk factors and creating a calculable risk score. This was regarded as a preferable approach to previous discretionary practices, which were influenced by the masculine culture of policing (Loftus, 2009). However, whilst there has been research on the predictive validity of these tools (Dutton & Kropp, 2000; Campbell et al, 2005, 2008; Messing et al, 2015), concerns have been raised regarding their deterministic nature. As a result, there has been a movement towards a model of assessment which still prioritises identification but additionally recognises the dynamism of risk. This has resulted in the wide-spread adoption of structured professional judgement (SPJ) tools which combine discretionary judgement with an encouragement to consider key risk factors (Hart et al, 2016; Robinson et al, 2016a).

SPJ tools, similarly to actuarial approaches, calculate a risk grading of high, standard, or low based on the amount of 'yes' answers to questions based on risk factors. Certain numerical scores, such as in the context of the DASH RIC which relies on a score of fourteen or more, are considered 'high risk' and trigger referrals to intensive partnership responses. However, SPJ's crucially allow for risk assessors to challenge this risk grading based on 'professional judgement' when the numerical score is deemed to understate the urgency or context. Despite this attention to professional judgement, however, SPJ models have been critiqued for erecting thresholds of 'risk.' For example, intensive multi-agency support is retained only for those scoring fourteen and over on a DASH RIC. This has led to critiques that the DASH RIC has become a tool "for funnelling and rationing the service response" (Stanley & Humphreys, 2014:79).

Further questions have been raised about whether the content included within the DASH RIC allows for an accurate prediction of homicide or significant harm. Monckton-Smith et al (2022) raise that the DASH RIC is not a sequential tool so cannot display patterns of escalation. Furthermore, Bland and Ariel (2020) dispute the link between homicide and behaviours getting worse or more frequent. Medina-Ariza et al (2016) assert that "assessment should not only be about predicting future physical harm, it should also be about identifying, diagnosing, and suggesting how to address current harm" (pp. 344), disputing the DASH RIC's focus on predicting harm. As further argued by Graham et al (2019), "risk is dynamic and should be re-assessed to understand the risk posed as a particular time... risk assessment is a process not an end goal". Therefore, the standardisation of 'risk assessment' has been considered as perpetuating a bureaucratic approach to managing risk. However, despite these ongoing concerns, SPJ models continue to be operationalised as standard practice,

particularly in the context of policing in England and Wales. Therefore, the implications of SPJ approaches for assessing AFV are considered.

3.3.2. Implications of SPJ's for AFV.

The DASH RIC was adopted universally in England and Wales in 2009 (Richards, 2009) and versions are used by police officers, DVA practitioners as well as health professionals. However, it is unclear how the widespread adoption of the DASH RIC came to be given the lack of rigorous evaluation (Myhill et al, 2023). For example, it has been doubted whether the questions on the DASH RIC adequately assess coercive control, with many questions continuing to focus on physical harms (Almond et al, 2017). Furthermore, their applicability to other abusive contexts outside of IPV have been disputed (Miles & Fox, 2022; Weir, 2024; Vera-Grey et al, 2025). Despite the 'Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment' (DARA) (College of Policing, 2022) offering some respite to the criticisms of a 'tunnel vision' on physical harm (Barlow & Walklate, 2021:897), there is no in-depth research examining either the DASH RIC or DARA's effectiveness for capturing risk in the context of AFV.

As indicated in the previous section, risk factors are discursive and partial knowledge, however, are homogenously accepted in the DASH RIC and DARA models as predictive of all abusive relationships. Most of the questions included on these tools are evidenced from research associated with IPV (Medina-Ariza et al, 2016; Storey, 2020; Standing Together, 2021; Weir, 2024). Miles and Fox (2022) raise that given many of the questions may be irrelevant to families experiencing HBV, the assessment "erroneously produces a 'standard' (low) risk score" (pp. 505). Butterby and Donovan (2024) highlight that the DASH RIC therefore labels who and what relationships are 'high risk' and consequently excludes experiences which are not represented within

the question set. This is exemplified by the fact both Bracewell et al (2022) and Sharp-Jeffs and Kelly (2016) found within adult family homicide reviews; risk assessments were often missing for AFV prior to homicide.

This is furthermore problematic as it means AFV may be disproportionately excluded from high-risk multi-agency support such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) (Steel et al, 2011) given the inability to gain a ‘high-risk’ score. Whilst the capacity to undertake professional judgement referrals is available within the DASH RIC, this has not been evaluated for the capacities of referring relationships of AFV (Robinson et al, 2016a; Myhill et al, 2023). Notably, it has been countered that risk assessments are increasingly filled out as a tick box exercise. This reflects a ‘fordization’ (Myhill, 2018) of risk-adverse cultures (Cockcroft, 2012; Myhill, & Johnson, 2015; Heaton & Tong, 2022). This has detriments for assessing AFV where victim-perpetrator relationships may often involve complex dynamics of care, substance abuse, familial norms, familial loyalties, mental health, and criminal offending (Bracewell et al, 2022) which may rely on discretion and professional judgement to understand fully.

As raised by Trujillo and Ross (2008), even though work has been done on recidivism and predictive validity, “little is known about how police construe risk in these situations, what situational or other factors contribute to their assessment of risk or how they use structured risk assessments in the field” (pp. 458). Although Robinson et al (2016b) discuss the ‘constellation of risk factors’ which shape policing assessments, this does not pay attention to whether the relationship being assessed influences assessments of risk or whether the knowledge that assessors have about that relationship allows them to adequately grade proximity to risk (Medina-Ariza et al, 2016). Although Weir (2024) has explored risk assessment scores by relationship

types, there is little consideration of the qualitative experience of risk assessing AFV, the use of SPJ tools to understand the dynamics and proximity to risk in these relationships as well as the operationalisation of knowledge on these relationships by risk assessors. As raised by Stanley & Humphreys (2014) “risk assessments are only as good as the information that informs them” (pp. 80).

3.4. Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the current theoretical understanding of risk in relation to DVA and the development of risk assessment practice. This chapter identified that current academic literature, whilst engaging in critical debate over what pertains as ‘risk’ (Walklate & Mythen, 2011), usually focuses on risk within the context of IPV (Standing Together, 2021). How risk is experienced, understood and managed in the context of AFV remains neglected.

This conflation of ‘risk’ with IPV has subsequently meant the effectiveness of SPJ risk assessment tools, such as the DASH RIC or DARA, have not been critically appraised for their use in different relationship contexts (Weir, 2024). As reflected by Butterby and Donovan (2024), the DASH RIC “constructs what, and who... is viewed as risky, with experiences that sit outside the checklist in danger of being viewed as ‘other’ or not risky, when the reality may be otherwise” (pp. 1381). This raises important questions regarding whether these tools can and should be used for identifying and assessing AFV.

Chapter Four: Literature Review – Supporting victim-survivors of AFV.

4.1. Introduction.

This chapter represents the final literature review chapter and assesses the current literature regarding legal and professional responses to victim-survivors of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) and explores the relevancy of these approaches for addressing the needs of victim-survivors of adult family violence (AFV). Building on Hesters (2011) 'three planet model', which examined the parameters of child contact, child safeguarding and DVA services, this thesis sees policy, policing and multi-agency practice as key 'planets' of response in DVA between adults. The chapter begins by evaluating the current legal protections in place intended to offer support for victim-survivors of DVA. Following this, the chapter explores the current literature on policing, advocacy, and safeguarding responses to DVA, including the integration of these into a multi-agency approach. This chapter argues that much like the systems designed to identify DVA and risk, support is again tailored around intimate partner violence (IPV). The chapter concludes by briefly discussing what is known about in the field regarding effective intervention for relationships of AFV, highlighting that current literature in this respect is scarce.

4.1. Legal protections for victim-survivors of DVA.

Whilst feminist activism significantly, and productively, influenced the policy development of DVA (see chapter one for further discussion), within initial activism there was little discussion of interpersonal violence beyond IPV. For example, whilst feminist scholarship highlighted how current legislation 'justified' male violence

towards their wives, there was little discussion of how this legislation impacted or shaped familial abuse. This alludes to critiques that have been made of the evidence base for early feminist theory and activism that it relies on 'who reported' (Harne & Radford, 2008), or who was believed (Beetham et al, 2021). As legal frameworks and protections relating to DVA developed, there still lacked specific consideration of familial relationships. For example, whilst the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976 expanded the use of civil protective measures, DVA continued to lack being a specific offence. It was instead conceptualised as a feature of existing offences, such as the offence against the person or property (McPhee et al, 2021). However, offences against the person or property are not distinguished by the specific dynamics of trust that can be exploited in interpersonal violence, thus familial abuse is conflated with stranger violence.

Furthermore, given offences against the person or property rely on visible or physical incidents, it can be argued that early legislation reinforced the "discourse… of DVA interpreted as physical violence perpetrated by men against women within a heterosexual relationship" (Rogers et al, 2019:507). Whilst this has been somewhat addressed by the criminalisation of coercive control (Serious Crime Act, 2015), the effectiveness of this on practice is disputed (Bettinson & Bishop, 2015; Barlow & Walklate, 2025). As has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, additionally little is known about the dynamics of control in familial relationships, so it is unclear whether the law in this respect offers protection for victim-survivors of AFV.

Whilst the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 extended civil protections to same-sex and non-cohabiting couples, this again largely focused on IPV. There was however, during the New Labour government, the emergence of additional provisions for HBV during this time, such as the Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) and Forced

Marriage Civil Protection Act (2007). Given the definition of AFV within this thesis includes HBV, some relationships of AFV may have therefore received some additional protections within these developments. However, these legislative protections are separate to policy concerning DVA, reinforcing the othering of AFV. Furthermore, the benefits of these protections are undermined by the fact that despite 'domestic violence' receiving a cross-government definition during this time (Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act, 2004), HBV still lacks a statutory definition and the associated protections with this.

Nonetheless, within the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 there has been the move to strengthen both criminal and civil protections for all victim-survivors of DVA. This is exemplified through the enforcement of non-molestation orders and injunctions, the criminalisation of breaching these and the unification of these into Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO) and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPN). However, despite the expansion of protection orders to include anyone who is 'personally connected' (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021), there is little research on the use or benefits of protection orders for addressing AFV. Miles and Condry (2014) raise that protection orders may be complicated to put in place due to familial loyalty and care obligations. They cite the low rates of parents seeking criminal justice support for abusive children as an illustrative example of this (pp.818). This is also discussed by Holt (2016) who questions the feasibility of removing a perpetrator from a household, which a victim-survivor, or parent, may have legal or caring responsibilities for. Low rates of formal action also exist in the context of elder abuse and HBV (Ash, 2013; Clarke et al, 2016; Gill et al, 2018) therefore further questioning the effectiveness of legislative protections for AFV. Furthermore, Ewin et al (2020) raise that protection orders are often used for high-risk incidents. This is both contradictory of their original

purpose to provide support for standard risk cases but also raises questions regarding if and how they are used for AFV should AFV be excluded from the discourse of high-risk, as stressed in the last chapter.

Another intervention for victim-survivors within contemporary legislation is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) (Home Office, 2023). The DVDS, or 'Clares Law,' allows people to request information about the criminal history/violent offending records of a partner they are concerned about. The 'right to ask' route also allows concerned family members to request relevant information to be released and places a responsibility onto the police under the 'right to know' route to share relevant information. Whilst police already held common law powers to disclose information to prevent a crime, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 makes this a statutory requirement when responding to DVA. There has been a wealth of scrutiny on the implementation of the DVDS, namely that it requires women to manage their own safety (Hadjimatheou, 2022; Renehan et al, 2023; Barlow et al, 2024) as well as assuming all women will and can safely leave potentially abusive relationships (Barlow et al, 2021). This ignores the restrictions placed upon women because of coercive control, systemic racism, and wider discriminatory policies (Gill & Sharma, 2007). It can therefore be argued that the DVDS is only available to certain victim-survivors, usually ones who are proactive and obliging (Duggan, 2018a). This is especially apparent for AFV as the DVDS is solely provided to potential IPV relationships and there has been no critical discussion about how or why this exclusion is justified.

These critiques query the feasibility of national policy as a framework for responding to AFV. Legislative protections, such as DAPO's or the DVDS, are expected to be applied universally, by virtue of being national policy. Therefore, there is an inherent lack of consideration that the implementation of policy into practice does not occur

within a vacuum. This process may be influenced by the abusive relationship encountered, such as AFV, by local government capacity or funding for service provision (Mayrhofer et al, 2025; Powell et al, 2025) as well as cultural and organisational assumptions (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018). There is little work that examines how current legal frameworks for DVA are interpreted and applied by 'street level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 1980), especially not when responding to AFV. These critiques are further compounded by the fact that DVA policy does often not reflect the voices of victim-survivors and professionals (Hague et al, 2003; Hammond et al, 2025). Therefore, it is unclear whether policy initiatives reflect lived experiences.

It can therefore be argued that current legal protections afforded to victim-survivors of DVA presume IPV. There is little academic work which explores how these protections are negotiated when responding to relationships of AFV. The preoccupation on criminal justice policy infers that the response to DVA has become conflated with the criminal justice system (Goodmark, 2017). Whilst this may communicate the immorality of abuse (Douglas, 2018), it may also overshadow the valuable work done by other agencies and pose additional marginalisation for minoritised victim-survivors. Therefore, there is a pertinent need to explore current representations of AFV in policy and how legal expectations surrounding DVA are applied by professionals when responding to AFV relationships.

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4.2. Roles and responsibilities of professionals.

4.2.1. Policing.

Policing has long been the object of criminological and sociological enquiry (Reiner, 2010). A key source of intrigue concerns police staff 'on the beat' and the use of

discretion to apply, enforce and uphold laws, legal frameworks, and powers (Poyser, 2004). McLaughlin (2007) suggests that a fundamental part of this was the “low visibility of police work” (pp. 51), where police officers had minimal supervision and were responsible for independent decision making in points of crisis. Whilst this was argued to be a central aspect of police work (Goldsmith, 1990), Reiner (2010) raised that this minimal supervision may allow for some officers to make decisions based on bias. Literature raised that this was especially problematic for responding to DVA, citing that responses to victim-survivors are often characterised by the masculine, often misogynistic, sub-culture of ‘cop culture’ (Radford & Stanko, 1994; Edwards, 1989; Loftus, 2009), perceptions about ‘real police work’ (Dobash & Dobash, 1981) and negative stereotypes about victim-survivors (Hoyle, 1998).

Given research has consistently highlighted victim dissatisfaction with the police (McKee et al, 2022; Hodgkinson et al, 2023), contemporary policing has consequently been increasingly scrutinised (HMIC, 2014; HMICFRS, 2017; Heaton & Tong, 2022). As Barlow and Walklate (2020) highlight, officers are now expected to justify decisions by using professional development, policy, and experience. Therefore, the application of personal values is considerably more difficult, although not impossible. A key example of this is the implementation of ‘pro-arrest’ policies (Sherman & Berk, 1984) and the duty of positive action (College of Policing, 2015). The decision to arrest must now be necessary and proportionate, however decisions *not* to pursue arrest must be equally justifiable (Barlow & Walklate, 2020). Pro-arrest policies were justified as being in the best interests of victim-survivors and designed to combat high rates of victim withdrawal. However, whilst there is some evidence of reduced recidivism as a result of pro-arrest (Sherman and Berk, 1984), there have also been serious concerns raised regarding the potential aggravation of further violence (Sherman et al, 1992), dual

arrests (Hester, 2012; Day & Gill, 2020) and the removal of victim-survivor agency (Leisenring, 2008; Durfee, 2012).

The use of pro-arrest has not been evaluated specifically for AFV; therefore, it is unknown if the arrest of familial perpetrators is beneficial. However, Amos et al (2025) find that reporting to professional services is often low for abuse from family members. This is furthered by Robinson et al (2025) who found in their sample of police recorded crimes that AFV victim-survivors very rarely supported prosecution but instead desired support for the perpetrator and their needs. Given familial loyalties have been discussed in the context of CPV as impacting decisions to pursue criminal justice actions (Wilcox, 2012; Miles & Condry, 2014), it can be theorised that arrest may be an unsuitable intervention measure. This is compounded by the fact arrest may sever family ties and thus exacerbate feelings of trauma and guilt (Holt, 2022).

Furthermore, pro-arrest policies have been critiqued for reflecting the “incident driven approach of policing” (Barlow & Walklate, 2020:7), with officers being required to make decisions based on what they perceive when attending a call-out. This not only signifies a continued reliance on physical indicators of harm (Barlow, 2023) but has additional consequences for AFV. Benbow et al (2023) suggest that there are often ambiguities over care, capacity, and coercion in AFV, which may often mean the identification of perpetrators and victim-survivors can be complex. It can therefore be hypothesised as crucial that front-line police utilise professional judgement when responding to AFV rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all framework.

The duty of positive action however does not only encourage pro-arrest but has a dual emphasis on applying protective measures. For example, officers are now expected to refer to target hardening schemes or utilise protection orders. However, as raised

in the previous section of this chapter, it is unclear how protection orders, and other intervention measures for that matter, are applied by police when attending callouts of AFV. This reflects concerns raised previously with the implementation of policy and practice, with McPhee et al (2021) raising that there is often a gap between “policies on paper and work in practice” (pp. 966) within policing. Given the uncertainties about the police response to AFV, there is therefore a need to additionally explore the roles and possible benefits of other agency responses.

4.2.2. Advocacy.

Often guided by radical feminist principles (Featherstone & Trinder, 1997), the advocacy movement has often been considered instrumental for responding to DVA. Whilst the grass-roots origins of this approach are increasingly ‘professionalised’ (Wies, 2008), third-sector DVA organisations remain fundamental. These services, usually voluntary or community in nature but may be commissioned or partially funded by the government are usually victim-survivor-led. Whilst usually focused on advocacy, services may also provide advice, safety planning, emergency and refuge accommodation, legal and court support, community and out-reach services, group work, peer-to-peer support and educational programmes (Howarth & Robinson, 2015). There has also been a recent movement to incorporate perpetrator programmes into this landscape (Bates et al, 2017; Lilley-Walker et al, 2018).

Advocacy and DVA services often centre principles of ‘empowerment’ (Kasturirangan, 2008). This is usually done using an advocate, described as a ‘mouthpiece’ for the victim-survivor (Pence, 2001). The use of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) is now widespread in England and Wales and has been linked to positive outcomes (Howarth et al, 2009; Davies et al, 2024). However, Rogers (2013) raises

that the long association between the women's liberation movement and DVA services has resulted in typical advocacy approaches being often exclusionary for trans and non-binary communities. Given the power and control framework, based on heteronormative IPV, is often central to advocacy work (Pence & Paymar, 1993), this raises obvious questions for AFV. It can be suggested that that the feminist advocacy movement may operate under the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of DVA. Little is currently known about how these services support victim-survivors of AFV.

An additional concern is an increasing uneasy reliance on government funding. Harvie and Manzi (2011) raise that due to demands for ‘measurement’ and ‘evaluation’ to justify funding, an increased managerial culture arises. The ‘payment by results agenda’ may conflict with intersectional feminist conceptions of justice, which include feelings of safety or interactional justices (Mulvihill et al, 2018) rather than quantifiable outcomes. Given ‘what works’ (Sherman & Berk, 1984) for AFV is currently unknown, it is important that responding to these relationships allows space for exploration and discretion. However, the increased managerial culture may negatively impact the ability of practitioners to have the resources and time to explore this. This is compounded by the fact the third sector is at the mercy of short-term funding, budget cuts and austerity (Towers & Walby, 2012; McPherson & McGibbon, 2014) leading some to argue there is a 'justice by geography’ (Davies & Biddle, 2017) in provision. Cuts to funding has especially impacted the ‘by and for’ arena (Towers & Walby, 2012; Sandhu & Stephenson, 2015; Beetham et al, 2021), raising further disparities for marginalised communities. Given the indicative rates of familial abuse occurring in marginalised communities, such as the LGBTQIA+ community (Amos et al, 2023; Gangoli et al, 2023), this is significant.

4.2.3. Health, social care, and safeguarding.

Given the potential intersections of care in AFV (Bracewell et al, 2022), the prevalence of older people being victimised (Bows, 2019) and the fact adult family homicide research has indicated that both victim-survivors and perpetrators may present to health and social care services (Chantler et al, 2025), understanding these services is pertinent for addressing harm.

The Care Act (2014) and associated guidance (Home Office, 2022b) places a statutory responsibility on health-care services and local authorities to take action when an ‘adult at risk’ is experiencing DVA. An ‘adult at risk’ is defined as someone who:

> (a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting an of those needs), (b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. (Care Act, 2014, c. 23, p. 1)

Within this health and social care professionals must balance the safety, well-being, and autonomy of ‘vulnerable adults’ (Robb & McCarthy, 2022). Despite these statutory obligations however, research has indicated that there is a lack of clear understanding by professionals concerning their responsibilities in the context of adult safeguarding and DVA (Heffernan et al, 2012; Hickson et al, 2013; Clawson & Fyson, 2017). Whilst children's safeguarding and DVA has been heavily examined and prioritised (Peckover, 2013; Stanley & Humphreys, 2014; Peckover & Golding, 2017), there remains significant gaps outlining the links between adult safeguarding and DVA (Bows et al, 2025). As raised by Robb and McCarthy (2022), whilst the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) goes into extensive detail regarding the decision making for children's safeguarding, the adults' section is much shorter.

Furthermore, despite recent efforts to draw attention to the importance of adult safeguarding for DVA, much of this focuses on the experiences of ‘vulnerable’ people', defined through reference to care and support needs (Norrie et al, 2018; Robb & McCarthy, 2022). Whilst this is crucial given the prevalence of DVA within this community (ONS, 2024b), Robbins et al (2016) highlights that this constructs an assumption that adult safeguarding is limited to certain types of vulnerability. Notably this is an understanding of vulnerability based on the assumption of physical and mental capacity, as opposed to situational dynamics. This conceptualisation of vulnerability is further problematic as Lonbay and Southall (2023) highlight the gender-neutral framing of this means that victim-survivors are routinely supported with their ‘vulnerabilities’ rather than supported for DVA.

Adult safeguarding responses therefore operate on the requirement for victim-survivors to meet the threshold of an ‘adult at risk.’ McLaughlin et al (2016) argues that this is akin to ‘resource management’. For AFV there are concerns as to whether the dynamics of these relationships would meet what is understood to be risk, vulnerability, or DVA. For example, it has been argued that professionals often do not recognise DVA in the context of older adults due to the assumptions of DVA being a young person's experience (Wydall et al, 2018). Bows et al (2025) suggest that this is especially the case for non-partner family abuse, finding in an analysis of Section 42 enquiries[1] that most of the cases missed as DVA were non-partner familial violence and abuse. This highlights that health and social care intervention may be based on

[1] A section 42 enquiry refers to a formal investigation by Local Authorities, as governed by The Care Act (2014). This investigation is triggered when a local authority reasonably suspects an adult is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse/neglect, has needs for care and is unable to protect themselves due to those needs.

either IPV or responding to ‘vulnerability’. Therefore, research is needed to further how AFV is understood and responded to within this.

4.2.4. Multi-agency, partnerships, and MARACs.

A key recommendation from domestic homicide reviews (DHR) has consistently been the need for better multi-agency working. This is notably emphasised in adult family homicide reviews, with Sharp-Jeffs and Kelly (2016) highlighting that many services, particularly health and mental health services, were in contact with victim-survivors and perpetrators of AFV but failed to share valuable information (pp. 59). The values of partnership working have long been recognised in relation to DVA, with the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) emphasising joint working between statutory agencies, health and social care and voluntary services. Murphy et al (1998) noted that a multi-agency approach moves away from a sole reliance on criminal justice, raised as problematic in this chapter. Multi-agency approaches have been considered “the best way forward” (Hague and Bridge, 2008:185), with successes being reported within various models (Robinson, 2004; Lea & Callaghan, 2015; Robinson & Tregidga, 2007; Cleaver et al, 2019). Whilst partnership working has not been directly evaluated in the context of AFV, adult family homicide research has emphasised the potential benefits of this intervention given the overlapping vulnerabilities for both victim-survivors and perpetrators (Bracewell et al, 2022; Chantler et al, 2025).

The most prolific example of joined-up thinking can be seen in the establishment of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) (Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act, 2004) as a site of “information sharing, coordinated safety and action planning linking with other relevant agencies” (Davies et al, 2023:148). MARACs are multi-agency conferences, where victim-survivors assessed as ‘high risk’ are

represented by an IDVA and safety planning is discussed across agencies. MARACs are often chaired by police officers and attended by local authorities, probation, health, housing, women's services, schools, refuges, and other organisations (Steel et al, 2011). Robinson (2004) demonstrated that MARACs were effective for reducing harm, with six in ten victim-survivors over a one-year period reporting cessation and four in ten remaining free from abuse. These findings have been shared by other studies (Howarth et al, 2009; Robinson and Tegidga, 2007), however, there remains little research on MARACs in the context of AFV.

Furthermore, MARACs are restricted only for relationships assessed as 'high risk' (Tsantefski et al, 2021; Speed, 2022). This may be exclusionary for relationships of AFV given the concerns about risk raised in chapter three. This is especially concerning as there have been critiques made over the different perspectives of risk adopted by different professional services across the multi-agency team (Coy & Kelly, 2011; Stanley & Humphreys, 2014; Peckover & Golding, 2017). Therefore, it is unclear the consistency to which different professionals interpret, assess, and respond to DVA. This may have implications for AFV as it may indicate a 'justice by geography' (Davies & Biddle, 2017) or 'siloing of provision' (Powell et al, 2025) in relation to the quality of awareness of this form of abuse across services.

Sharp-Jeffs and Kelly (2016) highlight that only one adult family homicide case in their dataset was referred to MARAC and during the conference was not discussed consistently as DVA. It may therefore be assumed that MARACs operate on the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) and it is currently unknown whether they are an effective forum for managing AFV. This leads to additional questions as to whom exactly is therefore being assessed at MARAC's and whether this extends beyond IPV. Donovan (2013) for instance highlights that between 2009-10 only 0.63% of those

referred to MARACs were in the LGBTQIA+ community (pp. 121). Given LGBTQIA+ communities represent high numbers of familial violence (Amos et al, 2023; Gangoli et al, 2023; Donovan et al, 2024) this is significant. An additional concern is that MARAC referrals are predominantly made by the police (Steel et al, 2011; Donovan, 2013) and conferences are consistently chaired by police (Robbins et al, 2014). This questions the effectiveness of MARACs in moving away from the focus on criminalisation, highlighted as particularly questionable for AFV.

4.3. What works for AFV?

This now leaves the question, what does work in the context of AFV? There has been research on potential interventions for CPV, although this is usually focused on responding to perpetrators that are aged under eighteen. Much of this has stemmed from social learning approaches which emphasise reinstating parental power, as identified in programmes such as 'Step Up'[2] and 'Who's in Charge'[3] (Routt & Anderson, 2011; Gallagher, 2015) or the use of non-violent resistance (Sheehan, 1997; Weinblatt & Omer, 2008; Jakob, 2024). This is of course more difficult in the context of adulthood, given the shifting dynamics of care and parental responsibilities. Furthermore, this places the emphasis on parents, usually mothers, to take responsibility for their abuse. There has been some promising use of restorative justice for CPV where a multi-

[2] Step-Up is a program designed for practitioners to work with young people and their families experiencing child-to-parent violence. The programme focuses on conflict resolution and management. More information can be found here: https://kingcounty.gov/en/court/superior-court/courts-jails-legal-system/court-programs-children-families/juvenile-court-services/programs-services-juvenile-court/for-families-experiencing-violence/step-up

[3] Who's in Charge is a 9-week child-to-parent violence intervention programme which works directly with parents. It challenges guilt and teaches strategies to manage conflict in the home. More information can be found here: https://whosincharge.co.uk/#programme-explanations

agency approach offers intervention for both the offender and the victim-survivor (Holt, 2021). However, this is again often limited to youth justice.

Interventions in the context of abuse of older adults and sibling violence and abuse have similarly been discussed primarily within a psychological lens. For the abuse of older adults, many have advocated for increased public awareness (Alt et al, 2011), more robust safeguarding (Milne, 2023), community-based and psychological interventions for the victim-survivor as well as support for caregivers (Fearing et al, 2017; Storey et al, 2021). However, as raised by Yon et al (2019) most of this focuses on managing individual-level risk factors rather than directly addressing harm. A wealth of research has been undertaken considering sibling violence and abuse alongside interventions for CPV (Tucker et al, 2014; Young et al, 2024) and interventions for child abuse (Katz et al, 2022). However, a lot of this focuses on parental management of behaviour (Johnston & Freeman, 1998; Smith & Ross, 2007) or mental health management (Tucker et al, 2013) rather than addressing this abuse as DVA. Furthermore, this only exists in the context of childhood and by focusing on the co-occurrence of abuse this renders the development of intervention specifically for sibling violence and abuse seemingly not justified.

Child abuse interventions exist primarily in children's social care (Frost & Dolan, 2021). It is unclear territory regarding what works for adult victim-survivors of abuse from their parents beyond literature addressing psycho-social intervention for adults who experienced abuse as a child (Muller et al, 2008; Musliner & Singer, 2014). Most literature on negative adult relationships between parents and children focus on estrangement, therefore indicating that victim-survivors may have had no other choice but to sever family ties.

What is significant about all these forms of familial violence and abuse is that none of these relationships are responded to within the explicit framing of a DVA, advocacy or criminal justice response. HBV, and therefore some forms of extended family violence, have to an extent however been afforded the lens of DVA. For example, there has been an emphasis on collaborative working (NPCC, 2015; HMIC, 2015) and on prosecuting offenders, building rapport with communities and training police staff adequately (NPCC, 2015; Miles & Fox, 2022). However, there are substantive critiques of the overreliance on a policing response to HBV given systemic discrimination and complex loyalties towards the family (Aplin, 2017; Gangoli et al, 2018; Mulvihill et al, 2018). Gangoli et al (2019) argue a holistic form of justice would be more beneficial, with Bafouni et al (2024) emphasising an advocacy approach. Furthermore, there are concerns about applying the DVA framework to HBV given there are significant differences between HBV and DVA. For example, literature has raised that HBV frequently involves collaborative networks of abuse (Salter, 2013; Chowdhury & Winder, 2022; Miles & Fox, 2022) that are not necessarily present in DVA.

4.4. Conclusion.

This chapter of the literature review has addressed the key sources of intervention associated with DVA and discussed their implications for addressing harm and meetings the needs of victim-survivors of AFV. Much like the previous chapters, the literature evaluating effective support tends to be focused around responding to IPV. This was particularly in the case for advocacy, policing, and legal frameworks, which are considered core pillars or ‘planets’ (Hester, 2011) of an effective DVA response. The current landscape specifically addressing intervention for relationships of AFV is comparatively scarce and there is a need to explore how professionals understand

AFV as a form of DVA and how this is subsequently responded to. Victim-survivor perspectives must be included within this.

The next chapter now establishes the theoretical framework. Drawing on key criminological and sociological theory, this thesis establishes a framework which allows policy, organisational and frontline responses to be addressed within the methodology.

Chapter Five: Theoretical Framework.

5.1. Introduction.

This chapter of the thesis outlines the theoretical framework which underpins the methodology. Having a clear conceptual framework is important for criminological research as it illustrates how knowledge is produced (Harding, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1993) and the author's perspective of social reality (Anderson & Rouse, 1988). This enables research problems to be addressed coherently.

The theoretical framework used is shaped by multiple schools of thoughts. Firstly, this chapter discusses the 'roots' of the research within feminist epistemologies (Harding, 1991). Given the gendered nature of DVA and AFV, feminist epistemologies are key for exploring the role of power, discourse and macro, structural patriarchal conditions which shape abuse. However, this thesis also highlights that there is a need to examine how organisations and individuals understand and respond to DVA. Consequently, the chapter considers the benefits of symbolic interactionism for examining this. It is concluded that a subsequent integration of feminist and symbolic interactionist frameworks into 'feminist-interactionism' (Stanley & Wise, 1993) is best suited for the research. This chapter concludes by providing an illustrative example of the framework and outlining how the research problem is conceptualised within this.

5.2. Feminist-interactionism.

5.2.1. Feminist epistemologies.

Feminist epistemology arose through the critique of traditional scientific and social scientific research. Feminism highlighted that most research was done by men and focussed on the male perspective, therefore did not establish the specific experiences

of women and other marginalised groups (Haraway, 1998). In response to this, many employed what is now known as ‘feminist empiricism’ (Harding, 1992) whereby methods were re-designed to incorporate the experiences of women (Campbell, 1994). However, this approach continued to uphold positivist values by viewing the problem as an issue of ‘bad science’ rather than inherently located in the production of knowledge (Smith, 1987; Letherby, 2003).

‘Standpoint feminism’ conversely argues that the exclusion of women from research was not just ‘bad science’ but also the lens of research was founded on assumptions of objectivity, positivism, and neutrality (Allen, 2011; Sweet, 2018). It is asserted that knowledge is subjective and “must begin with experience… since it is only from such vantage point that it is possible to see the extent to which women’s worlds are organised in ways which differ from those of men” (Maynard, 1995:14). Standpoint feminism focuses on both conducting research on marginalised communities and producing findings from their perspectives (Harding, 1991). Within this, they also recognise the role of the researcher and the influence of their values, beliefs and aims (Sweet, 2020). This focus on experience is influential for DVA research as it further demands that research actively confronts the unequal distribution of power that favours “men over women, creating and maintaining social institutions and practices that systematically put men’s interests and preoccupations ahead of women’s” (Lindemann, 2019:10).

Standpoint feminism can be critiqued for an explicit focus on the marginalised and therefore becomes difficult when researching those in positions of power, such as the police or the criminal justice system. However, rather than being a ‘point of view,’ standpoint feminism is fundamentally a ‘site of enquiry’ (Naples, 2003:84). From this perspective, standpoint feminism has been utilised to conduct research on

perpetrators, police, criminal justice, and other identities designated as ‘the powerful’ (Campbell, 2003; Scully, 2013; Skinner, 2013). However, the use of a homogenous ‘we’ in standpoint theory has been critiqued (bel hooks, 1989; Collins, 1990; Hekman, 1997) as “to say that women share ‘experiences of oppression’ is not to say we share the same experience” (Stanley & Wise, 2013:21).

Postmodern feminism comparatively disrupts this presumed universality by emphasising the socially constructed nature of identities. Postmodern feminism draws on Foucauldian notions of the productive power of discourse (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984) to highlight how myths regarding gender roles as a ‘regime of truth’ shape identity. This is further useful when considering the potential influence of the discursive ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of IPV on DVA praxis. However, there lies inherent trickiness when using postmodernism to research DVA. As raised by Hartstock (1983), how can we seek to explore GBV if we also seek to destabilise the category of gender? Furthermore, the nihilism of ‘everything is discourse’ (Zalewski, 1991) is contradictory with the inherent feminist value on activism. Viewing women as passive recipients of a discursive power conflicts with uplifting women's contributions, as women are subsequently positioned as “objects to be understood rather than subjects who can understand” (Sweet, 2018:227).

Whilst differences remain between different tenants of feminism, a common thread is the critical questioning of systems of power, gender and knowledge (Hester & Donovan, 2009) and the value of experience (Ahmed, 2017; Thompson et al, 2017). Harding (1987) initially classified feminist epistemologies into three categories, however, she later favoured to see them as mutually reinforcing (1998). This is welcomed for this thesis as there are benefits from feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism, and postmodern feminism. Feminist empiricism urges us to re-think the

practical methods and include women in the analysis whilst both standpoint and postmodern theory encourage us to use a ‘gender lens’ (Olesen, 2011). Whilst standpoint theory urges the subjective nature of truth, postmodern theory encourages a reflection on discourse and power. For this thesis, embracing feminist epistemologies therefore allows an exploration of AFV as a form of GBV and how structures of power have contributed to the way this is conceptualised.

There are some critiques however that feminism tends to be concentrated primarily on the macro, structural or discursive level (Roberts, 2019) and overlooks the significance of everyday lives. The remainder of this chapter therefore discusses the value of symbolic interactionism and the benefits of integrating these two perspectives.

5.2.2. Symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic interactionist theory, notably associated with the Chicago School of Sociology, emerged as a response to the dominance of theories focused upon the macro, structural sphere. In comparison, symbolic interactionist theory aimed to theorise everyday lives and individual actors (Plummer, 1990). A major concern of symbolic interactionism is a focus on the self (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1978) as “symbolic, situationally contingent and structured” (Fine, 1993: 77). Self is constructed through language, others the external social world and meaning (Becker, 1953; Blumer, 1969). The work of symbolic interactionism is popularly associated with Erving Goffman (1959, 1963) who suggested that individuals often create a favourable presentation of self to others to avoid negative repercussions.

The work of Goffman has been used in the context of DVA research, with literature discussing how victim-survivors may navigate the stigmatisation of being labelled a ‘victim’ (Bower, 2025). Holt (2022) discusses this in the context of CPV highlighting

how mothers often face a ‘double stigma’ of being both a failed parent and a victim. Whilst this may be beneficial for this thesis in understanding how both victim-survivors and professionals navigate experiences AFV within a wider discursive focus on IPV, Goffman’s work absents a discussion of power (Link & Phelan, 2013). This is problematic for research on DVA as Holstein and Miller (1990) highlight how ‘victimhood’ is not embodied but “conferred upon them” (pp. 26). Therefore, for this thesis, an attention to power is needed to understand how the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) has been constructed, what wider discursive aims may exist behind this construction and what consequences occur from this discursive construction for victim-survivors of AFV.

Fine (1993) however argues that later symbolic interactionist work embedded these critiques, stating that:

> The balance between structure and agency is at the heart of the interactionist approach... social order depends on how agents confront, use, manipulate, and remake structure.... and how social institutions take individuals into account. (pp. 69)

Therefore, there is an implicit relationship between individuals, interactions, organisations, and society within symbolic interactionist theory (Glaser & Straus, 1964; Maines, 1982). This relationship is intriguing for this thesis as it helps to understand how the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of what is acknowledged to be DVA may impact how organisations and individuals subsequently understand, identify, and respond to AFV. Indeed, Goffman himself, did attend to discursive power in his work on ‘frames’ (1974) and how these shape public attitudes to a social problem. Goffman's

work on ‘frames’ has been used in research concerning GBV (Bullock, 2007; Anitha & Gill, 2015; Tatton, 2023; Storer et al, 2023).

Therefore, by applying symbolic interactionism to the study of AFV is not to neglect power, rather it reflects that "macro-structures could be understood from a micro-analytical framework” (Fine & Kleimann, 1983:68) or power can be understood from the ‘bottom-up’. Hence, we can understand how discourse or power may shape organisations and individual level interactions. However, this focus on the ‘bottom-up’ or micro-level also centres the agency of individuals involved in or responsible for responding to DVA and AFV. This avoids the pitfalls, discussed in the context of postmodern feminism, of ‘everything being discourse’ (Westbrook & Finn, 2012).

Nonetheless, undertaking research on DVA fundamentally requires a gendered lens. Symbolic interactionism has failed to consider gender in its analysis (Jackson & Scott, 2010); therefore, this is problematic for a research context specifically focused on GBV. Therefore, this chapter now highlights the benefits of integrating feminist epistemologies and symbolic interactionism (Stanley & Wise, 1993).

5.2.3. The case for integration.

This chapter so far has highlighted that symbolic interactionism has its benefits in focusing on the micro-level whereas feminist epistemologies help to address the influence of power. However, as discussed in the previous section, symbolic interactionism has been used to pay attention to the wider organisation of social life (Maines, 1982; Fine, 1993). Similarly, some have argued that feminist epistemology pays heed to the power of the micro sphere with the mantra ‘the personal is political’ denoting a priority on everyday lives. Furthermore, both theories often rely on the notion that knowledge and self-hood are socially constructed. The ‘self’ in symbolic

interactionism is not fixed but created and reproduced. Similarly, ‘gender’ in feminist literature is a process of socialisation. There exists some literature which recognises these similarities, best seen in the work by West and Zimmerman (1987) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) whereby gendered identities come into being through interactions. In the context of DVA, Stark’s (2007) seminal work on coercive control demonstrates this further, highlighting how wider, macro spheres of patriarchy influence abusive interactions between women and men, resulting in a “patriarchy in miniature” (pp. 194). Thus, there are sympathies between the two theoretical frameworks.

By utilising the symbolic interactionist emphasis on the everyday but retaining a lens of gender and macro systems of power we can then examine the relationship between discourse and practice, challenging “the routine and mundane, the taken-for-granted nature of everyday life” (Stanley & Wise, 1993:134). This allows an examination of how the discursive ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of DVA may influence the understanding, identification, and response to AFV as well as how policy, policing, and practice ‘planets’ (Hester, 2011) interact with one another. Furthermore, by deliberating combining this focus on the lived experience or the everyday, as advocated by symbolic interactionism, with an emphasis on ‘the personal is political, as advocated by a feminist perspective, space is also opened for examining how professionals and victim-survivors may interact with the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014). This resists the notion that practitioners and victim-survivors are passive objects of discourse and instead hold an agentic awareness of their practice. As highlighted by Pitre and Kushner (2015):

> Individuals thus function as knowledgeable agents through whom structure comes into being as they act according to the demands of specific contexts.

> Concurrently, structure exists because it is experienced, remembered and socially reproduced. (pp. 287)

This subsequently allows the thesis to generate recommendations for change and practice by building on the agentic thoughts and insights of people with lived and professional experience, further consistent with feminist epistemological research.

A true value of a feminist approach lies within its ability to "borrow and change any and everything from anywhere that would be of interest and of use to it" (Stanley & Wise, 1993:137). Therefore, an integration of the two represents a 'fractured foundationalism' (Stanley & Wise, 2013). As will be reflected throughout this thesis, social lives, familial lives, and DVA are incredibly complex experiences and attempts to apply one theoretical lens does not do justice to this complexity (Pitre & Kushner, 2015). Thus, integration helps to explore the complex relationship between individuals, social structures, and institutions in the context of DVA.

5.3. Defining and applying feminist-interactionism.

5.3.1. A definition.

Thus, this thesis applies 'feminist-interactionism,' inspired by Stanley and Wise (1993), to explore how AFV has been constructed in macro-systems of power and is subsequently, understood, and responded to in policy and practice.

A definition of feminist-interactionism for this thesis is provided:

> Feminist-interactionism is a theoretical approach which integrates feminist epistemologies and symbolic interactionism. This framework examines the complex relationships between society, social systems, and social actors as the object of study rather than each of these in isolation. Therefore, this framework

incorporates a study of macro-level discourse, meso-level organisations, and micro-level individual interactions.

Knowledge is socially constructed and this framework places special attention to the organisation of gender within these levels. Complexity and ‘messiness’ are embraced, and grand theories, positivism and objectivity are rejected.

This framework emphasises the organising ‘top down’ power of discourse, however, simultaneously recognises that power is relational and can be both reproduced and resisted. Therefore, this framework leaves space for agency. What matters for the lens of enquiry is not simply power or agency; structure or interaction; discourse or people but the relationship between them, how this is resisted and reproduced, experienced and realised, discussed, and negotiated.

The researcher and the research are not detached from the research problem. Conversely, reflections from the research process are data within themselves.

5.3.2. Feminist-interactionism in context: an illustrative example.

A feminist-interactionist framework therefore allows an exploration of macro systems of power and discourse, meso-level organisational systems and micro-level interactions. Crucially emphasis is on the way these social systems interact with one another. To provide clarity, this framework is extradited into a visual example:

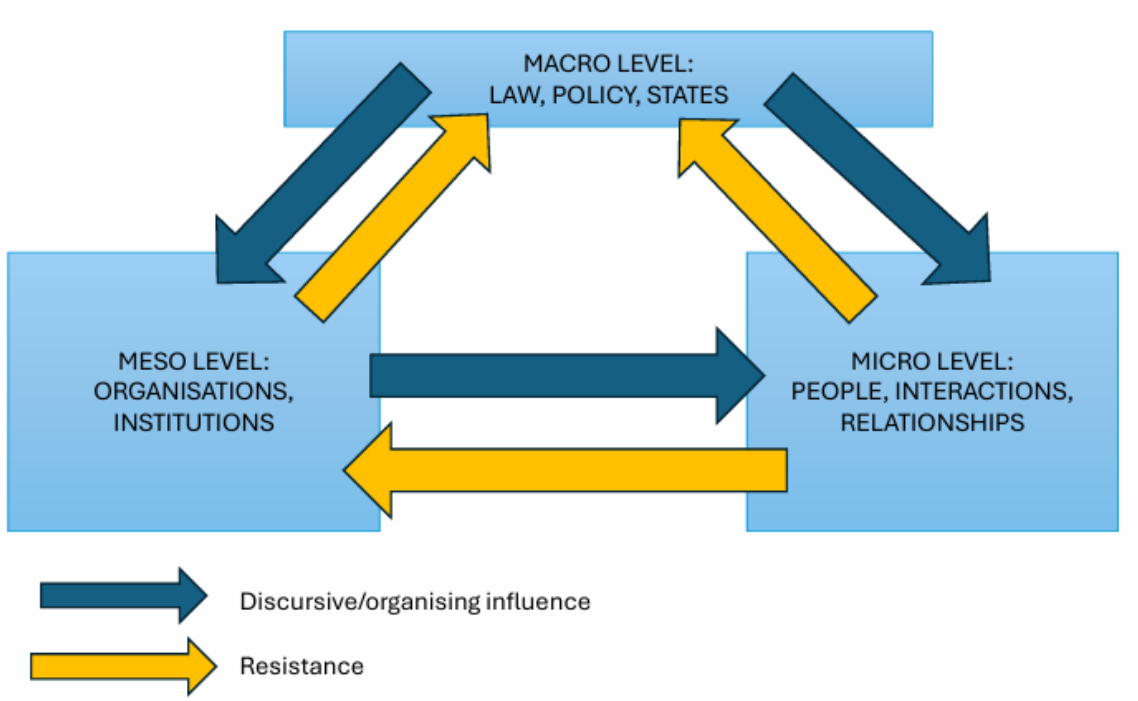


Figure 3: Theoretical framework (a visual example)

As stated in Figure 3, the blue arrows represent the directions of power and discursive influence. However, the yellow arrows represent the ability for both the organisational and interactional level to interact with and challenge discourse. This allows the research to explore best practice and make recommendations consistent with a feminist approach.

5.3.3. Feminist-interactionism for this study.

For the purposes of this thesis, this framework allows the research to study how AFV as a 'problem' (Bacchi, 1999; Rowlands, 2021) is represented within macro-level spheres of power and discourse (i.e. in law, policy, and legislation) as a form of DVA. This thesis seeks to understand how representations on this level shape the way AFV is understood, recorded, risk assessed and responded to within organisational systems (i.e. policing or practice databases and systems) and interactions (i.e. service

user and service provider interactions). A special attention is placed on the organisation, influence and role of gender within these societal layers.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, this research is motivated by the potential for a 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) or conflation between DVA and IPV, and the subsequent implications that this has had for conceptualising and recording AFV, identifying and assessing risk in the context of AFV, and how victim-survivors are supported. A visual example of how this research problem is applied to the theoretical framework is illustrated in Figure 4:

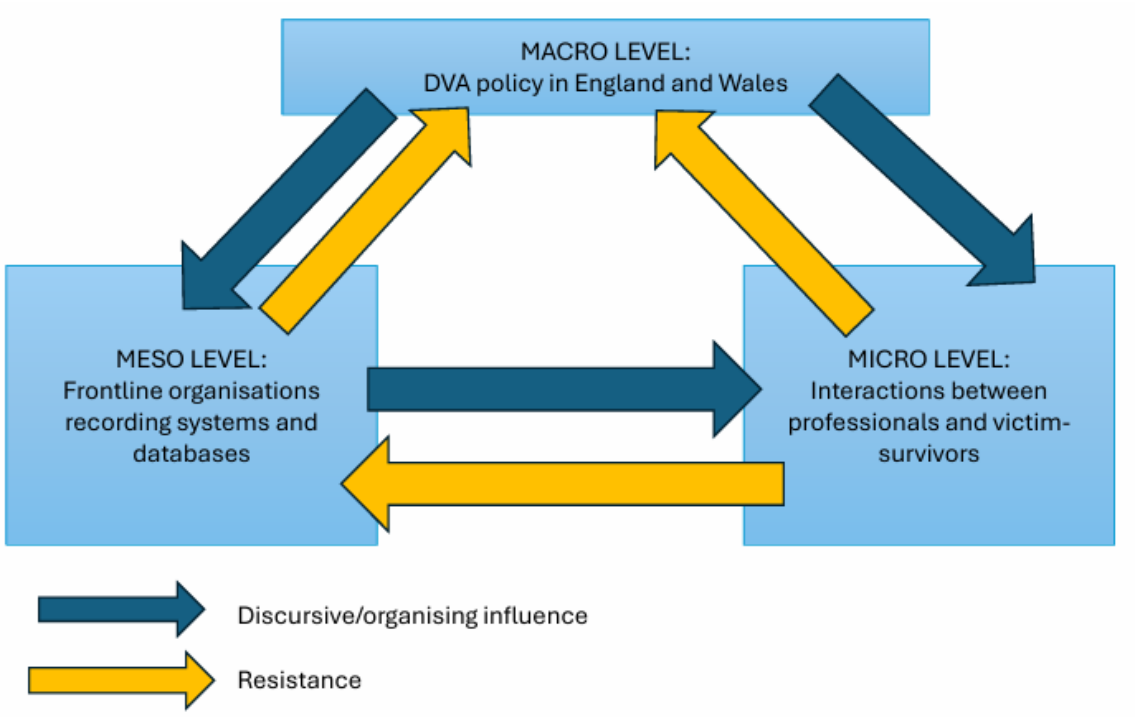


Figure 4: Theoretical framework (applying the research problem)

Whilst the blue arrows represent the discursive 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014), the yellow arrows represent the agency of practice to interact with this. This enables the research to explore how professionals and victim-survivors understand

and experience AFV, the current barriers and best practice in responding to these relationships. By allowing the potential for agency and resistance, the research can spotlight best practice and make recommendations. For example, this allows a discussion on how recording practices or support encounters may both reinforce and challenge policy representations.

5.4. Conclusion.

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework which underpins the thesis. In this thesis, the framework is ‘feminist-interactionism, which as defined above, exposes the interrelationships between power, discourse, and agency, interactions and social structures. The application of this into the methodology is now discussed.

Chapter Six: Methods and methodologies.

6.1. Introduction.

This chapter outlines the methodological framework and the methods used to achieve the research objectives. Firstly, the chapter describes the epistemological and ontological standpoints, building on the previous chapter, and outlines the decision-making process which led to the final methodological strategy. The chapter then outlines the research design and data collection phases. This section discusses each of the methods used, the justification for using these, the sampling procedures and the recruitment and collection processes. Following this, the analysis and integrative strategies are discussed. Whilst adaptations and limitations to the research are reflected on throughout, the chapter concludes by outlining some of the key ethical and reflexive considerations.

The research questions are provided again for clarity:

How is AFV understood, identified and responded to within the framework of DVA in England and Wales?

a) How is AFV understood as a form of DVA in policy, policing, and practice?
b) To what extent do current understandings of AFV shape the identification and assessment of risk within these relationships?
c) To what extent do current understandings of AFV influence the support provided by the multi-agency team to victim-survivors?
d) To what extent do current responses to AFV meet the needs of victim-survivors?

6.2. Methodology.

6.2.1. Epistemology and ontology.

As outlined in the previous chapter, this thesis is influenced by feminist-interactionism and emphasises the subjective construction of knowledge. Stanley and Wise (1993) favour constructivism as opposed to interpretivism, stating they “don’t accept that there is something ‘really’ there for these to be interpretations of” (pp. 132) and rather “our differing states of consciousness leads us into constructing different social worlds” (pp. 132). This thesis therefore adopted principles of constructivism, emphasising language, culture, social interactions, multiplicity, meaning, and reflexivity (Lynch, 2019). The acknowledgement of reflexivity is especially important for feminist research as “no research offers a neutral, bias-free and objective way to understand an issue or to measure outcomes” (Women’s Aid 2020:10). Adopting a constructivist position therefore meant participants, data, the research problem as well as the researcher were considered within the analysis.

6.2.2. External influences: The DTC.

It is important to note that this PhD thesis was shaped by pre-existing conditions. This thesis was funded by the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) for Industry and Collaboration, and the funding was attached to a pre-defined studentship. Although I posessed a large level of autonomy within the design, for example, it was my own decision to focus on AFV and explore beyond policing and risk, some aspects of the research were decided. For instance, the use of mixed methods, the use of police data and a focus on DVA and risk had to be addressed.

6.2.3. The case for mixed methods.

Whilst the use of mixed methods was stipulated in the research funding, this may initially seem contradictory to the feminist theoretical underpinnings. Oakley (1998) highlights that qualitative methods are often “aligned with a feminist perspective, while

‘quantitative’ methods have been seen as… defensive of the (masculinist) status quo” (pp. 707). This is due to the division of the ‘paradigm wars’ (Maynard, 1994; Oakley, 1998) in which qualitative methods were seen to emphasise subjective, experiential ‘truth’ and quantitative methods were associated with objective or factual ‘truth’. However, this divisive binary of methods is “unhelpful to the goal of an emancipatory social science” (Oakley, 1998:708). Crucially, the argument that numerical data is not ‘feminist’ has been disputed as reinforcing its own regime of truth. Kelly et al (1992) asserts “what makes feminist research is less the method used and more how it is used and what it is used for” (pp. 150).

Therefore, this thesis argues that several types of methods can add different ‘knowing’ (Westmarland, 2001; Leung et al, 2019). Quantitative methodologies have increased in feminist-based research on GBV as statistics can support to identify trends in perpetration and victimisation (Walby & Towers, 2018; Bates, 2018, 2020). Although it is flawed to suggest that quantitative ‘evidence’ is ‘gold standard truth’ (Hughes & Cohen, 2010:190), statistical data can allow researchers to “speak the same language” (Westmarland, 2001:7) as policy makers and therefore influence social change. Using mixed methods data can therefore be beneficial for GBV research in generating policy friendly findings.

Quantitative data has often been used to enhance the findings from qualitative research and qualitative research has similarly been used to ‘dig deeper’ and contextualise statistics (Wilkes et al, 2022). However, Bryman (2016) argues that this interpretation assumes that quantitative and qualitative research exist in two separate paradigms, thus presuming that statistics are not themselves subjective data (Gelman & Hennig, 2017; Ewin et al, 2020). This is disputed in this thesis, which demonstrates that statistical information can be attributed to wider social contexts or the influences

of a ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014). Heap and Waters (2019) conversely suggest that mixed methods should constitute the bringing together of findings rather than validation. This interpretation is beneficial for looking at the interactions between diverse sources of data and allows the research to look at the different systems involved in DVA response, as purported in the theoretical framework.

6.2.4. Applying the theoretical framework.

To replicate the theoretical framework discussed in chapter five into a robust research design, the thesis decided to undertake a multi-methodological approach. By using multiple datasets, methods and subjects of enquiry, multi-methods can support an observation of how the macro-level, discursive power can interact with organisational records and individual practice, such as that observed within policing and multi-agency practice. Multiple methods are argued to be beneficial, as indicated by Smart (2009) and Holt (2012) who call for methodologies which recognise the complex, messy, and contextual nature of both DVA and social lives.

The use of multi-methodological frameworks has increased in criminological research on GBV, for example large scale research projects such as Operation Soteria-Bluestone (Stanko & Crew, 2022) and Project Bright Light (Vera-Grey et al, 2025), have utilised a vast expanse of datasets, participants, and methods with significant, national impact. This is further reflective of ecological understandings of DVA (Heise, 1998; Hester et al, 2021) as a social problem produced through governments, institutions, communities and between individuals. The analysis in a multi-methods approach is therefore often on the overall system (Lewis, 2014; Baldwin, 2024) rather than focusing on one specific person or organisation as a source of blame. This is

furthermore complimentary for the research given the benefits of ecological and integrated perspectives outlined in chapter two.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, this thesis is inspired by the existence of a ‘public story’ of IPV (Donovan & Hester, 2014) as constructed due to the historic influence of the ‘battered women's’ movement on legislation in England and Wales. Therefore, this thesis sees the ‘macro’ level as policies, legislation and state decisions relating to the understandings, risk assessment, and response to DVA. The ‘meso-level’ was seen to be the way these relationships of AFV and their dynamics were captured and recorded on organisational systems. And the micro-level was the experiences of professionals and victim-survivors in operationalising understandings of DVA when responding, risk assessing and supporting victim-survivors of AFV Specifically, aligned with the theoretical framework, the methodology sought to examine how these interact with each other. Whilst the following sections of the chapter detail the chosen methods and their justification in more detail, these methods were applied again to the theoretical framework. A visual example of this is provided in Figure 5:

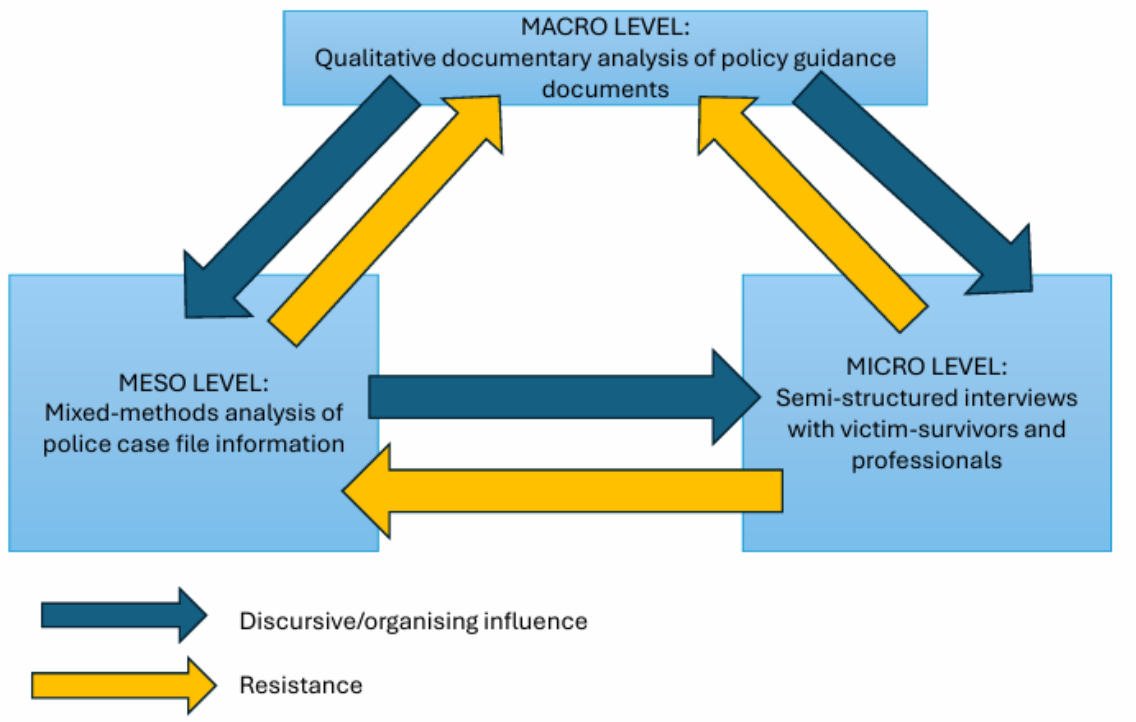


Figure 5: Theoretical framework (applying the methods)

6.3. Methods and data collection.

6.3.1. Mixed methods framework.

Creswell & Plano-Clark (2007) highlight that using multiple methods or mixed-methods involves various decisions. Using their 'decision tree' framework, outlined in Figure 6, this chapter now outlines the 'design' of the research:

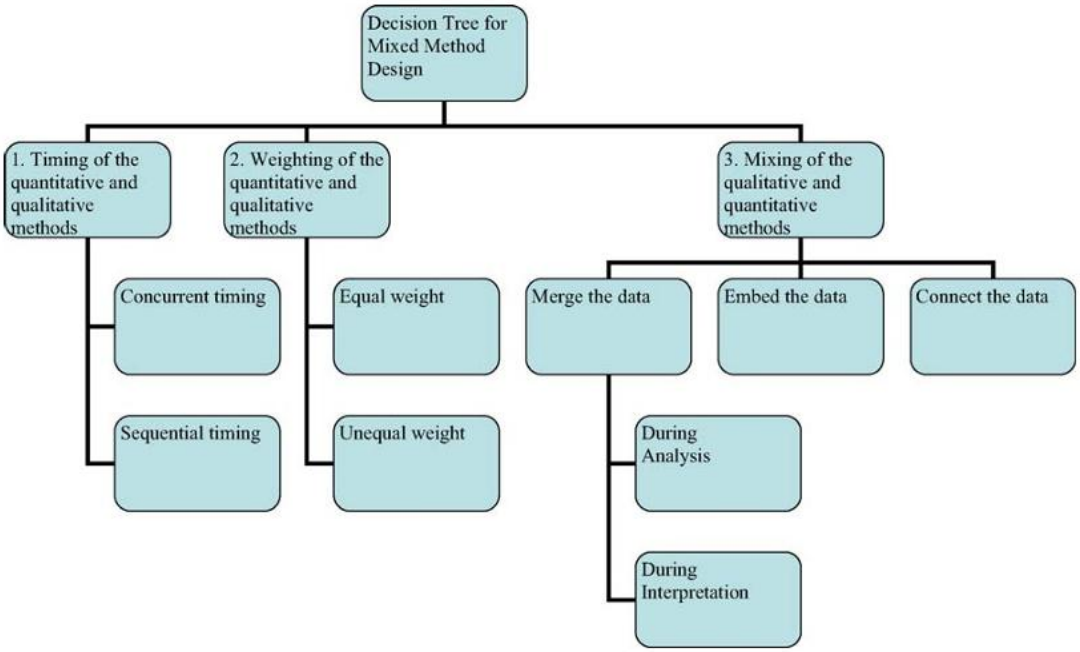


Figure 6: Mixed methods decision tree.

Source: Doyle, L., Brady, A-M., Byrne, G., (2009), 'An overview of mixed methods research', *Journal of Research in Nursing,* 14(2), pp. 175-185. DOI:10.1177/1744987108093962)

A) Timing of the methods: concurrent.

Initially the study aimed to conduct a sequential design, where the results of the first dataset shaped the proceeding datasets. However, due to time constraints of the thesis and the time taken to navigate relationships with gatekeepers, a concurrent design was deployed. Convergent or concurrent mixed methods happens when the researcher intends to "merge the phases in order that the quantitative and qualitative results can be compared" (Fetters et al, 2013:2136). This meant that different facets of data collection were done at overlapping intervals.

B) Weighting of the methods: equal weight.

Both datasets were treated equally in their ability to address the research problem. However, the design of the study utilised more qualitative methods. This may be

because of the emphasis on the subjective throughout the research, however, may also reflect my professional experience and comfortability.

C) Mixing of the methods: merge the data.

Due to the concurrent design of the collection of data, many different results were being collected at one time. Therefore, it was not possible to analyse the data in a sequential way. Furthermore, as outlined, the datasets were treated equally in their contribution to the research problem. Thus, it was deemed that quantitative data should not be simply embedded within a qualitative framework or vice-versa.

Heap and Waters (2019) suggest that mixed methods research constitutes bringing findings from different methods together into an overall narrative. Thus, it is important to recognise the conclusions gathered by each dataset and how they collectively contribute to the analysis. As Oakley (1998) argues “it is not simply a question of checking one dataset against another; different ‘types’ of data may yield very different conclusions” (pp. 715). However, each dataset must be analysed within its own paradigm requirements, given the different conditions in which the datasets were produced as well as practical differences. It was therefore deemed appropriate for the methods to be merged during the integration stage.

It was concluded that the mixed-methods approach aligns closest with the ‘Triangulation Design-multi-level model’ as defined to be:

> If different types of data are collected to represent different levels of analysis within a system, with the intent of forming an overall interpretation of the system, then the choice of design is the Triangulation Design–multilevel model. (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007: 84).

6.3.2. The macro level: Qualitative documentary policy analysis.

Decisions and justifications.

This section outlines the methods chosen. As discussed in the literature review, as a product of central government, policy holds significant power (Freeman & Maybin, 2011). Policy often reflects how “actors draw upon particular discourses, ideas, and frames to construct policy problems and shape social ‘reality’” (McCabe, 2024:523). This suggests that policy functions as a way in which organisations and individual practitioners can orient and justify decision making, as discussed in the third literature review chapter. Therefore, policy plays a key role in conceptualising how DVA should be understood and responded to.

It is therefore important to understand how DVA, and subsequently AFV, is constructed within policy as this enables an exploration of:

> Not just what material is shared, but how, when through which means and importantly what is left out… public opinions are shaped by the selection and presentation of information, the repetition of frames consequently affect agenda setting and public policy response and thereby resource allotment. (Gupte & Anitha, 2023:37).

Therefore, by analysing policy constructions of DVA and AFV, this supports to understand how and if these constructions are operationalised in policing and practice.

This study thus undertook a qualitative documentary analysis of policy documents relating to DVA practice created for professionals working in England and Wales. Qualitative document analysis has been neglected in criminology (Morgan, 2022) in comparison to law, policy, education, or business studies. This may be due to the preconception that documents are tricky pieces of data due to not being produced specifically for research. Thus, their interpretation lies solely in the eye of the

researcher, triggering queries regarding rigour and replicability. However, Mackieson et al (2018) highlight that document analysis in social work "facilitates historical research which informs understanding of past influences on present policies, legislation, service systems and/or programmes" (pp. 968). They further argue that "existing government documents are a particularly good data source because of the official provenance of such records." (pp. 968). Additionally, when used with other sources documentary analysis can support to build a wider picture of a social problem (Smith, 1987; Campbell, 1998). Wood et al (2020) argues that documents can either be used as 'commentary' or as data in their own right. This research took the latter approach.

Sampling, access, and collection.

Initial scoping searches of policy documents overturned hundreds of potential documents. Therefore, it was crucial that a robust sampling framework was employed (Bowen, 2009; Wood et al, 2020). For access purposes and to understand the discursive power of national policy decisions it was decided that all documents selected should be available on the GOV.UK website. In line with agreed parameters with the police force data as well as the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), the documents were refined to those produced or updated between 2021 and 2023 (start of the PhD date). It was decided that policies should be filtered by selecting Home Office produced documentation, as representative of 'law' and 'criminal justice.' Given the research is focused on the relationship between policy and practice, only documents directly relating to practice were included. An overview of the sampling framework is provided in Appendix 18.

This resulted in the following (n =4) documents presented in Table 1:

Name	Year of creation and/or update
Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance	2022
Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) guidance	2022
Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance	2023
Controlling and coercive behaviour statutory guidance	2023

Table 1: Selected policy documents

6.3.3. The meso level: Mixed methods analysis of police case files.

Decision-making and justifications.

The research then explored whether and how the understanding of AFV as DVA influences organisational recording and response. Given the PhD studentship was partnered with two police forces, the police force data served as an exemplary exploration of how organisations, notably the criminal justice system, record, understand and respond to AFV within existing DVA frameworks. Not all 'counts' of DVA crimes come to the attention of the police and relying on police recorded crime data can thus be problematic (Myhill & Johnson, 2015; Pheonix, 2023). However, by examining by this data with caution, we can begin to explore how organisational systems currently capture AFV.

To explore the organisational response to AFV, a mixed methods approach was utilised. Firstly, quantitative statistics on DVA crimes occurring between adult family members were requested to provide an overview of 'who does what to whom' (Hester, 2009; Bates, 2020). This helped to gather a picture of what relationships, crimes, assessments of risk and outcomes are associated with AFV in police data. This helped address gaps identified in the literature review. As discussed previously, statistics were

considered subjective to help understand the influence of ‘the public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) on organisational recording systems.

To dig deeper, qualitative case files were obtained from each police force. Case management systems and the information contained within them are seen to be useful in gathering a picture of “fixed, written descriptions of encounters between practitioners and family members… the environment, people’s behaviours, interactions… and the rationale” (Laird et al, 2017:1323). Campbell (2004) highlights that police reports often legitimise police action and therefore contain key information for understanding the decision-making undertaken when responding to DVA. However, given police case files are produced from the perspective of police officers, it is crucial that we do not see police reports as factual accounts but critically consider how, when and for whom and by whom and what purpose they were produced (Campbell, 2004). The theoretical framework here was beneficial in enabling the research to critically reflect on this when examining the case files.

Sampling, access, and data collection.

A bulk data transfer of DVA recorded crimes between family members over the age of eighteen were requested for the years 2021-2023. This was a negotiated period between the researcher and the partnered police forces. Initially the research hoped to cover from 2018 to the present day (2024 at the time of the request), however, the partners requested the parameters to be reconsidered. This highlights the negotiations involved in partnership research and the requirements for flexibility (Lumsden & Goode, 2017; Davies, 2021). Data on ages, gender and ethnicity of both victim-survivors and offenders were requested as well as risk gradings of the case, relationship between victim and offender, recorded offence, and outcome. Police force

analysts at both forces extracted the quantitative data, removed any identifying information, and sent this to myself via secure email. This led to over 28,000 case files as presented in Table 2:

	Police Force One	Police Force Two
Total number of cases analysed	16,057	12,601
Number of duplicates	239	692

Table 2: Quantitative datasets (an overview)

Subsequently, the police force teams were each requested to provide 10 anonymous case files (n=20). Police forces were requested to provide a purposive sample of standard, medium and high-risk graded files to allow the thesis to explore the range of behaviours, relationships, and narratives of risk in experiences of AFV. Case file information included incident summaries, decision logs, completed risk assessments and referral notes. These case files were anonymised before being transferred via email and were then uploaded to NVivo for analysis. An overview of the case files is provided within Appendix 20.

6.3.4. The micro level: semi-structured key informant interviews.

Justification and decision-making.

To understand the interactions between professionals and victim-survivors, the final dataset was decided to be semi-structured interviews. Uplifting the voice of those experiencing and responding to AFV is crucial given the absence outlined in the literature review. Whilst the research initially planned to conduct focus groups with professionals, this was quickly realised as not suitable for participants schedules. Participants highlighted their preferences for interviews, thus given the commitment to

active participation from researched communities prioritised in feminist epistemologies, interviews were then adopted and ethical approval was updated.

Interviews allow focus to be on a specific social actor, therefore symbolically prioritizing their voice. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews are often associated with feminist research, often inspired by Oakley's (1981) emphasis that interviewing techniques must diminish the power imbalance between researcher and researched. For this research, a semi-structured approach was chosen as it ensured that conversations were kept focused on the parallel problems of AFV, risk assessment and support whilst also leaving space for additional insights or commentary from participants (Hesse-Biber, 2014). This allowed the research encounter to be an “evolving set of questions” (McCallum & Rose, 2021:264) and provided participants with greater agency (Roberts, 2019).

To fully understand interactions between victim-survivors and professionals, the interview participants were decided to be both victim-survivors and those who were responsible for risk assessing and supporting victim-survivors. Firstly, in line with the studentship and the fact police are a symbolically vital component in responding to DVA (Richardson-Foster et al, 2011), it was decided to include the perspectives of police officers. Johnson and Hohl (2023) highlight that interviewing with the police can provide “insight into officer experiences, perceptions and practices which would not be available through... police administrative data alone” (pp. 5). However, aligned with ‘feminist epistemologies,’ this research emphasises that there are multiple standpoints in which to perceive a topic. Therefore, including the perspectives of police officers alone would not have highlighted the differences across the multi-agency team, as identified in the literature review chapters. The research therefore included the voices

of those who currently or have previously professionally supported victim-survivors of DVA. Bluett-Boyd and Fileborn (2014) argue that any research or policy consultation that aims to create impact should document victim-survivor experience. Therefore, victim-survivors were also included.

Whilst key informant interviews usually pertain to those in 'powerful positions' this thesis defines the mixed sample of practitioners, police officers and victim-survivors as key informant interviews, given each group hold specialist knowledge (Lokot, 2021). The use of these 'key informants' helped to facilitate rich data and stands consistent with the feminist emphasis on multiple, subjective truth.

Sample/s.

A purposive sampling strategy was deployed to capture the experiences of the three groups. Police officers were selected to be employed by the two partnership constabularies, located in the North of England. The inclusive criteria were that participants must have current or previous experience conducting risk assessments with victim-survivors of DVA. The sampling criteria was left deliberately broad to incorporate a wide range of expertise. The same criteria were used for the practitioner sample; however, the geographical location was wider to allow for reflection on the 'justice by geography' in service provision (Davies & Biddle, 2017).

The decision to include those 'previously employed' or those with 'previous experience' was made given my awareness of the quick turnaround experienced in the third sector, often due to funding and short-term contracts as well as the dynamic nature of police forces. This was also something raised during the recruitment process, where individuals previously employed expressed a desire to take part. Thus, this sample was widened, based on the principles of participatory research. It was however a

requirement that professionals had experience in utilising either the DASH RIC or DARA tools for risk assessment and had recent experience directly interacting with victim-survivors in a professional capacity.

When advertising the study, the language called for ‘DVA practitioners.’ Originally, this was intended primarily for those employed in DVA organisations, however, it quickly became clear that many professionals in different services identified with the term. This prompted a great deal of reflection on my role as a ‘gate keeper’ as well as wider thoughts on who may encounter victim-survivors of AFV. Therefore, the decision was made to include a wider range of professionals. This decision provided to be fruitful as it supported a wide range of perspectives and enriched the final data.

For victim-survivors, the sample was left deliberately broad, with victim-survivors asked to be those who had experienced abuse from a family member over the age of eighteen when they were also over the age of eighteen; currently feeling safe and had experience obtaining support from professionals. Whilst it is recognised that some victim-survivors may not define their experiences as ‘abuse,’ it was important that participants were clear about the aims of the research and its focus on DVA to ensure informed consent. Therefore, the study advertisement (Appendix 4) and information sheet (Appendix 9) stated ‘abusive or unhealthy behaviours’, inspired by Donovan and Hester (2014). The information sheet discussed the overall aims of the research and the focus on improving responses to DVA.

Deciding how many interviews to conduct requires considerable thought. Commonly, qualitative research requires smaller number of participants especially in the context of semi-structured interviews. Research has suggested that the ‘ideal’ number of participants can vastly differ dependent on the study (Hennick & Kaiser, 2022).

However, Braun and Clarke (2019) critique ‘ideal’ sample sizes, arguing that “coding and deeper analysis do not inevitably reach a fixed end point – instead the researcher makes a situated, interpretive judgement about when to stop coding” (2019:210). Given the time constraints of the thesis however some parameters were required. Thus, theoretical saturation, referring to when “saturation was reached when the researcher gathered data to the point of diminishing returns or when no new information was added” (Band-Winterstein et al, 2016:2603), was deployed to allow the research to be flexible regarding each participant group but still maintain the timeline of a PhD research project. For each key informant group, the interviews were transcribed and analysed on an ongoing basis to allow for initial patterns and themes to be continually reviewed. This also allowed the researcher to decide on when saturation was reached (Emmel, 2013).

The practitioner sample was originally designed to be a minimum of 15 participants, however, after 15 interviews were conducted data saturation was felt to be reached. Two more interviews were conducted to confirm this, leaving a total number of 17 interviews. This helped the researcher make informed decisions about the police sample, reducing this to a maximum of 15 interviews given the contrasting homogeneity in geographical region. After 7 interviews from Police Force One, saturation was felt to be reached, due to the more homogenous sample, and recruitment ceased. One interview was conducted at Police Force One following this to confirm, leaving a total of 8 interviews. Only 2 further interviews took place from Police Force Two due to delays in recruitment, however, these interviews reflected similar themes to Police Force One thus it was felt saturation was reached for the police officer sample.

While saturation was felt to be reached in the professional key informant groups, due to the difficulties in recruiting 'hidden populations' (Ellard-Grey et al, 2015) such as victim-survivors of AFV, the final sample size (n = 4) is unlikely to have led to saturation. However, due to the research timeline, recruitment had to cease in April 2025. An in-depth breakdown of the police, practitioner and victim-survivor cohorts can be found in Appendix 21; however, Table 3 provides a brief overview:

Group	Number of interviews
Police officers and staff	10
Multi-agency practitioners	17
Victim-survivors	4

Table 3: Interview samples (overview).

Recruitment.

For all interview cohorts, a rolling recruitment strategy was deployed where each key informant group were recruited on an ongoing basis until theoretical saturation was reached. This strategy was appropriate for the time constraints of the research project and the appreciation of busy and dynamic schedules of professionals engaged in front-line work. Practitioners were recruited from April to August 2024; victim-survivors were recruited from September 2024 to April 2025 and police officers were recruited from January 2025 to April 2025.

For the police officer interviews, information about the study was both advertised on internal police systems and within offices (Appendix 3) or participants were sent information directly by a Chief Superintendent. For practitioner and victim-survivor groups the study advertisements (Appendix 3 & 4) were forwarded to relevant organisations via email, advertised through social media and in newsletters, academic email groups, and networks (Appendix 5 & 6). This strategy was particularly important

for victim-survivor cohorts as given the nature of the 'public story' of DVA (Donovan & Hester, 2014), the research wanted to avoid the assumption that advocacy services would necessarily have ongoing and positive relationships with victim-survivors (Sandhu et al, 2023). Furthermore, the use of social media allowed an insight to the researcher, as it allowed the connection between the advert and my image, background, and professional interests. This helped dismantle one-sided and potentially hierarchical relationships of power (Oakley, 1981).

Interview materials and conduct.

Following an expression of interest in the study either via email or through an anonymous Microsoft Form, participants were provided with the interview materials and asked to provide details regarding availability, accessibility and given the opportunity to ask questions. At least a week was given from initial contact to the interview to allow participants a chance to change their mind and process the information provided. Before the interview took place, all participants were asked to provide written consent either via email or through a scanned copy of the consent form.

Before the interview began, professional and victim-survivor participants were provided with a consent form (Appendix 10, 11 & 12), interview guide (Appendix 13 & 14), and information sheet (Appendix 7, 8 & 9). Although it was emphasised that the interview guide was semi-structured, the decision was made to include examples of questions rather than topic questions. This is deemed consistent with trauma-informed approaches as it allowed participants to adequately prepare for the interviews in advance and be fully aware of what may be discussed, and therefore what they were consenting to. Participants were given the option to conduct the research online, over

the phone or in a public and confidential space. A breakdown of the interview lengths and locations is provided in Appendix 21.

The original research design intended to conduct a ‘participatory mapping’ approach with the professional sample (Ralls et al, 2021), however, after piloting the interviews with practitioners, this did not appeal to participants. Therefore, this approach was disregarded, further highlighting the commitment to listening to participant voices. Whilst victim-survivors were given the choice to creatively explore their experiences, they all discussed their thoughts verbally. As part of this mapping approach, the research utilised a vignette in the practitioner interviews to act as an ‘object elicitation’ (Wilks, 2004) and help elicit professional “values, attitudes and decision-making processes in a time efficient manner that produces focused, in-depth knowledge” (Bain, 2023:1). Presenting the vignette mid-way through the interview further allowed participants the opportunity to pause and reflect. Furthermore, the vignette acted as an anonymous referential point for discussions thus minimising inadvertent sharing of non-consensual information of clients. This vignette (Appendix 15) was constructed utilising DHR's, policy documents as well as the researchers own professional experiences (Bain, 2023). Details about social demographic information, or the relationship were left vague to allow professionals to ‘fill in the gaps’ (Aujlia, 2020). The first two practitioner interviews supported to clarify edits, word changes and structural presentation changes.

Whilst this was a successful tool in the practitioner interviews, unfortunately this became more difficult to do in the police interviews due to these conversations needing to be done quickly via telephone call whilst officers were on shift. Therefore, there was often no way for participants to view the vignette. This again reflects the need for research to be flexible and demonstrates the myth of hygienic research (Stanley &

Wise, 1993). Although one police interview took place in person and another on MS Teams, the activity was not completed in these contexts to provide consistency across this cohort. In the transcription process, direct references to the activity were omitted from analysis.

6.4. Analysis and integration.

6.4.1. Qualitative analysis: thematic discourse analysis.

The qualitative datasets for analysis were therefore the policy documents (n= 4), the police case files (n = 20), and the semi-structured interviews (n = 31). As discussed in the mixed-methods design, whilst datasets were mixed during interpretation, during initial analysis they were analysed within their respective paradigms. Whilst each qualitative dataset was analysed independently and uploaded to NVivo in separate files, they shared the same analytical approach.

Documentary analysis frequently utilises critical discourse analysis (Bacchi, 1999). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is described as a “qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimise social inequalities” (Mullet, 2018:116). This is often done by paying attention to relationships and the use of language in qualitative data (Fairclough, 2013). Mullet (2018) describes the steps in CDA as pertaining to firstly selecting a discourse to study, then selecting relevant documents, understanding these documents, analysing themes and then situating the data within a wider context. This approach was deemed consistent with the theoretical framework and helpful for the research consider how ‘the problem’ of AFV and subsequently how policy, police systems and practice attempt respond to this (Rowlands, 2021).

However, whilst this analytical approach is useful, to some extent it is a top-down and deductive strategy (Cobb, 2006). For the purposes of the theoretical framework, this further may risk preventing the voices, opinions and experiences of participants from having some power over the direction of research and subsequent findings. Therefore, the researcher felt it was important to allow for inductive findings to arise from the datasets through themes. Thematic analysis has often been used for qualitative research, such as case files or interviews, and identifies themes and patterns in the data. However, when developing the themes for each dataset, the researcher did continually consider 'discourse' and 'the public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) throughout the analysis as well as the importance of language in constructing DVA, AFV, risk and support. From this respect, the analytical framework can be defined as a 'thematic discourse analysis' (Rowlands, 2021). The ability to do 'thematic discourse analysis' reflects the flexibility embedded within Braun and Clarkes perspective (2020, 2021), whereby they highlight how thematic analysis is not fixed to one theoretical paradigm but can be suitable to a variety of research strategies. Thus, thematic discourse analysis can help to "theorize the socio-cultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided" (Braun & Clarke, 2006:85).

The initial step of the analysis was to familiarise myself with each document. The research diary was used to track thoughts, initial observations as well as assumptions. Given the case files and policy documents were not 'research produced' documents, they often included text that was not relevant for the research study. The interviews also included rapport-building conversations. Therefore, an initial round of deductive coding, based on the research questions, was applied to remove unsuitable data. Whilst this may question neutrality (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), it was deemed

fundamental for maintaining focus. Following this initial round of coding, subsequent child-codes were generated inductively. Throughout the coding process, inspired by the approach of CDA, attention was paid within themes on the use of language. Furthermore, consistent with the theoretical framework, discussions of gender and gendered implications were considered. An example of the coding framework for each dataset is provided in Appendix 22, 23 and 24.

Following several rounds of coding, preliminary themes were generated. These themes were reviewed and refined, with overlaps or insignificance identified. Some themes were merged to create themes and sub-themes. When reviewing and creating the themes, the researcher reflected upon Bacchi's (2009) 'What's The Problem' (WPR) approach to reflect on the text and think discursively. Specific attention was placed on considering what is left absent or silent. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) outline the questions involved in a WPR analysis as follows:

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

(Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016:20).

These six questions allowed the researcher to refine the themes and reflect on discourse, context, and wider society. A presentation of the themes and sub-themes is provided in Appendix 22, 23 and 24.

6.4.2. Quantitative analysis: descriptive statistics.

Following receiving the quantitative datasets from the partner police forces, the dataset was then uploaded into SPSS. In quantitative analysis, there is often a lot of decision making involved that can be excluded from the write-up (Spence & Crivatu, 2025). To provide transparency, this section briefly details some of the decisions pertaining to coding (see Appendix 19 for a full list of decision making).

A major source of tension was the recording of 'relationship,' where both forces used different practices. Therefore, there was a large amount of work involved in creating consistent variables. The inconsistencies in police data have been discussed (HMIC, 2014; Moretti & Buil-Guil, 2021; Spence & Crivatu, 2025), however, this raises a need to improve data quality in the context of AFV. The relationships were re-coded by the researcher into four categories (adult child to parent violence; parent to adult child abuse; sibling violence; extended family violence). It is appreciated that this undermines a nuanced understanding of the full spectrum of familial relationships, including differentials in the types of extended family violence or differences between biological or legal family relationships.

Similarly, whilst one police force utilised the DASH RIC terminology the other used other terms for these, therefore this forces data was recoded for consistency. Gender was also recorded differently across the forces, which again had to be recoded to ensure consistency. Additionally, both forces collected multiple variables on ethnicity dependent on whether this was self-defined or presumed. Self-defined ethnicity was

used, opposed to other variables, in the analysis given concerns raised about the potential for bias (Moretti & Buil-Guil, 2021). For consistency, these categories were recoded according to the 2021 census guidance (ONS, 2021). The outcomes recorded were also recoded to align with the Home Office outcome codes (Home Office, 2019).

Whilst Police Force Two indicated linked cases through a unique reference number, Police Force One did not include this. Duplicate cases were identified using conditional formatting in Excel to highlight duplicates in the disposal text for this police force. However, to allow full analysis of the full breadth of relationships included within AFV, the duplicates were left in. Whilst the inclusion of duplicates was useful to consider the vast number of relationships within this category, it therefore means that caution should be applied when considering the numerical extent.

SPSS was used to produce descriptive frequency statistics and cross tabulations. Bland et al (2022) suggest that using descriptive statistics "may aid future policy decisions before they influence future research, including the refinement of prevention and risk assessment procedures." (pp. 2).

6.4.3. Integration: Following the thread.

The mixed methods strategy for this research required the datasets to be brought together during the integration phase. Thus, following the analysis of each dataset, their findings and conclusions were combined. Triangulation is often used to affirm findings from one dataset and reduce bias (Denzin, 1970; Patton, 1990) and is often defined as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1970: 291). However, as Moran-Ellis et al, (2006) point out, data triangulation rests on the assumption that findings can be compared to assess whether one conclusion is valid or not. They argue that this however purports an assumption that

data is objective fact. This ‘validity purpose’ (Campbell-Fiske, 1959) is reflective of a positivist approach to research, therefore, was rejected by this research as incompatible with the theoretical foundations of the project.

Furthermore, ‘validation’ arguably retains that one method is somehow more valid than the other as it presumes that the results from one method can be used to ‘validate’ the information obtained from another. In comparison, as discussed, each dataset in this study represented a different component in a system of meaning (Heap & Waters, 2019). Therefore, these results, when brought together, produce an overall dialogue. As outlined by Blackham (2022) “mixed methods research is not necessarily just an exercise in testing findings against each other, instead it is about forging an overall or negotiated account of the findings” (pp. 91-92).

Moran-Ellis et al (2006) have developed an integrative strategy to address the limitations of triangulation, which they coin as ‘following a thread’. In this approach, each dataset is recognised as a set of subjective truths. However, the findings from each dataset come together to produce a deeper, more reflective narrative. ‘Following a thread’ is described by Moran-Ellis et al (2006) as involving the following process:

> We positioned all the datasets alongside each other conceptually and started with an initial analysis of each within the relevant paradigm parameters to identify key themes and analytic questions requiring further exploration. Based on the literature and the original research questions, we picked an analytic question or theme in one dataset and followed it across the others (the thread) to create a constellation of findings which can be used to generate a multi-faceted picture of the phenomenon. (pp. 54)

This approach was identified as complimentary for the theoretical framework and methodological design as it allows the observance of the relationships between datasets (Sanscartier, 2018; Akerblad et al, 2020).

Akerblad et al (2020) provides an overview of how to conduct the 'following the thread' approach. They highlight four steps for conducting this: initial analysis, picking up a thread, juxtaposing data, and then synthesising findings. This was adopted in this research in the following process. Firstly, initial analysis took place of each dataset in the context of their own paradigm (e.g. qualitative or quantitative). Following the analysis, the results from each dataset were placed side by side and thematic 'threads' between the findings were identified based on the research questions. These threads were then traced across the datasets, with similarities and differences between the datasets noted to enrich the final discussion. The findings and discussion chapters are organised around these three final narrative threads: understanding AFV, identification, and assessment of risk; supporting and responding to victim-survivors. Appendix 25 provides a visual overview of this process.

6.5. Ethical reflections.

6.5.1. Ethics declaration and data protection.

Robust ethical standards are especially important in research relating to GBV given it is often a deeply personal and potentially traumatic process for research subjects, researchers, and the public (Lee & Stanko, 2014). The research project obtained ethical approval from the University of Lancashire (Appendix 1). To continually ensure a reflective practice and ponder any 'ethical sticky points' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

a reflexive diary was used throughout the recruitment, collection, and analysis processes (Carroll, 2012).

A partnership agreement and data sharing agreement was put in place with the support of the University and police force legal and information sharing teams (Appendix 2). This ensured that the data collected and processed was appropriate, legal, and protected. Identifying details, such as names or addresses, were redacted by the police force teams from both the quantitative and qualitative police records to maximise confidentiality. Care was taken by the researcher when selecting quotes for inclusion in the thesis that no personal or identifying details were included in the final write-up.

All interview participants were provided with the interview schedule (Appendix 13 & 16), consent form (Appendix 10, 13 & 14), and information sheets (Appendix 7, 10 & 11) prior to the interview to ensure full and informed consent was achieved. Before the interview was scheduled as well as at the start and end of the interview, participants were provided with the opportunity to ask questions or change their mind about participation. Following completion of the interview, a debrief email and debrief sheet was sent to participants (Appendix 16 & 19). Pseudonyms were used for the participants, and any personal or identifying information was redacted during transcription.

6.5.2. Upholding feminist ethics.

Utilising a feminist epistemological framework means undertaking a feminist ethics of care. Feminist ethics were developed primarily in response to the legacies of paternalism and aimed to disrupt hierarchical imbalances of power in research (Gilligan, 1982). A feminist ethics of care approach considers the deployment of

empathy, care, and sensitivity as crucial in research (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002). These values are especially important when conducting research on GBV and therefore working with both sensitive data and potentially vulnerable groups (Aldridge, 2012).

Feminist ethical principles are defined by Leung et al (2019) as meaning research should be: 1) ethical, 2) collaborative and participatory, 3) transformative, 4) intersectional, 5) accountable and 6) accessible and open (pp. 431). This section now details how these principles were applied.

Ethical.

This research ensured ethical approval was granted before any data collection took place, all data collected was on legal and justifiable basis and all participants provided informed consent. ‘Ongoing consent’ (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).) was adopted throughout the interviews, continually asking participants, ‘is it okay if you tell me about this’ or ‘is it okay if I ask you to speak more about that’. Confidentiality of data and participants continues to be maintained.

The research emphasised a ‘doing no harm’ and trauma-informed approach (Campbell et al, 2019). Being trauma-informed in the interviews meant maintaining an active knowledge on trauma and how it may manifest in language, body language, or presentation within the interviews. Therefore, I remained vigilant for any signs of distress, offered breaks, ensured participants had time after their interviews to reflect and kept questions open. This was also applied to the professional interviews therefore recognising the potential for vicarious trauma (Kim et al, 2021; Huey et al, 2023).

Collaborative and participatory.

Feminist research often involves a breaking down of typical hierarchical relationships between researcher and 'researched' through collaborative research (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992). Specific strategies were adopted within the research to minimise these imbalances, whilst also recognising that whilst "reflexivity can make us more aware of asymmetrical or exploitative relationships... it cannot remove them" (England, 1994:86). Within the interviews, I ensured adequate choice was afforded to participants over what they discussed or what they chose not to discuss. Participants were provided the interview schedule in advance and encouraged to add topics that they felt were important or to let me know if there were any questions that they did not feel comfortable with discussing. Providing choice is especially important in the context of GBV, where the impacts of abuse may often have left victim-survivors without control (Stark, 2007; Downes et al, 2014).

As has been reflected throughout the methods discussion in this chapter, the initial research design for the interviews involved an interactive activity or aimed to use focus groups. Whilst adapting research can be frustrating, the act of flexibility is more beneficial than the imposition of methods that do not meet participants where they are at. Therefore, the conduct of the interviews was collaborative in that the final methodological conduct was directly influenced by potential participants. This was also seen in the decisions regarding the sample, also discussed earlier in the chapter.

Transformative.

Central to a feminist ethics framework is the effort to "understand, criticise and correct" (Lindemann, 2019:15) societal and structural inequalities. Therefore, feminist research should aim to be transformative and impactful (Bloom & Sawin, 2009). Participants expressed inspiration in taking part in the research, symbolising the individual benefits

of the research. Whilst the concluding section of this thesis does incorporate recommendations, a summary of the findings will also be produced for participants and partnering police forces.

Intersectional.

The term ‘intersectionality’ is often attributed to the work of Kimberlie Crenshaw (1991) who identified that oppression is the result of interlocking systems of oppression (Collins, 1990). This means that discussions of power and oppression must recognise the differential experiences of professional response and harm, for, for example, women of colour, minoritised gendered communities and women within the LGBTQIA+ community. As a result, being feminist in research processes means being attentive to the ‘matrix of domination’ (Collins, 1990) within the research design, data collection, and analytical phases.

The research recruitment used a variety of strategies thus recognising the barriers some victim-survivors may have in accessing formal support. Therefore, the research did not want to rely on advertisement only through formal organisations and subsequently outreach was conducted via social media (Keller & Lee, 2003) and extended to community, by and for and grass roots organisations. However, due to my own limited connections and the time limit of the research, it is recognised that more investment could have been made to work collaboratively with these communities.

The emphasis on intersectionality was also applied in the research conduct. The interviews often started with a ‘strengths-based’ approach (Kelly & Gates, 2010), where the questions posed acted an opportunity for participants to discuss their values, what matters to them, their motivations for participating and their professional or personal identities. This allowed the transcripts to reflect participants as more than

‘participant,’ ‘victim-survivor’ or ‘professional’ by allowing participants to construct their own holistic ‘life story’ (Prins, 2006). This also allowed participants to discuss their local area, aspects of their identities or histories which had shaped who they were today. Despite these attentions, however, I was acutely aware of the close relationship with the police due to the studentship requirements. This was made clear on research materials; however, this may have impacted the ability for some prospective participants to access the research.

The critical attention to power was further upheld in the quantitative analysis. As discussed previously, the data relies on self-defined ethnicity to reduce the implication of officer bias, and throughout the quantitative analysis the researcher maintained an awareness of structural inequality. D’Ignazio and Klein (2020) argue that ‘data feminism’ should continually ask “data science with whose interests and goals in mind?” (pp. 2). Therefore, whilst analysing the police data, the researcher maintained a critical awareness of over-representation or the potential for officer bias, especially in the context of race and ethnicity (Moretti & Buil-Guil, 2021).

Accountable.

Feminist research and methods by nature frequently involves using experience as ‘data’ (Smith, 2005). In this study this was the researcher's own analysis of policy, the recorded experiences of people who had presented to the police or the empirical voices of participants. Therefore, being accountable to these groups, as well as wider academic, practice and public communities, was important. To ensure the voices of those in the research were adequately reflected, care and consideration was placed into the coding and analysis process. Each policy, case file and interview was written

up into a unique one-page document, so I could continually reflect on this when conducting analysing and including participant quotes in the write-up.

The research was also presented to academic and non-academic communities to share early findings, discuss implications and take on board suggestions. The research was also thoroughly discussed with supervision teams to ensure a process of accountability. However, there has been an increase in the use of co-researchers with lived experience (Harding, 2020) which may have been beneficial. This was not used due to limited experience and time constraints.

Accessible and open.

Throughout the research process, there was an effort to ensure that the research was accessible to a variety of audiences. The research materials and advertisements were advertised as both photos and as text, for accessibility readers, and the researcher was willing to translate any materials if requested. Contact details were provided as part of the study to encourage organisations and potential participants to ask questions, enquire about the research or offer any suggestions.

When being invited to interview, the Microsoft form link included an opportunity for participants to highlight any accessibility requirements (e.g. translator requirements, accessible locations) or anything that would make the interview more comfortable (e.g. preferred location of the interview, preferred time of day, preferred way to contact). This was also asked in prior emails and in the interview. The interviews took this further by starting with a rapport-building chat, the opportunity to ask questions as well as the opportunity to grab a drink or other materials that might make the participant feel more comfortable.

6.5.3. Researcher well-being and resilience.

Whilst ethical review processes focus on avoiding harm to participants, as raised by Skinner et al (2023), they often neglect to anticipate the harms that may be incurred onto the researcher. Paying sufficient attention to researcher well-being is especially important in the context of GBV research as the topic, the kinds of data and the populations involved may constitute 'emotionally demanding research' (Smillie & Riddell, 2023; Burrell et al, 2023). As Widdowfield (2000) asserts "not only does the researcher *affect* the research process but they are themselves *affected* by this process" (p. 200, emphasis in the original).

It was therefore important that the research had a strong ethics of care for the researcher. This meant ensuring that there were strategies to uphold my own well-being (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2017; Skinner et al, 2025). This included managing physical aspects of safety, for example, by setting up a safety plan for any in-person interviews as well as having emotional safety strategies. These included ensuring adequate breaks before and after analysis or data collection, scheduling processing and reflection time as well as limiting the number of interviews, case files or data accessed within a period.

6.6. Reflexivity.

6.6.1. Positionality statement

Although providing a positionality statement has often been critiqued as potentially reflecting colonialism (Gani & Khan, 2024), a commitment to understanding the relationship between the researcher and the data is vital in feminist research (Martin et al, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2022) argue that "a knowing researcher is one who strives to 'own' their perspectives… is deliberative in their decision-making and

reflexive in their practice" (pp. 1). Feminist research especially encourages researchers to acknowledge their identity, status, and relationship and how this may shape the production of knowledge (Widdowfield, 2000; Flax, 2004).

Building on the introductory chapter, as a white, cis-gender woman I acknowledge the privileges that come with this identity. My ethnicity for instance may have meant navigating these gatekeeper relationships were less likely to be complicated by experiences of direct, systemic, and generational trauma and bias. Furthermore, I have previously been employed in DVA services and therefore held 'an insider status' (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013) by having 'shared definitions' (Kebbell, 2019), networks, and connections. However, as recognised by Campbell (2002b), there is a moveable line between researchers and victim-survivors and an acute awareness that easily the tables could be shifted. As a result, this sense of closeness to the research and our "emotions influence our research, and our research can affect us emotionally" (pp. 15).

Recognising these emotional dialogues is important to research as:

> Our consciousness is always the medium through which research occurs; there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher. (Stanley & Wise, 1993:157).

Indeed, there were times throughout the research process in which my emotions were heightened and directly correlated to my positionality to the research. Excerpts from the research diary are presented within Appendix 26, however, these reflexive dilemmas are briefly summarised.

6.6.2. The passive bystander.

During my analysis of the police case file data, I found myself often 'bearing witness' (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002). This data represented a point of crisis in victim-survivors'

lives and included details about abuse and thus, distress, fear and pain. Whilst it was legal to witness this data, I often felt conflicted about reading these cases without direct consent from the subjects. Whilst attention to reflexivity has dominated feminist qualitative literature for some time, Barlow (2015) raises that there is often an assumption that documents do not have the same ethical considerations or emotional consequences as other empirical data sources. However, I conversely routinely felt 'pain by proxy' (Moran-Ellis, 1997).

My emotional state was especially impacted when I spotted missed opportunities to share information or offer support in the casefiles. My emotions would quickly shift into anger and frustration. This demonstrates the negotiation of my identity in research as both previous practitioner and current researcher (Sampson et al, 2008), and thus the impossibility to remain objective. This was exacerbated further by my commitment to undertaking feminist research, which "implies a commitment to action" (Fisher, 1984:187). In direct conflict with the emphasis on feminist research to be transformative, when observing the case files, I often felt like I occupied a bystander-like identity.

6.6.3. The guilty feminist.

The frictions experienced when reading the police data were exacerbated by the fact that the data was created by the police. This increased my feelings of guilt as many case files did therefore not capture the holistic senses of selves of victim-survivors, contradicting the feminist effort to provide victim-survivors with dignity. As a feminist researcher I was continually reflective of the responsibility to the wider community to uplift the voices of those marginalised (Bott, 2010). Therefore, by focusing on the perspectives of those in designated positions of power, I felt I was a 'bad feminist.'

Similarly to Molyneux (2024), I had often thought of myself as critical of systems of power and sympathetic to anti-carceral feminism, therefore my close working relationship with the police challenged me. This guilt was sometimes exacerbated when I found myself in interviews with police officers, whereby I often felt conflicted when I built good rapport or agreed with their sentiments. Although all police officers in the study showed sensitive and empathetic insights, this propels my pre-existing assumptions of what police may say, as influenced by my critical feminist self, into question.

6.6.4. The junior researcher.

My concerns over my closeness to the data and the emotional reactions I had, often meant I worried that I was not fulfilling the requirements to do objective and rigorous research. This was often exacerbated by my choice of methods where I worried that my decisions to do a multi-stage methodology, my decision to embed subjectivity and complexity and include my perspectives on policy readings and policing meant I was not upholding what I believed to be 'rigour'. Whilst I used the research diary to explore my interpretations, bias or assumptions, this meant my experience of research was often characterised by anxiety. This anxiety reflects my position as a junior researcher, where I worried that I was not a good researcher and therefore would not progress or effect research impact. This further demonstrates the entanglement with my feminist self, desiring activism and change.

My status as a junior researcher had other implications. For example, when reaching out to services to request to help to share information or actively support the research, I was often met with silence. My worry over my lack of credentials, knowledge and expertise was therefore a further sense of frustration and anxiety.

These concerns about rigour and objectivity however reflect an ongoing influence of masculine positivism. The closeness of the researcher to the data and to the research project does not detract from research but can conversely sometimes enrich research. For example, I often disclosed my previous professional experience to participants which allowed a sense of connection to form with interview participants or stakeholders. Furthermore, I often used my position as a junior researcher to present a 'vulnerable self' in the interviews. I joked with participants about needing to use multiple recording devices, disclosing my anxieties about the success of the research. This supported to eradicate hierarchies or imbalances of power.

6.6.5. Embracing mess, complexity, and emotions.

The emotional journeys experienced during the process exposes the realities of doing research; the bumps along the way, the plans that go awry and the constant decision making (Stanley & Wise, 1993). Making these public is important for encouraging more honest and frank discussions of the reality of research. This, as discussed by Stanley and Wise (1993), helps to dismantle the mythology of hygienic research and normalise research as messy, complex, and difficult. This may have significant benefits for researcher well-being, especially that of junior researchers.

Making these feelings of discomfort public in this thesis is a symbolic feminist act (DeLuca & Maddox, 2016). As Schmitz and Ahmed (2014) encourage, we need to not only pay attention to our emotions, but what they do and thus, how we can use them. For example, these emotions helped shape my analysis and recommendations – a possibility only achievable using a feminist framework and thus eradicating the myth of objective neutrality.

6.7. Conclusion.

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodological strategy deployed by this research. This methodological approach aims to understand how policy, organisations and individual practice understand, identify and respond to AFV within the wider system of DVA. Specifically, the methods chosen to allow the research to explore how constructions of DVA which exist in systems of power, such as policy documents, shape how AFV is recorded, understood and risk assessed and how victim-survivors are supported in policing and multi-agency practice. By centring a feminist-interactionist framework, this research sees these 'planets' (Hester, 2011) of response as interactive and therefore uses a data integration strategy which embraces this complex relationship.

This chapter has been transparent and reflective of the decisions made and the challenges encountered. This is crucial to challenge the myth of 'hygienic research' (Stanley & Wise, 1993) and highlight the close, complicated relationship between the researcher and research data. The thesis will now move to discussing the findings thematically before integrating these into an overall discussion chapter.

Chapter Seven: Findings – Understanding AFV as DVA.

7.1. Introduction.

This chapter represents the first of three findings' chapters in the thesis and presents the findings related to ‘understanding AFV.’ This theme discusses how AFV is constructed in policy and how this narrative is subsequently observed in recordings and understandings of AFV by victim-survivors, the police and multi-agency partners.

The chapter firstly outlines the policy construction of DVA and the implications of this framing for AFV. Notably this construction relies on a binary model, positioning the problem as between two social actors. This ignores the wider ‘web’ of familial violence (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022). The subsequent discussions highlight how the constructions extradited on the policy level may have influenced the way AFV is recorded and interpreted by professionals. This chapter highlights that relationships of AFV are seen as different to typical narratives of DVA, leading to these relationships commonly being misunderstood, mis-recorded or ‘othered’.

7.2. The ‘policy story’ of AFV.

7.2.1. The binary model of coercive control.

Throughout the qualitative documentary analysis, the framing of DVA in the analysed policy documents relies on a binary construction of two people. The term “*the* victim and *the* perpetrator” is commonly used, as can be exemplified in the following quote:

> Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours... It is widely recognised that *the* perpetrator’s desire to exercise power and control over *the victim* is at the centre of abusive behaviours. Many victims will experience abusive behaviours simultaneously; perpetrators may demonstrate a wide

> range and use different tactics to gain power and control. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

In this excerpt DVA is presented as a desire by *the* perpetrator to exercise *power and control* over *the* victim. Thus, consequently the 'problem' (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016) is presented as relating to two people, with one person a clearly defined victim-survivor and the other a clearly defined perpetrator. Whilst the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance does state that, "abuse may be perpetrated towards a victim by more than one relative", there lacks an in-depth nuance of these dynamics across the documents. Instead, there is a continued reliance on a singular perpetrator and/or victim-survivor.

This binary framing is further identified across the documents, as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

> The behaviour has had a serious effect on *the* victim, meaning that it has caused *the* victim to fear violence will be used against them on two or more occasions. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> Multi-agency working also enables professionals to understand and manage *the* perpetrator. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> These powers form the basis of disclosures under the DVDS, meaning in practice that information can be shared about *a* person's known history of violence or abuse. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> It is important to note that bail with conditions and protective measures can be used simultaneously to build up greater protection for *the victim.* (Domestic

> Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)

This reference to a singular victim and singular perpetrator reinforces that DVA is a problem of relationships and individual perpetrators within those relationships. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, this silences the possibility of multiple victims, perpetrators, and witnesses despite previous references to this. This is problematic for AFV given the potential for ‘webs’ of abuse (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022) that have been identified in research as being located across the family. For example, some research on CPV has indicated the occurrence of overlapping abuse between children, their parents, and their siblings (Fitz-Gibbon et al, 2022). Secondly, this focus on a singular victim-survivor and perpetrator excludes critical attention on the role of wider societal, systemic, and structural conditions of patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). This is further by Gangoli et al (2023, 2024) as important in the context of familial abuse perpetration as motivations can be linked to family honour (also discussed in the context of trans communities by Rogers, 2016), stigma and shame, culture and community, religion and faith, kinship and care, finances and control as well as wider societal contexts.

It is furthermore of note that the framing of DVA relies not only on individual victims and perpetrators but also on a perpetrator exerting “power over” a victim-survivor. This intentional exertion of power by one over another embodies Starks coercive control framework (2007). This reliance on the dynamics of 'power and control’ and ‘the powerful perpetrator’ (Sherman, 2007) is established across the documents:

> There is concerning behaviour by B demonstrated towards A. This may include a *pattern of behaviours* that indicate that B is stalking or exercising controlling

> or coercive behaviour *over* the victim. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> The AO may issue a DVPN… if they have reasonable grounds for believing that: P has been violent towards or has threatened violence towards an AP. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance).
>
> A perpetrator may manipulate the victim or those around them... Perpetrators may also be particularly adept at manipulating professionals, agencies and systems, and may use a range of tactics to maintain contact with, and control over the victim. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

In these excerpts, control, and therefore abuse, is an intentional action or course of behaviours deliberately exerted to scare, to exert fear and to invoke distress typically from one person "*over"* another person. Whilst this appreciates non-physical violence, this framing relies on the presence of an unequal imbalance of power. This constructs an image of a perpetrator who is more powerful than the victim-survivor. This is best exemplified in the following excerpt:

> The perpetrator must have known that their behaviour would have a serious effect on the victim, or the behaviour must have been such that he or she "ought to have known" it would have had that effect. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

In this quote perpetrators are constructed as active and intentional agents as they "must have known that their behaviour would have a serious effect." Therefore, perpetrators are constructed as deliberately exerting power, control, and fear "over" a weaker victim-survivor. However, as discussed by Holt and Retford (2013), this notion

of a ‘powerful perpetrator’ can be problematic in the context of families. They discuss how this is particularly contradictory in circumstances of CPV, where parents are traditionally perceived as holding symbolic and often physical power over children due to access to finances and legal rights. Whilst this may be countered by the fact that CPV is still intrinsically gendered (Condry & Miles, 2013a, 2013c) and thus characterised by an imbalance of power due to gender inequality, it is important to critically explore the subjective nature of “power over” further. The use of ‘power over’ further conjures imagery of physical violence, potentially indicating a continued reliance on physical violence and abuse in policy framings of DVA.

The construction of an active perpetrator directly opposes the construction of victim-survivors. Whilst perpetrators are assumed to be powerful, intentional actors, victim-survivors are comparatively constructed as passive. This is outlined in the following excerpts:

> The restrictive nature of controlling or coercive behaviour means that... victims can be limited in their ability to exercise autonomy. Many have a sense that the perpetrator is everywhere, knows about everything that they are doing and have come to believe the perpetrator’s negative view of them. This narrowing of options can lead to a victim’s ability to make decisions, act or implement change, being limited. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

> Individuals may not be aware that they are a victim of domestic abuse, they might blame themselves, fear the consequences of leaving the perpetrator, not know where they can seek help, or fear that they will experience stigma and

> shame if they do try to seek help. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)
>
> It is important that the police have the right tools to enable them to provide effective protection to *vulnerable victims.* (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)

In these passages, victim-survivors are "vulnerable," they "may not be aware" and have limited ability to "exercise autonomy." This contrasts with the construction of perpetrators as agentic, intentional actors. This was discussed further in the DVPN and DVPO guidance, as it is sometimes regarded necessary to apply protection orders without the consent of the victim-survivor due to this lack of awareness of abuse:

> It may be necessary and proportionate to issue a DVPN even though a victim does not wish it because there may be suspicion of the presence of coercive and controlling behaviour affecting the decision-making of the victim. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)

Within this excerpt, the perceived lack of agency for victim-survivors is established as a motive for law enforcement action. Enforcing protection orders without the express desire of victim-survivors may be especially damming in AFV given the dynamics of care and control in family relationships and desires to maintain familial relationships (Wilcox, 2012; Miles & Condry, 2013b). Thus, enforcing separation or law enforcement action may have repercussions for victim-survivors safety and empowerment.

Whilst this framing of victim-survivors and perpetrators is potentially harmful for all DVA relationships, this is arguably especially the case for AFV given data on homicide has

raised the potential for these relationships to harbour complex vulnerabilities and overlapping interdependencies (Bracewell et al, 2022). Thus, the black and white construction of active, powerful perpetrators and passive victims ignores the potential for slippage. For example, labels such as ‘victim’ or ‘perpetrator’ may change over time. This is exemplified in the research on CPV which has highlighted the prevalence of prior experiences of DVA as a victim and the subsequent perpetration of CPV (Routt & Anderson, 2011; Beckmann, 2020).

This construction of powerful perpetrators and passive victim-survivors to some extent embodies the work of Nils Christie. Christie (1986) argues that the ‘ideal victim’ is one which elicits sympathy from the public, fulfils the expectations of victimhood, and thus becomes a ‘better victim’ than others. Good or ‘ideal’ victims report their experiences to professional agencies, follow safety planning actions put in place by professionals and support prosecution (Duggan, 2018a). Those that do not fulfil these conditions fail to achieve ‘victim status’, an experience which is linked to negative repercussions. Fohring (2018) highlights how being excluded from ‘victim status’ can mean experiences are silenced, services and support is not provided and stigmatisation is compounded. In relation to the ideal victim, the ideal offender is constructed as ‘big and bad’ (Christie, 1986). This framing of offenders and victims means following abuse, “the characteristics and behaviours of both are scrutinised and blame is directed at these agents rather than at any broader social or economic systems of injustice” (Fohring, 2018:196). Thus ‘the problem’ becomes the relationship and the people within it.

Reflecting on the framing of a physically powerful perpetrator and passive victim, this can be considered to therefore construct an idealised image of what a DVA relationship and victim-survivors and perpetrators should look like. This is usually discussed in

reference to experiences of IPV between two people, despite some references to the possibility of familial abuse and multiple perpetrators. DVA is commonly expected to involve a powerful perpetrator, a weaker victim and consist of 'power over' relationship, as discussed previously in this chapter.

As can be further exemplified in the following excerpt, references to Starks (2007) coercive control literature are used consistently to underpin understandings of DVA, however, this is often discussed in tandem with IPV:

> Controlling or coercive behaviour can also be perpetrated in cases where the victim has never been in an intimate relationship or lived with the perpetrator but may be in a parental or familial relationship with them through parenting the same child. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

> Separation can raise both the likelihood and consequences of risk because of the perpetrator's perceived lack of control. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

> This may include a pattern of behaviours that indicate that B has stalked or exercised controlling or coercive behaviour over previous partners. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance)

The references to separation and parenting in these excerpts further demonstrate that there is an explicit conflation between coercive control, intimate relationships, and intimate partner parenting. This may be linked to the fact that Stark's framework (2007) was based on a gender asymmetrical and heteronormative account of IPV. The application and co-option of this framework, without critical appreciation of its origins, into DVA policy in England and Wales therefore embodies what Goodmark (2015) discusses as 'exporting without a license'. This theoretical framework was not built for

the experiences of AFV and therefore the ‘unintended consequences’ of using this to understand all DVA relationships (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) mean that AFV is inadvertently ‘silenced’ (Bacchi, 2009) within policy framings of DVA.

The analysis discussed therefore constructs what this thesis considers an ’ideal DVA relationship,’ building on the work of Christie (1986). Here it can be argued that the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ is one which includes an intimate partner relationship between two people, usually a heterosexual intimate relationship. The ideal offender is bigger and more powerful than the ideal victim, who is passive and vulnerable but willing to leave. The dynamics of this relationship are characterised by clear directions of power, control, and violence; with the ideal offender actively and intentionally harming the ideal victim. The physicality and visibility of these dynamics can thus be easily managed using existing frameworks.

As has been referenced to, DVA is as has been discussed a ‘wicked social problem’ (Devaney & Spratt, 2009) and the dynamics rarely fit these mythological conditions. However, this may have significant consequences for AFV as it may be more difficult to meet the criteria of this idealised relationship and thus be afforded with the provisions which support ideal victim-survivors in this matrix (Fohring, 2018). This chapter now considers how AFV was framed within policy.

7.2.2. The ‘othering’ of AFV.

The previous section of this chapter highlights that AFV is often left unproblematised in policy constructions by the dominance of the ‘ideal DVA relationship’. There are some references to familial violence and abuse in the policy documents, however this is often conflated with so-called honour-based violence (HBV). This is exemplified in the following excerpts:

> Honour'-based abuse is typically carried out by a member or members of the family or extended family. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)
>
> Pressure from the victim's family or associates for example, in cases of 'honour'-based abuse. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)
>
> Using religion and faith systems to control and subjugate a victim can be a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is often characterised by a systematic pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour within a religious context and can be perpetrated by a current or former partner, as well as family members. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

As identified in the excerpts, abuse can occur across families and family networks. However, this is often implied to exist only within racialised, religious communities by virtue of the conflation with HBV. In the excerpt there is reference to "behaviour within a religious context" and "using religion and faith systems", therefore placing the 'problem' (Bacchi & Godwin, 2016) to be the system of faith and religion or the values of the family and community (GBV) (Gangoli et al, 2018; Chowdhury, 2023). Rather than focusing attention on the structural contexts of GBV, this presents the problem to be certain families, usually those from South Asian backgrounds, an issue raised within academic literature (Meetoo & Mirza, 2007; Gill & Brah, 2013; Idriss, 2017). This furthermore excludes the vast expanse of relationships within the umbrella of AFV, as indicated in chapter two of this thesis.

Both the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme and Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) guidance and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance contained little reference to the family as a potential for a source of harm. In

the DVDS guidance, family members are only mentioned when discussing the definition of a serial perpetrator:

> A serial perpetrator of domestic abuse, defined by the College of Policing as 'someone who has been reported to the police as having committed or threatened domestic abuse against two or more victims. This includes current or former intimate partners and family members' (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance)

In the DVPN guidance, familial abuse is only discussed in reference to official definitions:

> An associated person means a person who is associated with the alleged perpetrator within the meaning of section 62 of the Family Law Act 1996. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)

Applying Bacchi's (2009) examination of absences, there is a therefore lack of nuance on AFV in the context of associated legal protections and provisions. As is further discussed in this thesis, this not only impacts the way AFV is understood but also the way professionals can respond.

Whilst these documents however contain little acknowledgement of familial abuse, in the Domestic Abuse Act Statutory Guidance and the Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance, there is sometimes a conflation which persists between familial violence, and the abuse of vulnerable people. This is outlined in the following excerpts:

> Individuals, who have care and support needs, may be particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse from intimate partners or family members, who may use the

> fact that they have caring responsibilities as a cover for their abuse. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)
>
> Harming someone whilst performing ‘caring’ duties, which are often performed by relatives. This is especially relevant for disabled victims. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

Whilst the recognition of family abuse is welcomed, it is disappointing that it is only expanded upon in the context of vulnerability. Furthermore, troubling is that this construction of family abuse is prefixed on an assumption of a vulnerable and passive victim-survivor dependent on the care of a perpetrator, thus further reinforcing the problematic binaries discussed throughout the chapter. As can be further demonstrated, this is often conflated with the notion of inherent vulnerabilities (Brown, 2011) such as childhood or dependency:

> Young people may be at an increased risk of abuse perpetrated by family members. Young people may be inherently more vulnerable because it is harder for them to distinguish between normal and abusive behaviours, and this may especially be the case where the perpetrator is a trusted family member. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

This passage ignores the complexities of caring relationships identified in DHR’s of adult family homicide (Bracewell et al, 2022; Benbow et al, 2023) by assuming that those who are ‘vulnerable’, such as young people, are victim-survivors. As raised by Hunter et al (2010), this removes the possibility for people's children or people's elderly parents to be framed as responsible for abuse. Bracewell et al (2022) discusses how in DHR’s of adult family homicide, many victim-survivors were carers of adult sons with mental health vulnerabilities, therefore within this framing of vulnerability, held a less

‘vulnerable’ position. However, Warburton-Wynn (2023) discusses the prevalence of abuse in care relationships, with both those cared-for and carers able perpetrate or be victimised by abuse. Carers have financial and emotional obligations, which may be exploited by perpetrators through emotional blackmail or isolation. Thus, labels of vulnerability are not static in the context of AFV, and the directions of power are complex and fluid. These complexities challenge the binary construction of 'power and control', and therefore the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ as discussed in the previous section.

Furthermore, this conceptualisation of AFV and familial abuse as ‘either’ HBV ‘or’ abuse (Aldridge, 2020) within the context of vulnerability creates a conceptual distinction from the ‘ideal DVA relationship.’ This creates a dichotomy between DVA and ‘abuse of vulnerable people’ and signposts front-line responders in different directions. Lonbay and Southall (2023) discuss how the linguistic dualism between DVA and the abuse of elderly people has consequences for the perceived role of adult social care, with the latter viewed through a safeguarding lens and DVA constructed as an issue of criminal justice. This was discussed in chapters two and four of the literature review. This dualism inadvertently constructs AFV as occurring only within a situational vacuum context of vulnerability or cultural issues. This prevents AFV from being conceptualised within dominant theoretical perspectives regarding DVA.

It is furthermore significant that familial violence and abuse is often presented as a secondary or collateral abusive relationship in the policy documents. As identified in the following excerpts, familial violence and abuse is often presented as a consequential relationship which occurs following the experience of IPV:

> Consideration should be given to whether abuse is being perpetrated by more than one individual, for example**,** *family members of the abuser.* (Domestic

> Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> Threats and/or pressure from *the perpetrator, the perpetrator's family,* or associates. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

This collateral framing of the family assumes that familial violence and abuse occur as secondary to IPV or the 'ideal DVA relationship.' Consequently, the impact of AFV and the potential for harm by family members are constructed as lesser in severity. This creates a typological hierarchy of relationships of violence and abuse whereby the 'ideal DVA relationship' is the primary lens of focus.

This is further exacerbated by the fact that families are further conflated with 'places' of safety and retreat for victim-survivors, as can be outlined in the following quotes:

> *The family and friends of the victim* may be able to give evidence about the effect and/or impact of the perpetrator's behaviour on the victim, *such as isolating the victim from the family.* (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> Encourages the police and allows members of the public to take responsibility for the safety of the *potential victim and their family*. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

The fusion of 'victims and their families' and their distinction from 'the perpetrator' positions the family as a source of support rather than a potential site of harm. Ewin et al (2020) discuss this in the context of protection orders, stressing that family members are often expected to provide safety and support to victim-survivors. To conflate family with safety leaves absent abusive family relationships and therefore

leaves victim-survivors without a frame to problematise their experiences (Holt, 2012). This echoes traditional narratives of DVA whereby it was assumed to be a 'private' matter to be dealt with within the family. Whilst IPV has broken free of these chains, it remains unclear in policy representations whether AFV has moved beyond this conceptualisation.

7.3. Understanding AFV in police data.

7.3.1. Conflicts and consequences: reflections from the recoding process.

To establish the impact of policy on how organisations conceptualise AFV, the research now discusses the findings from the mixed-methods analysis of police case file data. The data obtained from includes relationship and demographic data. This intended to help the research to establish 'who does what to whom' (Hester, 2009; Bates, 2020), however, some of the reflections which occurred when coding this data supported the research questions. The use of these reflections as data is aligned with feminist reflexivity and the notion that statistics are a discursive truth.

Both forces use different variables, strategies, and terms to record relationships. For example, in one police force, it is unclear whether the label assigned, such as 'sibling of,' pertains to the victim or the perpetrator. When recoding the data, this had to be deduced from cross-referencing against the incident summary. This police force also does not provide detailed information on the relationship, for example whether this was stepsiblings, biological siblings, or siblings-in-law. In comparison, the other police force holds extensive detail about each of the relationships. For example, it distinguishes if these are biological siblings, adoptive siblings, foster siblings, or siblings-in-law. To provide consistency across the two datasets and to prepare the data

for analysis these relationships are recoded into four simple categories: i) Adult child to parent violence; ii) Parent to adult child violence; iii) Sibling violence and iv) extended family violence.

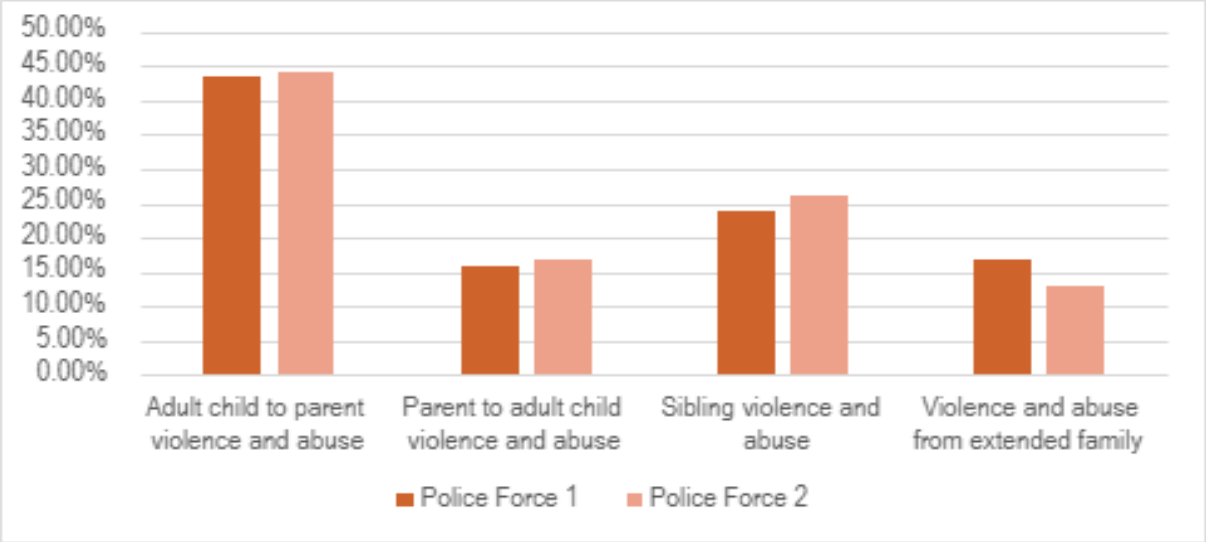
It is appreciated that this neglects a rich understanding of the kinds of relationships that can be included in these categories. For example, extended family violence could include violence by in-laws and by an intimate relation or sometimes violence from nephews, nieces, aunties or uncles. These are quite different relationships with different nuances, which would have been beneficial to explore given the lack of research on extended family violence raised in chapter two. This raises questions about the quality of criminal justice data (Myhill & Kelly, 2023; Phoenix, 2023) and the need to improve this. This is especially the case for AFV where it is proposed that current systems do not adequately support a proper recording of ‘the problem’.

This leads to a wider issue regarding when multiple family members are involved as either victims, perpetrators or witnesses to violence and abuse. Both recording systems used by police only allow for the recording of a singular victim and singular perpetrator. Whilst cases can be linked to signal multiple victim-survivors, perpetrators, or both, this is not done consistently across the two police forces. This results in the overlaps or ‘webs’ of abuse (Chowdhury, 2021) failing to be nuanced in organisational systems. It can be argued that this is a result of these force systems being designed with the 'ideal DVA relationship’ in mind. As discussed, this is an image conflated with an understanding of abuse as incorporating one victim-survivor and one perpetrator. Thus, police data is not objective but reflects the discursive ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of what is officially known and understood to be DVA. The complexities of familial violence, as discussed in the previous section, are thus left without space to be captured.

7.3.2. Victim-survivors, perpetrators and their relationships: demographic insights.

Using the data available, however, the thesis examines the relationship and demographic information to explore the nature of AFV. This allows the thesis to determine the extent to which the 'ideal DVA relationship' or the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of IPV presented in policy influences police staff when they record information about AFV that they attend to.

Across both datasets, as indicated in Graph 1, the most common relationship recorded is adult CPV (a full overview of the values can be found in Appendix 27). Within this category, this includes abuse from an adult child who was either biologically, legally, or socially related to the victim who can be seen to represent a parental figure (e.g. adopted children, stepchildren, children of a victim's partner). This is consistent with research on adult family homicide (Bates et al, 2022; Bracewell et al, 2022). It is significant that the second most common relationship in both datasets is sibling relationships, given the dearth of research of this relationship in adulthood as indicated in chapter two. The high rates of this type of abuse and the contradictory lack of research allude to the impact of policy on what relationships are identified and thus recorded onto criminal justice systems.



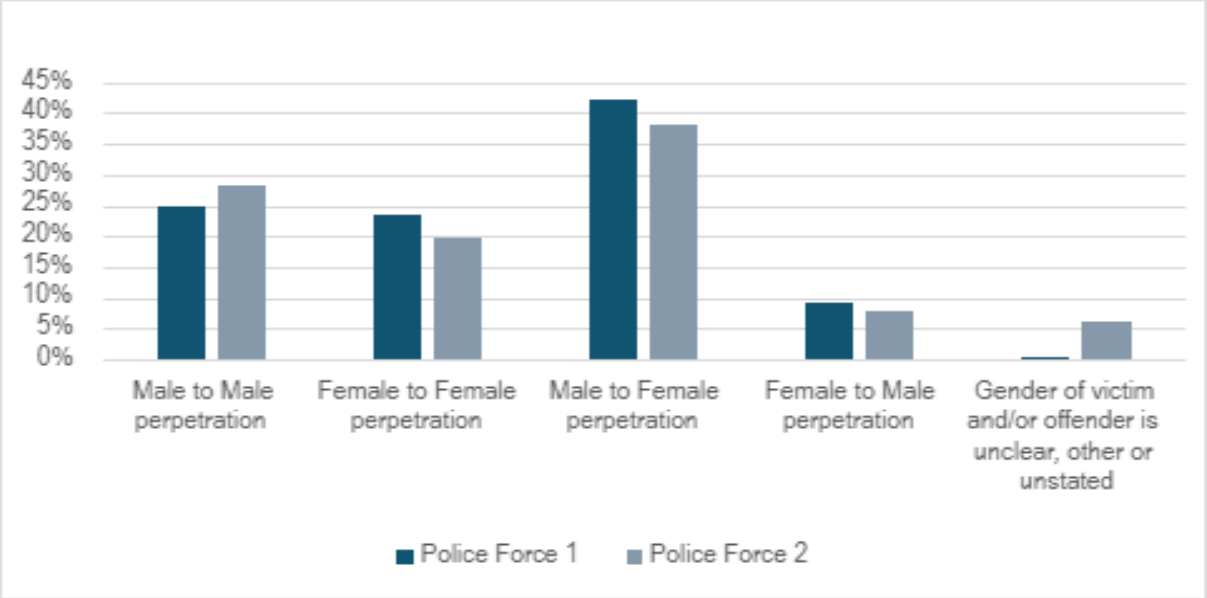
Graph 1: AFV relationship data by police force.

As can be demonstrated in Table 4, across both datasets, most victim-survivors are recorded as female, and most offenders are recorded as male. This is not impacted by the relationship type.

	Police Force One		Police Force Two	
	Victim-survivor	Perpetrator	Victim-survivor	Perpetrator
Female	**65.7%**	**32.7%**	**60.4%**	**28.3%**
Male	34.2%	67.2%	37.4%	67.6%
Undefined or other	0.1%	< 0.1%	2.1%	4.1%

Table 4: Gender data by police force

Abuse is most likely to be perpetrator by those recorded as male to those recorded as female. This is represented by five different variables, 1) Male-to-female perpetration; 2) female-to-male perpetrators; 3) male-to-male perpetration; 4) female-to-female perpetration, and 5) when either the gender of the victim-survivor or offender is unclear, undefined or 'other'. The proportion of these directions is similar across both forces, as indicated in Graph 2.



Graph 2: Gendered direction of perpetration by police force.

The figures relating to gender asymmetry are slightly less pronounced compared to similar research addressing IPV (Bland & Ariel, 2020; McPhee et al, 2021; ONS, 2024c; Barbin et al, 2025), however, are consistent with research on adult family homicide (Bracewell et al, 2022; Bates et al, 2022). It can be deduced that this may indicate the existence of multiple truths. This may suggest that the gendered dynamics of AFV in both these force areas are less asymmetrical than national analyses of IPV. However, it may also indicate that men may be more comfortable in these local areas, or in circumstances of familial violence and abuse, to contact the police as victims. This may further suggest that officers in these forces are more likely to acknowledge and record men as victims of DVA. Whilst the true reality is beyond the scope of quantitative analysis, the gendered asymmetry within the data, whilst less pronounced than research on IPV, does assert that AFV is a gendered crime and thus needs to be considered through a feminist lens. The lack of emphasis on this within feminist academia, theory and practice is therefore disappointing. Furthermore, it may reflect the conflation between DVA and IPV.

When looking at the age and ethnicity of victims and offenders, these results further challenge the policy perspective of AFV. As identified in Table 5, most victims and perpetrators in both police data sets are white. This is consistent with research from Bland et al (2022) and Bland and Ariel (2020).

	Police Force One		Police Force Two	
	Victim-survivor	Perpetrator	Victim-survivor	Perpetrator
Asian or Asian British	**1%**	**0.9%**	**8.8%**	**8.8%**
Black African, Caribbean, or Black British	1.2%	1.4%	0.5%	0.5%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.9%	1.6%	0.4%	0.8%
White	**82.0%**	**81.4%**	**76.0%**	**74.0%**
Other ethnic group	0.6%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%
Not provided or declined	13.6%	11.7%	10.9%	9.6%
Missing data	0.6%	2.2%	3.1%	6.0%

Table 5: Ethnicity data by police force

There are slightly lower proportions of white and higher proportions of Asian and Asian British victim-survivors and perpetrators in Police Force Two compared to Police Force One, this potentially reflects the demographics of the two geographic areas. This is interesting however as it challenges the racialisation of familial violence and abuse, as discussed in the previous policy findings chapter. In comparison, the data in this context shows that the majority of AFV recorded and attended to by these police forces relates to white families. This may be again resultant of multiple truths. This may suggest that most cases of AFV that are attended to by the police involve white families but could also allude to the difficulties and barriers for marginalised victim-survivors in reporting concerns to the police (Khan et al, 2018). However, it may also raise that the

recording practices and systems do not allow the police to identify or do not effectively capture AFV amongst ethnic minoritised communities.

The average age of victim-survivors and perpetrators is consistent across the datasets. For victim-survivors, the average is 45.3 in Police Force One and 45 in Police Force Two. For perpetrators this is 36.9 for Police Force One and 37.4 for Police Force Two[4]. Perpetrator ages are more likely to be clustered around the younger age brackets, as indicated in Table 6. This mirrors findings from DVA more widely (Barbin et al, 2025) but also data regarding CPV (Condry & Miles, 2013c) and adult family homicide (Bracewell et al, 2022; Bates et al, 2022).

	Police Force One		Police Force Two	
	Victim-survivor	Perpetrator	Victim-survivor	Perpetrator
18-25	14.7%	**25.6%**	18.2%	**28.3%**
26-35	15.4%	**26.8%**	17.3%	**29.6%**
36-45	17.2%	21.6%	18.2%	18.5%
46-55	21.4%	14.4%	20.4%	13.3%
56-65	18.1%	7.9%	15.6%	7.0%
66+	13.1%	3.6%	10.2%	3.4%

Table 6: Age data by police force.

Around half of all perpetrators are under the age of thirty-five. This may reflect the reality of most of the cases of AFV being adult CPV, however, may also indicate the presence of a ‘powerful perpetrator’ (Sherman, 2007) i.e. someone who is physically able. This reflects discussions in the policy section of this chapter about the constructions of the 'ideal offender’ (Christie, 1986). However, the victim-survivor ages are especially interesting in this respect. The policy analysis discussed that victim-

[4] Average ages were calculated by firstly multiplying the midpoint of the age bracket by the frequency of cases which were found in the age bracket (e.g. 30.5 x 2476). All six of these results were then added together and divided by the overall frequency of the dataset (e.g. 16, 057). This was then rounded to 1 decimal point.

survivors of familial abuse are younger and reliant on adults, or older and reliant on family members for care and needs. However, the ages of victim-survivors in the police data challenge this as they are spread across the age bands. This suggests that familial victimisation can and does occur over the life course.

The discrepancies discussed in this section highlight clear tensions between the constructed ‘policy story’ and the realities of AFV. It can be suggested that what is publicly constructed to be ‘familial DVA’ is not what is occurring in practice.

7.3.3. The 'web’ of familial violence: complexity and multiplicity in case files.

To further explore how AFV is recorded in police systems, the case file analysis provides subsequent depth into how these relationships are constructed in police narratives. The policy presentation of the problem relies on the ‘ideal DVA relationship,’ constructed to be two intimate partners with clear directions of power and control. However, in the case files, AFV conversely involves multiplicity and complexity, challenging policy representations. This is identified in the following case file notes, where there is reference to multiple victims, witnesses, and perpetrators:

> Argument with parents during which has assaulted both parties leaving no visible injury... Argument has started due to [perpetrator] being verbally abusive towards Mum... Dad has tried to stop [perpetrator] assaulting Mum and has also been assaulted. (Case File 7, Police Force One)

> The victim is mother. The suspect is her son. Mother's partner is a witness. Mother's brothers are also witnesses... victim, partner and brothers got to victim's address. They came as a group to mediate with victim and son, as son can be aggressive. (Case File 18, Police Force Two)

> The aggrieved has called police to report an incident involving his brother and nephew, he has stated there is history between them that goes back years. (Case File 1, Police Force One)

Whereas the policy framing relies on ‘the victim’ and ‘the perpetrator,’ the case files presented a network or ‘web’ (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022) of familial relations. In these case files, DVA between family members is not simply one person exerting abuse over another but involves multiple people exerting harm (as outlined in Case File 1), multiple people receiving that harm (as outlined in Case File 7) or multiple people witnessing incidents and patterns of abuse (as outlined in Case File 18).

This contradicts the notion presented in the policy documents that relationships of familial violence and abuse emerge only as a ‘collateral’ or secondary form of violence after IPV. In the quotes presented, AFV is linked to the subsequent emergence other abusive familial relationships. For example, in Case File 7, the perpetrator harmed multiple people, thus highlighting the existence of poly-victimisation and in Case File 1, there is reference to dual perpetration. Both these case files therefore indicate a wider network of abusive familial dynamics. Therefore, AFV is not one person exerting power over the other, as presented in policy, but involves intertwined relationships consistent with Chowdhury's ‘web’ model (2021, 2023). This adds nuance to the quantitative information presented in this chapter but compounds the disadvantages of the datasets being unable to establish linkages between cases.

These overlapping relationships often take place within a wider contextual history. As can be outlined in the following excerpts, many of the case files reference that incidents had taken place previously:

> Victim and suspect are brothers, there has been a long dispute, resulted in unwanted contact on sporadic occasions. (Case file 1, Police Force One)
>
> In regard to the criminal damage... claims this to be her brother. When asked why he would do this, she was unable to give any specific reason, simply stating that they do not get on and he has 'always been like this'. (Case File 9, Police Force One)
>
> After speaking with victim and victim's wife they have explained that they have been having ongoing issues with their... son and his behaviour. (Case File 17, Police Force Two)
>
> She states that her family have been having lots of issues with her brother for some time now. (Case File 12, Police Force Two)

In Case File 9, the victim states that her family member has ‘always been like this’. Furthermore, Case File 17 indicates “ongoing issues” and Case File 1 expresses a “long dispute”. This highlights how AFV may be normalised or considered as part of the familial experience. This not only adds value to the quantitative data, which highlights the experience of victimisation over the life course, but additionally challenges the notion that AFV only occurs in a situational dynamic of vulnerability or ‘honour.’ It is clear here that AFV can be part of an ongoing pattern of control, much like IPV (Stark, 2007). This establishes that AFV should be discussed within the framework of DVA. However, due to the conflicts with the ‘ideal DVA relationship,’ AFV has arguably been neglected to be analysed in this way.

7.3.3. Arguments, disputes, and rivalry: minimisations of AFV in case files.

Further troubling is that the analysis found that relationships of AFV are often othered in case file notes. Despite the ongoing nature of some of the relationships and the fact

that they are crimed as DVA, incidents are sometimes referred to as disputes, arguments and disagreements as opposed to the specific use of ‘abuse’ or ‘violence.’ Although some cases are considered as DVA, and appropriately risk assessed, amongst the case files there is concerning use of potentially othering and minimising language. This is exemplified in the following excerpts:

> There appears to be some sibling rivalry between the two which is exacerbated by the fact both brothers live next door to each other. (Case File 6, Police Force One)

> There is tension between the 2 parties due to a bereavement. This has caused issues and the harassment against the victim. (Case File 10, Police Force One)

> There has been a verbal argument and some pushing and shoving where both parties have sustained very minimal injuries, mainly two small scratches in suspect’s case and one small scratch in brother's case consistent with a small scuffle. (Case file 11, Police Force Two)

A lot of this minimisation occurs in the context of sibling violence and abuse (as outlined in Case File 6 and Case File 1. The use of terminology such as “sibling rivalry” is significant, given this has been deemed inappropriate (Meyers, 2015). It can be suggested that this minimisation of abuse in sibling relationships may be influenced by the lack of the ‘ideal victim’ (Christie, 1986) or ‘ideal DVA relationship’ due to the overlapping directions of behaviours. Furthermore, sibling violence and abuse in the quantitative information indicated reduced gender asymmetry and was more likely to occur between similarly aged victims and perpetrators. This again may suggest that the realities of AFV conflict with the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ due to multi-faceted dynamics of power rather than the ‘power over’ matrix (Stark, 2007).

Building on the policy analysis and the construction of the 'ideal DVA relationship,' it can be suggested that the complex dynamics of AFV therefore conflict with this conceptualisation. The relationships are multi-faceted, not binary and the needs of both victim-survivors and perpetrators are entangled. There is no clear 'ideal victims and offenders' (Christie, 1986) nor is there clear, visible directions of abuse, the dynamics of power are more fluctuating. Whilst Christie (1986) discussed 'ideal victims', he also briefly discussed 'non-ideal victims' (pp. 22), those who contradicted the ideal. The complexity of AFV as established in the case files and quantitative information may mean these experiences embody 'non-ideal DVA relationship' status in their failure to fulfil the conditions of the 'ideal DVA relationship'. This may be a contributing factor as to why these relationships are routinely othered in the case files for these police forces. As indicated by Fohring (2018) this means that these relationships may not get acknowledged as abuse or problematised.

This process of othering impacts the support and response provided to victim-survivors and instances of AFV, again reflecting Fohring's (2018) discussion on the consequences of failing to achieve 'ideal victim status'. Whilst some of the case files frame the incidents as DVA, this is considered as "minimal" or "low" risk. This framing of risk and responses provided to victim-survivors are explored further in subsequent chapters; however, it is important to note. For example, in Case File 11 it states that there is "some pushing and shoving", "very minimal injuries" and "a small scuffle". These terms undermine and minimise experiences of abuse. This leads to the case file stating that:

> Due to the nature of the incident, the low level of injuries to both parties and the fact that emotions were obviously high at the time of the incident due to its nature, I do not believe it to be proportional to pursue this investigation any

> further. Words of advice will be issued to all parties, and they will be told to stay away from each other, something that should come easily to all as they have been estranged for nearly 20 years.

In this case file the lack of framing this relationship as DVA thus has consequences in the way this is responded to. The lack of obvious physical violence and abuse and the perception of the situation as emotions being "obviously high," means the situation is not perceived to warrant a DVA response. Given the overlapping nature of this situation, and the lack of visible harm, this incident therefore does not fulfil the conditions of the 'ideal DVA relationship' and is not treated as such. Consequently, rather than a concrete safety plan and safeguarding intervention, it is deemed suitable to offer "words of advice."

However, this minimisation and a tendency not to consider these incidents as DVA is not limited to the police. Rather, in the case files, victim-survivors or other family members also categorise these incidents using language such as "fight" or "argument". This is demonstrated in the following excerpts:

> Both claimed self-defence and family members who had witnessed the incident stated both had been as bad as each other. (Case File 6, Police Force One)

> Police received a 999 call from father stating that both his sons are fighting and one has just headbutted the other. (Case File 20, Police Force Two)

The use of "fighting" and "both as bad as each other" may indicate a wider public misunderstanding of DVA within the family. This raises how the wider context matters in shaping what is considered or recorded and thus responded to as DVA. As will be discussed in the limitations section of this thesis, often police call-outs do not distinguish between DVA and 'domestic incidents in the home' (Robinson et al, 2025).

Thus, it is important to listen to victim-survivors to establish their perceptions of the event.

7.4. Navigating AFV in professional practice.

7.4.1. Tensions and conflicts: understanding the complexity of AFV.

The concluding section of this chapter examines how the 'ideal DVA relationship' and the conflict with AFV is navigated by professionals and victim-survivor encounters with professionals. Aligning with the police data, the interview data identifies AFV as involving complex dynamics. This complexity is characterised by participants as often involving the presence of so-called 'complex needs,' such as substance use and mental health needs. This reflects research which has been conducted on adult family homicide (Bracewell et al, 2022) and CPV (Miles & Condry, 2014, 2015). This is outlined by the following quotes:

> They've got mental health issues, but… they're still living with parents, and they keep having ongoing issues… we keep having to go back… parents don't want to give up on their kids you know? Just because they know kids are struggling through some of their issues… struggling through drugs. Drugs is a big issue. (Mo, police officer)

> There is usually some sort of misuse... alcohol drugs or mental health issues... I think sometimes there is always another factor like even if you're talking about um, marginalised young people... or like marginalised people in general sort of, we're talking about unemployment... Might have been in prison and come out and tensions are strained between family members and arguments start. (Drew, practitioner)

> A couple of the ones that stand out to me is where both children had mental health issues… had lost their job due to mental health... was living with parents… getting you know support for that, trying to find a job. (Paris, police officer)

Professionals in the study therefore highlight that both victim-survivors and perpetrators in the context of AFV have additional vulnerabilities. As reflected by Mo, in instances of CPV, “kids are struggling” too. This conflicts with policy constructions of DVA as involving an intentional, ‘powerful’ perpetrator and a passive victim. This has been discussed in the context of CPV by Hunter and Piper (2012) who raise that CPV involves ‘complex dynamics’ (pp. 219). They raise that the black and white binaries of the criminal justice system between victim-survivors and perpetrators are often not suitable for these dynamics (pp. 220). Thus, the reality of overlapping needs between victim-survivors and perpetrators in the context of AFV, evidenced by participants in this research, contradict the notion observed in policy documents that only victim-survivors can be ‘vulnerable’ by result of age or capacity.

Similarly, it is also reflected that AFV can include wider networks of the family, which can often influence both the experiences of abuse and receiving support. As outlined in the following excerpts, participants highlight the trickiness of conceptualising or understanding familial abuse given it often involves more people than what is typically expected from DVA:

> That’s not really… how people live… You have grandmothers, mothers, … you know like sons and daughters all like living together... it can mean that sometimes families can get very, very big and then very, very complicated. (Blair, victim-survivor)

> When it's familial, you don't know who's going to say what, you don't know how many people there's gonna be, you don't know who's gonna be involved. So, I guess it's harder in that sense. (Ari, police officer)

> With family abuse cases... there's more people involved... there's kids… there might be an ongoing pattern of behaviour… um… that may affect things going forward… they’re always going to go back to each other. (Florian, police officer)

Blair highlights that families are “very, very complicated” due to families often living together well into adulthood. Blair linked this to their cultural expectations of family and multi-generational households. The existence of multi-generational households, and their impact on the experiences of abuse, challenges the framing of the nuclear family, discussed as problematic in the context of parent-to-child abuse and sibling abuse in chapter two of this thesis. The complexity of family members living together or in proximity is discussed by Ari and Florian as impacting how police conceptualise, anticipate and respond to callouts. This therefore challenges the 'ideal DVA relationship’ as relating to one victim and one perpetrator. This also adds nuance to the case files highlighting that DVA between family members often involves interlocking experiences, people, and layers of complexity. It is interesting that both police officers express a sense of unknown in responding to familial incidents. This suggests that the default assumption is responding to two people, or the ‘ideal DVA relationship’. It is clear from Ari and Blue’s perspective that AFV can thus be “harder” to respond to. The ways in which the understanding of AFV directly influence response is explored in the subsequent chapters, however, the contradiction between the framework of DVA and the realities of AFV can be attributed to causing tension for professionals on the frontline.

The complexity of AFV is further considered as intertwined not only with the physical presence of multiple family members and so-called complex needs but also with omnipresent feelings of expectation in relation to culture, community, family roles, and gendered familial roles. Blair links their experiences to cultural expectations of looking after your family and providing a space for them to live. Furthermore, the expectations of being part of a family, such as displaying loyalty, or the expectations associated with gendered familial roles, such as 'mother' impact the experiences of abuse. This is outlined in the following quotes:

> There was lots he would say… beatings as well… that is a very cultural thing... It's nothing personal per say but in our culture, it is very normal… for kids to be disciplined through ways of beating… It was because of all these cultural dynamics like the patriarchy. (Blair, victim-survivor)

> There's so many additional layers there… it's a very different kind of love than the love between... a perpetrator and a victim or a perpetrator and a survivor... It adds a lot more dimensions to the work we do… For example, a son seeking love from mum or is it actually a manipulation tactic? Like, I'm your son I know how to draw you in. (Elliot, practitioner)

> He was her only son and her only family member... she never wanted to… give a statement or anything... there was lots of complexities with that because there was massive risk involved... But then she had the unconditional love for her son. (Kendal, police officer)

As described by Elliot and Kendal, the feelings of love between victim-survivors and perpetrators in relationships of AFV are impacted by different feelings of love and loyalty in comparison to IPV. This is seen to add to experiences. Elliot alludes to the

love and intimacy as per expectation of “a son seeking love from mum,” drawing attention to how experiences of AFV, especially in victimhood, may be shaped by gendered familial roles. Both Kendal and Elliot discuss “layers,” “dimensions” and “complexities” in the context of familial violence, further highlighted by Blair who discusses how their experience of familial violence was situated within a wider context of patriarchy, culture, and gendered familial norms. This challenges the individualistic framing in policy and stresses the need to look at how experiences of AFV are shaped by wider familial and societal contexts. Specifically, AFV experiences intersect with gender, and this must be central in explanations.

However, alongside gender, family and culture, norms around upbringing and ways of doing family (Weeks, 2001) are considered to impact abuse. This can be outlined in the following quotes, where professionals feel the impact of trauma and learned behaviours is a significant and compounding factor:

> They’ve got a maladaptive coping technique and if they’ve come from violent relationships... Maybe their families were violent in the past and or maybe they’ve seen violence in, you know, other parts of their families... They’re not always scared… That’s the worst part of family violence is the fact that it’s the norm. (Jay, practitioner)

> They’ve been abusive, they’re abusive parents or they’ve been abusive grandparents and it's you know, come down through the generations. (Noah, practitioner)

This highlights the need for theoretical understandings to incorporate multiplicity and complexity, a current gap as discussed in the first chapter of this literature review. Whilst gender impacts experiences of AFV, the participants who took part in this

research feel AFV is more complex than just a feminist analytical framework. This aligns with Heise's ecological perspective (1998).

Furthermore, it is recognised however in the interviews that 'power and control' (Stark, 2007), specifically coercive control, is currently the dominant theoretical framework adopted in both policing and multi-agency practice for understanding experiences of DVA. However, in the following quotes, professionals highlight that the dynamics of AFV are different to coercive control in IPV:

> If it's partner on partner… there's the aspect of like coercion and controlling behaviour… which adds another layer of complexity to it um, where you probably wouldn't have that in like siblings or… other family members. (Blue, police officer)

> The thing that's… difficult with family domestic abuse is peoples like understanding of that… I've had referrals through to more sort of low to medium risk services rather than high risk services… when you kind of look at it it's probably more less likely to be domestic abuse because… there's not like a coercive control element necessarily… it's a bit more grey. (Alex, practitioner)

Alex highlights that familial violence, and abuse is "a bit more grey", suggesting a lack of clarity that is not present within normative constructions of DVA as an intentional desire to exert power and control over another person, usually in the context of IPV relationships. This questions the appropriateness of the 'power over' and intentionality frameworks as discussed in the policy section of this chapter and again addresses the complexity required for theorising AFV. This was discussed further by Yale, who discusses the difficulties of framing their experiences with their family within current understandings of DVA due to the stipulation of intentional behaviours:

> It is domestic abuse, but I still don't think it fully is because I think domestic abuse it tends to be intended where... it was incidental domestic abuse rather than... If you just said to him this is how it's making me feel, which we did at times, he was remorseful. Whereas the domestic abuser would be like, what you talking about? (Yale, victim-survivor)

Yale challenges the idea of the ‘active perpetrator’ or ‘big bad offender’ (Christie, 1986) and the ‘passive/ideal victim’ as discussed in policy, noting that the perpetrator in this case was remorseful and as a ‘victim-survivor’ they were able to challenge this behaviour. Yales insights suggest that the blanket application of Starks power and control model (2007), without consideration of family dynamics has overshadowed the ability to create space for conceptualising more complex forms of abuse, such as AFV. This notion of ‘powerful perpetrators’ and a ‘power over’ is clearly much more complex and fluid in the context of families in this study.

This is exemplified further by River who highlights that there is more to look at within the context of AFV than just power and control:

> We still look at power and control it’s a fundamental part of a feminist approach in which we apply... but there’s other aspects where we’re looking at their dependency on their parent and the rejection that they’re feeling and a whole host of different things. (River, practitioner).

It is therefore clear that the realities of AFV, as discussed both in the interviews here and in the case files previously, conflict with the 'ideal DVA relationship.’ Experiences are compounded by multiple factors and can be experienced beyond binary relationships. Control and abuse are multi-faceted and fluid and must consider

relational dynamics. The lack of acknowledgment of these impacts not only the way AFV is understood but also support offered to victim-survivors.

7.4.2. A lack of language and name for experiences of AFV.

It is thus clear that AFV is different to the 'policy story' of both AFV and the 'ideal DVA relationship' as presented in current legislation guidelines. However, this conflict impacts professional language and the ability to 'name' and problematise experiences of AFV. For example, as demonstrated by Aspen, they were unaware that AFV constituted DVA until they were required to respond to these relationships within their practice:

> When I did training, it was more based on partner relationships domestics... I actually didn't realise that domestics include family members as well. So, a bit more clarification on that and like things we can do when it's family members would be useful as it's much harder than like partner relationships I believe. (Aspen, police officer)

Aspen indicates that training tends to be orientated on responding to IPV. Furthermore, professionals highlight that AFV is not normally what they associate, or have been taught to associate, with DVA. Like a quote stated by Ari previously in this chapter, Aspen refers to AFV being "much harder" to understand and respond to than IPV. This further demonstrates a sense of 'othering' and complexity, that will be explored further in chapter nine. Aspen's experience of having limited operational knowledge and training about the dynamics of AFV and they present are explored by other participants. As indicated in the following quotes, AFV is often missing in or lacks fit within current conceptualisations of DVA:

> I suppose it's the same… um issue where we've had an idea as society, we've had an idea of what abuse is and familial abuse doesn't particularly… fit that. (Alex, practitioner)

> I wonder if it's just a bit of its always kind of a bit of an afterthought… You've got like the models that we have, you know, you've got the power and control wheel… and it feels like they were really designed for… partner relationships. (Bailey, practitioner)

> I think the term is a bit too loose. I think, um, especially when, um, you're going well, it's ex partners mums sisters… that is still a domestic by the nature of it... then you go and see it but it's not the same risk and you're not dealing with it like that. (Ari, police officer)

As outlined by Bailey and Alex, there is a sense that experiences of familial violence and abuse do not "fit" or are an "afterthought." This represents the lack of fit discussed by Holt and Retford (2013) between conceptualisation of power and control, namely the 'power over' reliance, and familial violence and abuse (pp. 370). This reflects discussions in the case file section of this chapter where AFV was routinely othered by virtue of being a 'non ideal DVA relationship'. Ari suggests that the term DVA "is a bit too loose," questioning whether the use of umbrella terminology is appropriate. It is thus unclear whether AFV should be subsumed within the definition of DVA or whether it needs to be considered a distinct form of abuse.

Bailey further highlights the 'unintended consequences' (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) of the use of the theoretical conceptualisation of the power and control framework in practice, suggesting this is made for "partner relationships", or the 'ideal DVA relationship'. This questions whether AFV can be framed as a form of DVA within this

framework, despite being gendered in nature (with women being disproportionately victimised), as reflected by the quantitative statistics presented in this chapter. Therefore, AFV should share similarities with the gendered nature of 'power and control' (Stark, 2007) but there lacks sufficient understanding of what impact the intersection of a family relationship in this framework has. This leaves AFV without a stable framework for problematising or acknowledging experiences as abuse. This is significant as it may prevent victim-survivors from achieving catharsis or practical benefits such as referrals to support services (Fohring, 2018).

It is of furthermore significance that interview participants suggested that the typical expectation of DVA relationships is IPV. As indicated in the quotes below, there are very different perceptions which exist for AFV in comparison to the expectation of DVA:

> Sometimes with family I think some people might lean towards more thinking… it's... like a fifty fifty tit for tat… disputes rather than like a partner… domestic violence incident, whereas there's a vulnerable victim who needs to be safeguarded… from this offender and we need to do everything we can... we have to um protect that person… In families… just you two separate. (Blue, police officer).

> The general norm and… the general bias… like If you say domestic, you instantly think man versus woman, right? (Ezra, police officer)

> I've noticed anyway when it is two women... I think they just think they're just… they're just as bad as each other, they're just arguing and it's just got a bit out of hand… I've never dealt with two males actually, but I can imagine that would be taken more seriously because they're... physically stronger and are more capable of um hurting each other. (Ali, practitioner)

In the quantitative police data previously discussed in this chapter, whilst AFV is gendered, it is less so than IPV. Furthermore, there is a notable minority of male-to-male or female-to-female perpetration. As discussed by Ali has potentially prevented AFV from being considered as the same phenomenon as DVA. Ali suggests that especially when it is two men, there is the presumption that AFV is 'situational couple violence' rather than 'intimate terrorism' (Johnson, 1995, 2006). In comparison to 'intimate terrorism', 'situational couple violence' is, although a significant form of violence, lacks the patterns of control, escalation, stalking, and intimidation which are often defining pillars of DVA (Kelly & Johnson, 2008:486). This speaks to the lack of typical conceptualisations of coercive control in relationships of AFV discussed by interviewees in this chapter.

Significantly, Johnson (2006, 2010) discusses how victim-survivors in situational couple violence may not always present as fearful. This, as has been discussed, may be the case in AFV as behaviours may be normalised as part of the family experience. This further problematises the reliance on an intentional perpetrator, or 'big bad offender' (Christie, 1986), as discussed in the policy section. Here a perpetrator of DVA attempts to gain total control over a weak, passive, 'ideal victim' and this imbalance of power is foundational for defining incidents as DVA. However, in the context of AFV, victim-survivors and perpetrators may have more blurry power dynamics and relationships may involve overlapping forms of violence. Therefore, the lack of fear perceived in victim-survivors of AFV and the unclear directions of power result in these relationships being understood, and treated, differently by the multi-agency and police perspective. As indicated in the quotes, AFV relationships end up not being taken as "seriously" or considered to be "just as bad as each other." This is exemplified further by Blue who suggests that whilst IPV might involve a "vulnerable victim" who needs

“safeguarded”, AFV and family violence often results in a “tit for tat” mentality where victim-survivors and perpetrators are just recommended to separate.

Whilst the ‘policy story’ of DVA is presented as gender neutral, these quotes further display how the legacies of coercive control have influenced public understanding. Starks (2007) conceptualisation is an explicitly gendered formation concentrated on IPV, therefore, as Ezra alludes to, this foundational understanding underpins professional understandings. Whilst AFV is, a gendered relationship, the dynamics and relations of gender are less understood and more complicated. As Ezra suggests the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) is “man versus woman” and therefore any dynamics situated outside of this are ‘othered.’ This is problematic as, as Ali suggests, this leads to AFV relationships being relegated to harmful assumptions that “they’re just as bad as each other.”

What is especially interesting from Ali’s perspective is that the othering of AFV is additionally impacted by gendered attitudes. Ali suggests that whilst if two female family members are experiencing an abusive situation, this dynamic would be seen as situational couple violence, it would be different if it were to be two men. Ali believes that if two men were experiencing an abusive situation, this would be treated with more severity. Ali attributes this to the fact men would be seen as “physically stronger” and therefore “more capable... of hurting each other.” This again demonstrates the focus on physical violence and abuse and ‘powerful perpetrators’ inherent in the ‘ideal DVA relationship.’

There are other assumptions forwarded by participants in this study as common in conceptualising AFV. Building on Ali’s perspective about AFV sometimes being seen

as “they’re both as bad as each other,” participants also suggested that AFV was still considered as a personal, family, or civil matter:

> Yeah, it's that private… you know, they’ve got to keep it private... under the wraps… If you’re talking about... other family members, uncles, cousins whatever, its just treated in a very different way… You wouldn’t charge a cousin if they like hit their other cousin... You wouldn’t see that as domestic abuse, would you? You’d just see it as an assault. (Aubrey, practitioner)

> I think it can come across as like a civil matter or… it's just two adults that have just had too much to drink. (Fran, practitioner)

> It's sort of generally seen as something internal within the family that they have to deal with themselves... For society, people… it's just another family argument. There's that phrase knocking around, like that or just thinking it’s another argument. That is a phrase I’ve heard at jobs... It’s not that like lack of understanding per say, you know I think they know it exists but… it's just sort of a… family thing that happens. (Paris, police officer)

> If there's anything on the news with... domestic abuse, it's always partners... If we can like take a step back and think about like um the actual definitions. Like, obviously it’s just personally connected and sixteen and over so it could be um anyone really um but I don't think that sort of definition is out as wide as it should be… because like say children who are still living in a home... they might not realise that it is domestic violence to be fair. (Sunny, police officer)

Sunny and Paris allude to a wider public perception of DVA and ‘the family.’ Sunny suggests a wider lack of understanding that AFV is legally DVA resulting in victim-survivors not realising their experiences constitute abuse. However, Paris suggests

that the lack of recognition of AFV as DVA is also due to familial norms, highlighting that this is seen as a "family thing that happens." This alludes to how the complexities of intergenerational transmission and family norms, as well as other intersecting factors, impact upon both experiences of AFV and the subsequent ability to identify AFV. As presented by Aubrey and Fran, AFV is still often treated by police and multi-agency staff as a civil matter (Carrillo, 2021) rather than a criminal justice matter. Aubrey suggests that this is especially the case in extended family violence, such as cousins. The use of language framing AFV as a personal, family, or civil issue suggests that the successes of radical feminism in reframing DVA as a social problem has only been in the context of IPV. Arguably, AFV has not been given the same 'problem' status. It can be interpreted then in this study that the ability to identity and respond to AFV is compounded by societal perceptions of the family, familial norms (which are often gendered) as well as absences in legal frameworks.

These entangled assumptions of both the family and DVA lead to implications for practice. As suggested by Aubrey previously, abuse between family members may just be treated as a general assault as opposed to being investigated as a form of DVA. This shows the discursive, real-world influence of the 'ideal DVA relationship' on practice and response. Eden and Morgan demonstrate this further:

> Because it is a family member and it's… oh, like that's family, oh family is complicated, let's leave them to their own devices but if this was an external third party like police and social care would be all over that. (Eden, practitioner)

> A lot of services understand domestic abuse as intimate partner abuse um... but I think a lot of the time… they're like... if it's your child abusing you then maybe it's just your parenting... I have um heard that. (Morgan, practitioner)

Morgans perspective of familial roles and expectations have been similarly identified in literature on CPV, with Holt (2022) referencing the ‘double stigma’ of being both a failed parent and a victim-survivor. Eden's suggestion builds on this and displays how these assumptions of what family is and how families behave may impact the support offered. For example, the policy section of this chapter discusses how family is assumed to be a safe space and this is reflected in Edens perspective. They highlight that the assumptions tied to understandings of family mean professionals are more likely to “leave them to their own devices” rather than treat them with appropriate concern or perhaps apply positive action and safeguarding. Eden demonstrates their belief that AFV is even treated differently to stranger violence.

Jesse further adds nuance to why AFV is routinely misunderstood, suggesting that the preconceptions regarding what is and what is not DVA impacts data capture. Jesse feels that when they worked in victim support, AFV was often mis recorded by the police in referrals to victim services:

> I don’t think they actually were recording them accordingly... They would call this [Grievous Bodily Harm] they wouldn’t call this domestic violence slash [Grievous Bodily Harm] ... on the referral they would not say domestic violence they were saying only… grievous bodily harm. They were not saying domestic violence, and it was domestic violence because he hit his mother. (Jesse, practitioner)

This demonstrates how official records or representations of DVA may be impacted by discursive perceptions. If AFV is recorded as assault, or defined within stranger violence, this fails to be counted in official representations of DVA. This silence was further constructed by interview participants to be exacerbated by the fact not only

does AFV lack adequate policy and cultural attention but lacks a stable, consistent definitional name in practice. As indicated in the following quotes, professionals suggest that training and organisational conversations tends to be predominantly concentrated on IPV:

> “The... hot topic... is... the epidemic is violence against women and girls.... so… training is mainly focused around intimate partner... There is training on siblings, daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, aunty, nephew… but in terms of that those dynamics, I would say it's a lot more lacking than it is with intimate partner. (Ezra, police officer)

> We don’t have any specific worker that’s like an expert in that kind of abuse... I never saw any training material or any kind of you know information about that specific kind of abuse... in my career so far. (Bailey, practitioner)

> All training seems to be catered around the intimate relationship… the adult relationship is sort of bolted on… like as an extra…. just to be mindful you know that this… this can happen as well. So, I don't recall ever receiving any specific training… it was all sort of under the domestic abuse umbrella… It would be talked... about briefly, but predominantly it's the intimate partner relationships. (Kendal, police officer)

Ezra's suggestion alludes to the wider national policy context surrounding Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). This can be seen as referencing the Labour governments aim to eliminate this in ten years (Labour Government, 2024) and the upgrade of VAWG to a policing priority (NPCC, 2023). Ezra suggests that AFV is not understood to fall within this conversation and is therefore not constructed as a priority for police or for multi-agency safeguarding partnerships.

This lack of emphasis on AFV has further implications for victim-survivors. Although professional support and interactions is the focus of the third findings chapter, as outlined by Yale below, this lack of language or 'name' can impact whether support is offered:

> A part of me does think I was missed in it all, you know. Am I resentful to that? Probably not, because... I was probably stronger than those... there were more important people to focus on at that point. It's not that I was missed… it was that I was coping better. (Yale, victim-survivor).

Yale suggests that during their experiences of abuse, they were often 'missed' by support services and professionals. They attributed this to wider experiences within the family as well as the fact their experiences contradict what is normally indicated to be DVA. They reference that their status as "coping better" than others played a contributing factor within this. This alludes to Yale not fulfilling the 'ideal victim' trope (Christie, 1986) by presenting a 'self' (Goffman, 1959) that is strong and coping rather than weak and passive and thus in need of help.

Professionals in the study feel that it is not just necessarily that there is a lack of language amongst professionals, but also, the absence of a nuanced understanding of AFV impacts the ability for victim-survivors to report abuse. As reflected by Fran:

> They didn't always have the understanding of this is what's been happening and be able to link that… and call that abuse. (Fran, practitioner)

Fran suggests that there is a lack of an understanding for victim-survivors to demonstrate their experiences as abuse or use the legal framework of DVA to articulate their experiences. This was something discussed by victim-survivors in the interviews, who often reflected that they were not always able to speak out or frame

their experiences within the context of DVA. This can be alluded to within the following quotes:

> Theres lots of stuff that… might have certain terms or associations like legal associations, cultural associations in the UK that have like a label or whatever but they don't exist in [my culture]… and also there are cultural expectations that exist in [my culture] that don't exist in the UK so it all kind of creates a melting point of stuff that aren't really recognised. (Blair, victim-survivor)

> Because it's so close and being family, it's hard to label it as that. (Yale, victim survivor)

> I didn't even know like this had a name to it until I sat my [education] degree and that was the moment I realised oh my gosh, that's what it was. (Lex, victim-survivor)

These quotes indicate clear barriers to problematising experiences of AFV. Lex suggests that they were "totally unaware" that this was classed as DVA, Blair suggests that there are cultural and familial differences in naming experiences as abuse and Yale suggests that due to the intimacy of 'the family,' naming these experiences as abuse is a process fraught with tension. This highlights both the difficulty of embedding AFV within an umbrella term of DVA as well as the current conceptual breadths between what is understood to be DVA and the reality of AFV. This links into what has been discussed previously about the barriers to understanding and responding to AFV as a form of DVA being impacted by wider societal, cultural, and familial norms.

However, within Lex's perspective it is clear that discovering a 'name' for experiences of abuse held emotional significance. Lex spoke about "the moment" of realisation. Red, demonstrates this further:

> Red: She made a reference to like, well, when you have a narcissistic [parent] and I was like, what sorry? And after that... I googled... I felt like I'd come home like all these people were saying, and I was like. Oh. My. God.
>
> Interviewer: I imagine that must have felt quite powerful to be given that language?
>
> Red: Yeah, completely. And that's all really new, I think that's all in the last 10 years. And before that, I just thought I was insane. So now you know, I can say I'm a cycle breaker. (Red, victim-survivor)

The ‘light bulb moment’ highlights the power of naming experiences (Hearn, 1992) and how attaching a label can help problematise experiences of abuse between family members and provide the cathartic experiences of articulation. As discussed by Red, being provided a name allowed for a realisation and release of internalised shame. Therefore, overshadowing AFV within a focus on IPV risks causing harm and prevents both supports being extended by professionals and catharsis for those impacted by these experiences of abuse.

7.5. Conclusion.

The findings in this chapter suggest that DVA is primarily framed in policy, and thus subsequently public understanding, as problem of two people, usually a heterosexual couple, locked in an imbalance of power. Perpetrators intentionally inflict power and control over a passive victim. This creates an ‘ideal DVA relationship’ (Christie, 1986). Comparatively, AFV is constructed as ‘either’ an issue of vulnerability and cultural differences ‘or’ as a related output from IPV.

This chapter highlights that the ‘ideal DVA relationship' influences how recording systems capture relationships and the way frontline practice is organised. Police systems are precipitated on this binary and do not easily allow for the recording of multiple victims, perpetrators, or witnesses. Furthermore, relationships of AFV are recorded inconsistently, compounding a lack of understanding of these relationships present as forms of DVA. In the case files, AFV includes complex dynamics, relationships and overlapping vulnerabilities. These dynamics challenge the policy presentation of DVA. Significantly, this leads to AFV often being undermined or othered through reporting as a ‘non ideal relationship’ (Fohring, 2018).

This notion that AFV is a more complex phenomenon and presents differently to what is typically understood as DVA was further evidenced in the interviews. Interviewees demonstrated the intersecting influence of gender, family norms, so-called complex needs and vulnerabilities, multiple people and familial expectations. Their accounts of the realities of AFV challenge the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of the ‘ideal DVA relationship’. This has consequences for the way both professionals and victim-survivors can articulate experiences. This is exacerbated by the lack of training and knowledge on AFV within police and multi-agency teams, often highlighted as especially scarce in comparison to IPV. The lack of name for AFV continues its status as ‘the other’ or the ‘non ideal relationship’. This speaks to the power of policy, public stories and discourse and their influence on both organisational and interactional realms.

This chapter offers some answers for the first research question of this thesis and creates a foundational understanding for how AFV has been constructed within the framework of DVA, and the consequences for recording and navigating these relationships within practice.

Chapter Eight: Findings – Risk and risk assessment in the context of AFV.

8.1. Introduction.

This chapter represents the second of the three findings' chapters and addresses the second research question. As discussed in the literature review, risk, risk identification, and risk assessment have become increasingly discussed in academia, practice, and policy. Risk assessment interactions are often a critical point in victim-survivor journeys, symbolising a formal acknowledgement of their experiences. Therefore, it is crucial that these are explored.

This chapter firstly outlines the construction of risk on the policy level, highlighting how this constructs risk as an escalating factor strongly associated with IPV. Building on the 'ideal DVA relationship' discussed in the last chapter, this chapter argues policy conflates risk with heteronormative IPV. This chapter then highlights how this construction of risk, and what is expected from risk assessment, impacts the way AFV and associated risk factors are recorded in police risk assessments. The chapter then discusses how risk assessment and risk was navigated on the frontline in the context of responding to AFV relationships, again charting the direction of policy influence.

8.2. The 'policy story' of risk.

8.2.1. Risk as an escalating harm or crisis point.

In the policy documents examined, discussions of 'risk' or 'being at-risk' are often situated within the context of future events or incidents that may be harmful or an escalation of abusive behaviours. As is highlighted in the excerpts below, risk is constructed as something which grows, escalates or increases in nature:

> Early intervention by the voluntary sector and statutory agencies working together can help to protect adults and children *from further harm,* as well as preventing *escalation and recurrence* of abuse. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> Consideration must also be given to whether B should be told that information about him/her may be disclosed to the applicant. Such a decision must be based on an assessment of *risk of harm* to A... consideration must be given on whether seeking representations from B *would have potential to escalate the risk of harm* to A. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> Victims can experience these abusive behaviours simultaneously, they may occur *quickly and intensely*, or they *may develop and build gradually.* (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

As identified in the quote from the Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Guidance, abuse is seen to occur either “quickly or intensely” or “gradually” but either way increases in severity. This is often associated with the eventuality of “further harm” presented. These quotations mirror the literature review discussions on the understanding of risk as an artefact or object which needs to be managed to prevent further harm (Kemshall, 2003).

Interestingly, however, there are some discrepancies between the documents regarding the presentation and understanding of risk. The guidance pertaining to DVPN’s and DVPO’s describe risk as “ongoing” rather than ‘increasing’, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

> A Domestic Violence Protection Notice and subsequent Order are aimed at perpetrators who present an *on-going risk* of violence. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance, emphasis own)

This reflects Walklate's (1999) assertion that the definition of risk is inconsistent and changeable. However, across all documents there is still a clear conflation between risk and further harm. For example, the quote previously presented references the "risk of violence." This furthermore often comes to fruition when the documents discussed the eventuality of homicide or significant physical violence. To some extent this therefore embodies the 'Risk Society' perspective and definition of risk (Beck, 1999). As outlined in the following quotes:

> Non-fatal strangulation can be used as a form of assault in domestic abuse, and a history of strangulation *can increase the risk of an eventual fatality.* (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> Given the complex nature of domestic abuse, a multi-agency response is critical to identifying victims and their families at an early stage and *before abuse reaches a crisis point.* (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) are independent professional advisors that work with victims *from the point of crisis* to assess the level of risk. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)

In these excerpts, experiences of physical harm are seen to "increase" the likelihood of "eventual fatality," therefore mirroring the notion that risk is something which

incrementally increases until a “crisis point” is reached. This echoes both the idea of risk as an event, as exemplified in Becks ‘the risk society’ (Beck, 1999) as well as the homicide timeline, as constructed by Monckton-Smith (2019). However, this reference to “eventual” fatality construes risk as what Walklate and Mythen (2011) critically highlight as a “forensic object” (pp. 109). Risk is seen as an event or something that *will* happen rather than an experiential, embodied sense of ‘something not quite right’ (Barlow et al, 2021). This neglects the complexity of AFV as experiences of abuse may be normalised as part of the family system (Gelles, 1997), may be experienced continually across the life course (Holt, 2021; Warren et al, 2023), or, as evidenced in the previous chapter, may be situated within a wider ‘web’ (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022) of familial relations, norms and networks of abuse. In these contexts, abusive behaviours may not be incremental but rather sustained and endured. There is currently no agreed definition of what risk is, however, the language in policy is inadvertently guiding practitioners to look at one experience of risk, namely that this is conflated with escalations of physical harm and eventualities of homicide.

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance further discusses that the risk of harm must be a “credible risk.” It is unclear what is meant by ‘credible,’ however, as outlined in the following excerpts, ‘high-risk’ in the policy documents, often relies on physical conceptualisations of ‘harm’:

> Domestic abuse *causes untold harm* which can have *devastating impacts* on victims and their families. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> Domestic abuse is a *high harm, high volume crime* that remains largely hidden. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> In deciding whether to make a DAPO without notice, the court must have regard to all the circumstances, including: any risk that the perpetrator will cause *significant harm* to the victim if the DAPO is not made. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> The AO may issue a DVPN to P if they have reasonable grounds for believing that... P has been violent towards or has threatened violence... the risk of harm is *too great* to allow P to return to the address. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance, emphasis own)

Risk is therefore constructed through language such as “devastating,” “untold,” “great” and “significant.” This again ignores the embodied or intuitive feelings that something may not be quite right (Barlow & Walklate, 2021). Attention is drawn on the potentiality of a severe or significant event and notably this is conflated with physical incidents. As identified previously, as well as risk being conflated with ‘devastation,’ there is also a focus on homicide or a crisis point.’ This construes imagery of emergencies, harm, and therefore physical violence. Consequently, risk is not just seen as an increase in abuse but an escalation *into* severe incidents of physical violence. This has been raised as problematic in academic research, with Barlow and Walklate (2021) highlighting that professional bodies such as the police continue to operate on physical and visible signs of being-at-risk.

The emphasis on physical harms and visible risk, whilst problematic for conceptualising all abusive relationships, is especially problematic for AFV given research has indicated that abuse within the family may often take on different forms

or dynamics. For example, Bows et al (2025) discusses that the abuse of older adults may often involve enduring, sometimes subtle, financial and economic control. Similarly, research on CPV has highlighted that this may involve sudden outbursts of threats or intimidation (Condry & Miles, 2013b, Rogers & Ashworth, 2024) rather than a gradual building of severity or continuity. This raises questions over whether the 'policy story' of risk adequately reflects the experiences of AFV and infers that this is based again on a conflated understanding with 'the ideal DVA relationship.'

8.2.2. Risk as a heteronormative, intimate partner experience.

Within the documents, risk is not only associated with an escalation into physical harm, but these behaviours are often directly associated with IPV. As can be identified in the following excerpt, separation, non-fatal strangulation and coercive control are framed as a high-harm behaviours:

> The research also identified that a history of domestic abuse, non-fatal strangulation and attempts to separate are indicators of controlling or coercive behaviour, and *risk factors for both intimate partner homicide* and suspected victim suicide. This suggests that cases of *high-risk domestic abuse, often characterised by control or coercion,* might end in either a homicide or suspected victim suicide. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

In this quote there is also a direct conflation with "intimate partner homicide." By paying attention to the silences (Bacchi, 2009), it becomes unclear from this quote, and wider policy, whether these experiences (separation, non-fatal strangulation, history of DVA and coercive control) are only risk factors for intimate partner homicide or whether they can be applied as risk factors to other relationship contexts, such as AFV.

The reference to separation is particularly important as throughout the policy documents, separation is often seen to contribute to the escalation of abuse or an increase in risk:

> The post-separation period carries a *high risk* of violence for victims, including children. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance, emphasis own)
>
> As a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse can start, continue, or *escalate post-separation in the case of intimate partners.* (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> Abuse can continue or intensify when a relationship has ended or is in the process of ending. This can be a very dangerous time for a victim including an increased risk to their physical safety... Separation can raise both the likelihood and consequences of risk because of the perpetrator's perceived lack of control. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

Separation is thus linked to escalating harm and high-risk, however, this is only in the context of IPV. There lacks a discussion of if and how separation and escalation is experienced within other relationships incorporated in the legal definition of DVA. This again reinforces the presence of the 'ideal DVA relationship.' Whilst post-separation abuse is terrifying for any context, if it is associated with IPV as a key risk factor, risk is consequently conflated with IPV. This furthermore places 'the problem' as pertaining to the individual relationship, whether that be during a relationship or post-relationship, as opposed to the wider societal and structural context. This reflects a misapplication of Stark's (2007) reliance on human rights frameworks (Libal & Parkeh, 2019).

The emphasis on non-fatal strangulation, stalking and coercive control as ‘high risk behaviours’ are discussed throughout the documents. These are often presented as high-risk due to their relationship to serious harm, homicide, and fatality. As can be reflected in the following quotes:

> Non-fatal strangulation can be used as a form of assault in domestic abuse, and a history of strangulation can increase the risk of an eventual fatality. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

> The DVDS was introduced to set out procedures that could be used by the police to disclose information about previous violent or abusive offending, including emotional abuse, controlling or coercive behaviour, or economic abuse by an individual, where this may help protect their partner or ex-partner, and any relevant children. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Guidance Statutory Guidance)

> The College of Policing have issued principles to assist forces in the identification, assessment and management of serial or potentially dangerous domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Guidance Statutory Guidance)

> Stalking has also been identified as a common feature within domestic suicides. To mitigate risk, it is imperative that stalkers are identified as early as possible (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

> Stalking behaviours are high-risk and this behaviour must be identified at the earliest opportunity. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

However, as discussed previously it is unclear how these risk factors manifest or impact family relationships. This reinforces the discussion in the previous chapter

regarding IPV being constructed as ‘the problem,’ namely a conceptualisation of IPV that fulfils the conditions of the ‘ideal DVA relationship.’ This subsequently and inadvertently reinforces it is IPV that is a high-risk form of DVA.

This conflation between IPV is further identified in the policy documents. As outlined below, ‘high-risk’ and risk management are often discussed when pregnancy or children are present in abusive relationships:

> The ongoing management of a DAPO and the risk posed to the victim and their children requires a proactive multi-agency approach at all stages. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)
>
> It is important to remember that the purpose of the DVDS is to facilitate disclosure where necessary in order to protect a potential victim, and any relevant children from harm. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory (DVDS) Guidance)
>
> The post-separation period carries a high risk of violence for victims, including children. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)
>
> Being pregnant may put women at increased risk of abuse. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

This mirrors what Ewin et al (2020) find in the context of protection orders, highlighting that the presence of children often directly influences judgements of harm. Similarly, Turner et al (2019) raise that many questions on the DASH RIC focus on children. This thus arguably construes heterosexual relationships as entangled within the definition of risk. However, the presence of children, and their impact on ‘risk’ or potential for significant harm, is still conflicted in literature with Myhill and Hohl (2016) finding that

risk factors such as threatening to hurt children or hurting children were often low in prevalence in high-risk cases. Whilst this thesis does not minimise the complicating and impossible decisions and fear that pregnancy and child contact may have on experiencing relationships of IPV, it must be acknowledged we do not know how the presence of children, pregnancy or separation may impact experiences of AFV. 'Risk factors' in policy are therefore founded on a partial knowledge, notably located within a presumption that DVA is IPV. This reinforces the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of the 'ideal DVA relationship'. Furthermore, these risk factors are heteronormative in nature and presume the experience of a heteronormative relationship – further problematic for LGBTQIA+ communities, a potential prevalent community in the experience of familial violence (Gangoli et al, 2023).

8.2.3. Encouraging the gaze of risk assessment.

In the documents, professionals undertaking risk assessment are therefore inadvertently encouraged to focus on visible harm or heteronormative risk factors such as coercive control, children, pregnancy, or separation. It is unclear how to risk assess familial relationships and whether these risk factors are similarly applicable.

Risk assessment in the policy documents is subsequently focused on the individual relationship and identifying harm in these relationships rather than wider contextual factors:

> The senior police officer will need to consider other relevant information and evidence, such as any incident reports from *previous call outs, including those against other individuals to be protected,* any intelligence from other agencies or organisations. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)

> In identifying controlling or coercive behaviour, *it is important to consider the context* in which the behaviour is taking place, in particular: *The relationship history between the victim and the perpetrator.* (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

In these quotes there is an emphasis on considering the past behaviour of the perpetrator, previous incidents of DVA or previous criminal behaviours. This is often focused on prior offending in the context of current or previous IPV relationships. There is a clear absence of consideration for how risk assessment can incorporate AFV and what historical incidents impact abuse for these relationships.

However, across the policy documents, there is also an emphasis on the dynamic, changing, and fluctuating experience of risk, which is appreciated and helpful for conceptualisations of risk. As indicated in the following excerpts, risk assessment is constructed as a dynamic process of decision-making and rapport that centralises the needs and wishes of individual victim-survivors:

> Any assessment process should *recognise and allow for fluctuations in the victim's needs and safety* and should be informed by the assessment provided by the specialist domestic abuse service. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> It should be noted that *risk is not static, and assessment should be ongoing* throughout the process. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> It is important at this stage to *review the risk assessment* and the level of risk posed by the alleged perpetrator to the victim / children / vulnerable persons.

(Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)

Critical to the success of the scheme is the need for ongoing safety planning throughout the process and the need for a formal risk assessment to be *reviewed at every stage* in the disclosure process. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

In these excerpts, there is an emphasis on the idea that risk is not static. This contradicts the construction of risk as a static or 'forensic concept' as discussed previously within this chapter. On the contrary, this is a well-nuanced picture of risk which encourages a holistic assessment of the wider context which may shape an abusive relationship. This is beneficial for AFV given the intersection with family, so-called complex needs and wider 'web-like' (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022) dynamics discussed in the previous chapter.

Furthermore, risk assessment is considered as a way to gather the bigger picture or obtain a contextual understanding. There are further references to holistic consideration as well as discussions on the use of professional judgement. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

Risk assessments should *holistically encompass specialist professional judgement,* survivor perceptions of risk, along with additional indicators relevant to minority groups. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

It is essential that services work together to identify and respond coherently *and take into account the whole picture of a domestic abuse context.* (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

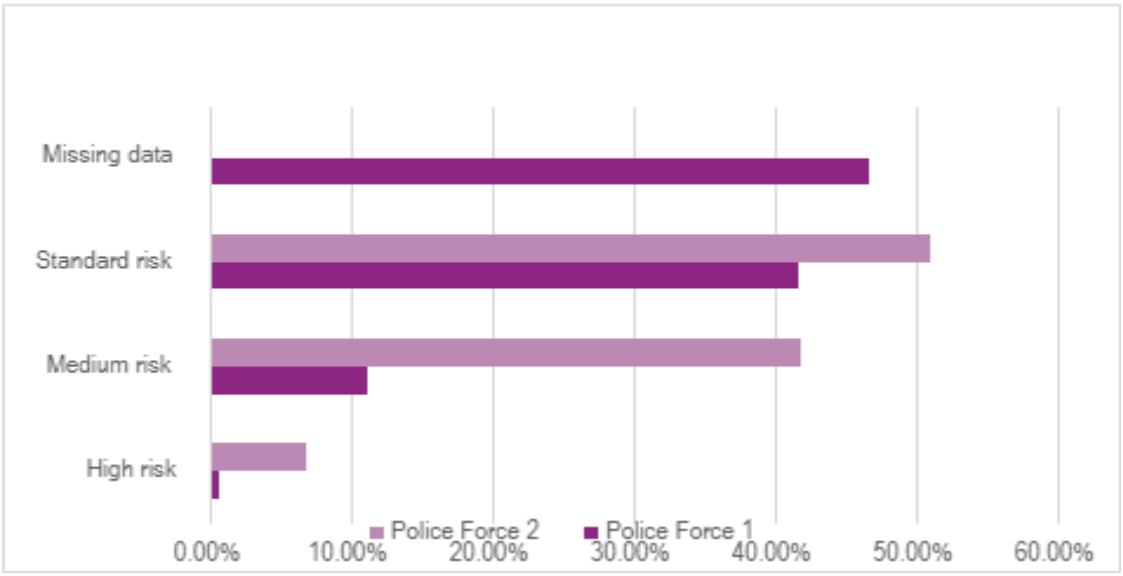
> It is important for police officers to use *professional curiosity and look beyond what may be presented to them* at the scene, in order to identify any patterns of behaviour. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

The emphasis on context, professional curiosity, additional barriers, and victim-survivor perceptions of risk is beneficial for AFV as it encourages looking beyond the immediate scene or circumstance of abuse. As discussed in the previous chapter, AFV may be bound with the wider networks of family, community, and society so an understanding of 'context' is important. Specifically, the emphasis on survivor perceptions of risk is important victim-survivors often have accurate perceptions of their own safety and risk (Barlow & Walklate, 2021). This is especially beneficial for AFV given experiences of abuse may be normalised, concealed by the 'public story' of IPV (Donovan & Hester, 2014) or victim-survivors may lack the language to articulate their experiences, as indicated in chapter seven. Furthermore, should 'risk' be conflated with IPV, AFV may not be initially considered as inherently 'risky'. Therefore, positioning victim-survivors' perceptions at the forefront of risk assessment can help to counter these limitations.

8.3. Police records of AFV and risk.

8.3.1. Risk gradings for AFV.

To understand how relationships of AFV are risk graded, assessed, and determined in organisations, and whether this is influenced by policy narratives, the research used the quantitative data. Across both police datasets, most cases of AFV are graded as standard risk:



Graph 3: Risk grading by police force.

There is a large amount of missing data in relation to risk assessments for Police Force One presented in this graph. For this police force, a risk assessment is completed at every DVA call-out or incident in line with force policy. For some cases, a completed risk assessment for this force would generate its own non-crime occurrence. This would be linked within the police force system. However, the data provided for this research included the primary crime and not the linked occurrence. Therefore, whilst it appears much of the data is missing, this is due to the dataset provided and does not reflect the forces completion rates. Stalking and harassment crimes are disproportionately impacted by this as they are more likely to be recorded as secondary crimes. This was under the guidance of the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR)[5] , in place at the time in which the data was gathered, which specified that behavioural crimes should be recorded in addition to a primary offence. This adds

[5] Home Office counting rules provide guidance for police forces in recording crimes. Further information about Home Office Counting Rules can be accessed on the following web page: Home Office Crime Recording Rules for frontline officers, staff - GOV.UK.

nuance to the assertion that recording practices and indeed risk assessment practice, are often inconsistent across different forces. This highlights that despite the attempts to streamline the assessment of DVA, such as through the DASH RIC and the DARA, recording is impacted by local and national contexts. This further alludes to what Myhill et al (2023) refer to as ‘the officer effect’, whereby, the impact of an individual's training, experience and personal biases may impact risk assessment scores as well as local processes.

It is however interesting that AFV is most likely to generate a standard risk across the datasets. The standard grading results may be due to the fact officers are more likely to judge the risk of the case depending on the obvious or visible characteristics on the scene (Robinson et al, 2016b). Whilst this has implications for the assessment of non-physical abuse, such as coercive control as discussed by Barlow et al (2020), it can be argued that perhaps that policy discourse holds some sway here. Should police be operating under the directive gaze of the ‘ideal DVA relationship,’ they may be preoccupied with identifying risks factors associated with this context. This could include pregnancy, separation, physical violence, non-fatal strangulation, child contact or stalking as outlined in this chapter. Therefore, judgements of risk may be based on whether these risk factors or facets of the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ are immediately present.

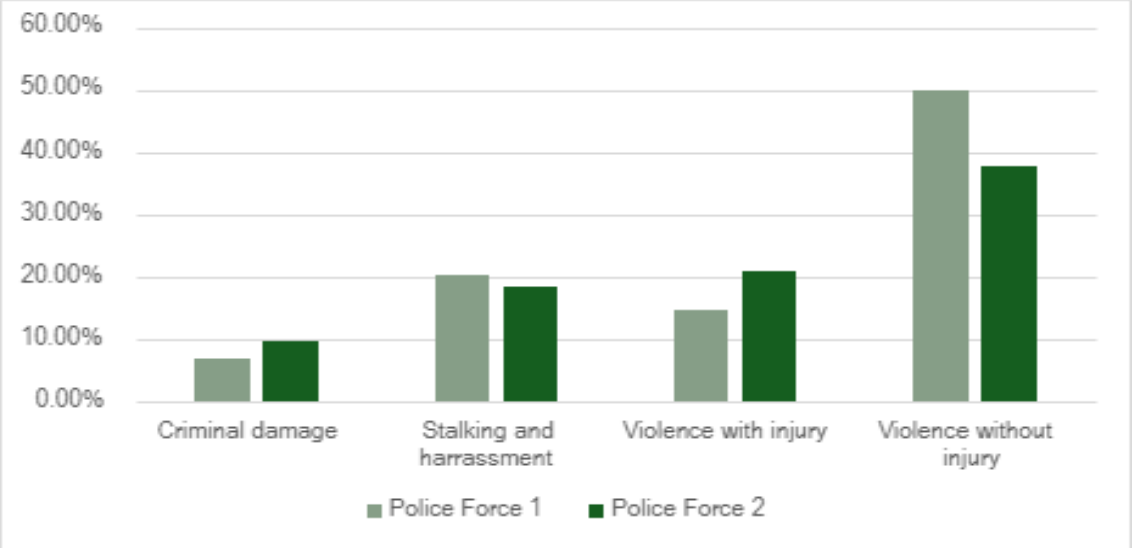
Considering the type of AFV relationship, for each relationship type it was likely that this would produce a standard or medium risk grading. This is consistent with findings by Weir (2024) and Turner et al (2019). Each relationship type in each police force is unlikely to be risk assessed as high-risk. However, when examining the percentage of high-risk cases within each AFV relationship type, adult CPV was more represented in the high-risk dataset. Given the recent attention on CPV in the media, policy, and

academia (The Guardian, 2022), this however may contribute an explanation as to why.

8.3.2. Low risk and high risk? Risk and crime in the context of AFV.

To further understand risk in the context of AFV, the data included the crimes which were recorded on case file systems. Whilst there were a variety of crimes recorded in each dataset, many of these represent less than 0.5% of cases. Categories of crimes which have a value above 5% across both datasets include criminal damage, stalking and harassment and violence with injury and violence without injury. These have been included in the graphs below; however, an overview of the full crime and outcome data is provided in Appendix 27. The types of offences and the frequencies of these are similar across the datasets. The only slight discrepancy is an increased number of public order offences in Police Force One (7.3%). Police Force Two, however, does not record one specific 'public order' offence and records this in multiple categories. Therefore, this is not presented in the tables for consistency purposes.

Across both datasets, the most common recorded crime is 'violence without injury' (49.9% in Police Force One and 37.8% in Police Force Two) as indicated in Graph 4. This mirrors findings of Bland and Ariel (2020) and McPhee et al (2021) in the context of IPV. The substantial proportion of violence without injury may also reflect the influence of the coercive control legislation (Serious Crime Act, 2015) whereby there is an increased focus and public expectation to address and respond to non-physical forms of harm.

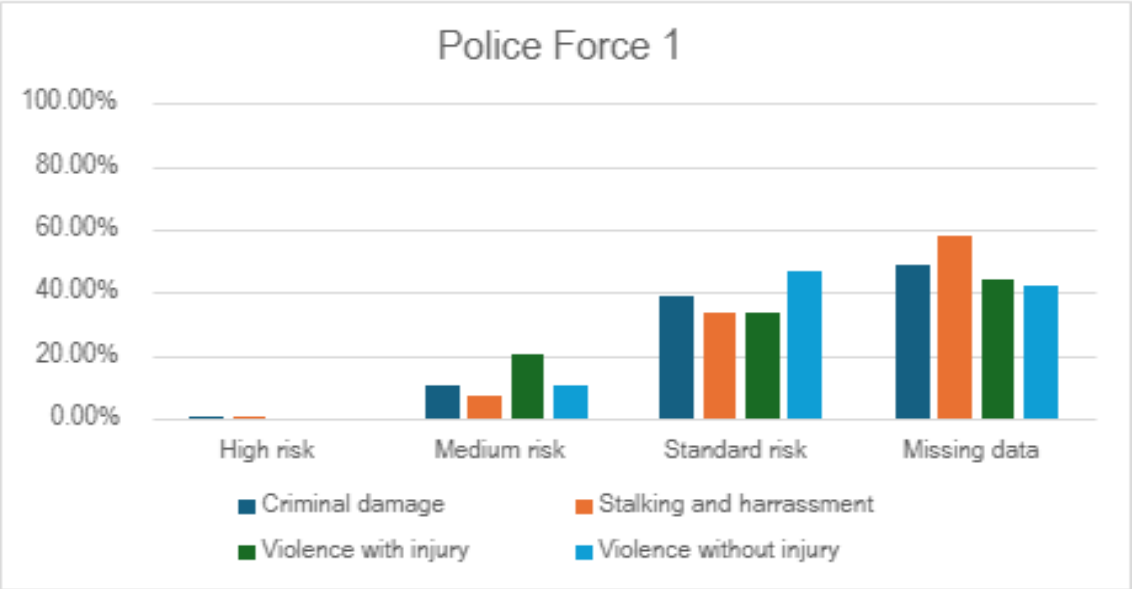


Graph 4: Recorded crime by police force.

The types of crimes recorded for each relationship type in the datasets are similar, however, there are some interesting differences. Adult CPV often includes slightly higher rates of criminal damage and violence without injury than other relationship types. Extended family violence is more likely to be crimed with stalking and harassment. These findings mirror work done in the context of CPV where intimidation utilising objects and threats are common features (Rutter, 2023, 2024; Rogers & Ashworth, 2024). Similarly, work on HBV, usually considering extended family members, has indicated the potential for harassment and stalking (Gill et al, 2018; Bafouni et al, 2024). Whilst an in-depth and rich exploration of 'who does what to whom' (Hester, 2009, Bates, 2020) is beyond the scope of this thesis, this does point to the need to how behaviours may differ across relationship types and to IPV.

The analysis also explores how crimes are represented in risk assessment. Again, focusing on 'violence with injury', 'violence without injury', 'criminal damage' and 'stalking and harassment', Graphs 5 and 6 represent the percentage of each risk grading that is recorded for these crimes. As noted previously, the large numbers of

missing data for Police Force One are compounded by the recording of primary and secondary offences in the obtained dataset. Stalking and harassment incidents are impacted by this due to Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) in effect at the time.



Graph 5: Police Force 1 – recorded crime by risk grading.



Graph 6: Police Force 2 – recorded crime by risk grading.

As identified in the policy chapter, physical harm and stalking is often framed as high-risk. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that this would be reflected in the risk assessments in the quantitative datasets. However, as indicated in Graphs 5 and 6, this is not the case. The percentage of stalking and harassment cases that are graded high-risk, are 0.4% in Police Force One and 4.4% in Police Force Two. This contradicts the policy story which emphasises the dangers of stalking and harassment as often a precursor to homicide (Monckton-Smith, 2019). This could suggest that stalking and harassment within the family is not well understood and subsequently not treated with appropriate concern. This may further allude to the fact that risk assessment is a subjective and discursive process (Sebire & Barling, 2016; Myhill & Johnson, 2015). The discrepancy between the severity of harm (i.e. the stalking and harassment behaviour) and the resultant risk grading suggests that there is a misunderstanding of risk in the context of AFV perhaps due to the influential conception of the 'ideal DVA relationship'.

It is also noteworthy that violence with injury is more likely than violence without injury to be graded as high risk across both police forces. This is also observed in rape, sexual offences, or weapon possession –especially apparent within the dataset for Police Force Two. This suggests a potential reliance on visible or physical harm to judge risk, like research on IPV has indicated (Robinson et al, 2016a). This again additionally demonstrates the influence of the policy story of risk as overt escalations in physical harm on the recording and assessments of risk on police systems (Robinson et al, 2016b).

8.3.3. Escalation, fear and the troubling conflict of low risk in police case files.

This conflict between the severity of abuse or behaviours and the resultant risk grading is observed further in the case file analysis. As discussed in the previous chapter, AFV often intersects with so-called complex needs. This complexity often adds to the dynamics of the abuse, impacts the behaviour of the perpetrator and therefore can increase the proximity to risk for victim-survivors. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

> Perpetrator has been residing at their address for a few months, they were unsure of specifically how long, during this time has displayed increasing issues with alcoholism and drugs. (Case File 5, Police Force One)

> She had been drinking throughout the morning, consuming a small bottle of vodka. I know when drinks she becomes aggressive. (Case File 7, Police Force One)

> Officers have attended scene and have been met by the suspect who was heavily intoxicated. After speaking with victim and victim's wife they have explained that they have been having ongoing issues with their... son and his behaviour. He is drinking heavily on a regular basis and has extremely aggressive outbursts. (Case File 17, Police Force Two)

The quotes suggest that alcoholism, drug use, and mental health difficulties are prominent features in relationships of AFV in these force areas. Whilst not explanations for DVA, they are linked to high-risk experiences of violence and abuse (Graham et al, 2011; Leonard & Quigley, 2017; Adnan et al, 2020) and appear on risk assessments as a contributing factor to escalation and severity. This destabilises the quantitative risk assessment data, illuminating the disparity between records of standard risk on force systems and the conflicting high-risk realities of AFV.

What is especially apparent in the quotes are the layers of loyalty and vulnerability within these so-called complex needs. The quotes indicate that many of these potentially high-risk perpetrators either live with or have frequent proximal contact with victim-survivors or depend on victim-survivors. This may place victim-survivors at an increased risk due to familial loyalties and physical proximity. This is evident in many of the case files, exemplified in Case File 5 previously and Case File 8 as follows:

> Victims in this incident are elderly and suffering with their [mental health] brought on by the behaviour of their grandson, who has [mental health] issues and substance & alcohol problems, he resides at their home. (Case File 8, Police Force One)

The reference to so-called complex needs also highlights a potential for perpetrators in the context of AFV to be unpredictable. The proximity may also place victim-survivors at heightened vulnerability, which is especially concerning given the potential for escalation. Case File 8 is particularly concerning, as not only were these so-called complex needs present, but they also impacted both the victim-survivors mental health and their safety.

As can be further highlighted, the abusive and concerning behaviours in Case File 8 not only had emotional and physical consequences but were further described as escalating or increasing in nature. As can be indicated in the following excerpt, the perpetrator is identified as “escalating” and becoming “more aggressive”:

> It is reported his behaviour is escalating and he is becoming more aggressive, his bedroom contains... weapons. (Case file 8, Police Force One)

This experience of escalation, however, is not isolated to Case File 8. Across multiple of the case files, victim-survivor and police reports indicated a trend of escalation and increasing incidents of abuse. As can be exemplified in the following excerpts:

> Was kicking, hitting and throwing various items around, shouting and swearing, making numerous threats, including that was going to burn the house, were both extremely upset stating that they could not cope with anymore, that his drinking and drug taking is escalating as such his behaviour is becoming more threatening and they were both scared of him. (Case File 5, Police Force One)

> Victim also states she received another message from her brother a couple of days ago again threatening her life... victim believes this to be another credible threat... her brother is a violent man with a history of violence against women and his behaviour throughout this incident has scared her a great deal (Case File 13, Police Force Two)

> Offender has turned up at victim's home again today... in breach of his restraining order. Offender has started kicking off and starting an argument, causing victim to become fearful. (Case File 15, Police Force Two)

These quotes demonstrate a clear pattern of escalation consistent with the widely accepted understanding of what risk is, as discussed previously in this chapter. For example, Case File 15 highlights that despite a restraining order being in place, the perpetrator continued to turn up and perpetrate harm. Similarly, Case File 5 highlights how aggression and violence is increasing as is the perpetrators use of drugs and alcohol. Perpetrators are often discussed as volatile or risky in not just their mannerisms to the victims or other family members but also to attending police officers

or in historic relationships with others. For example, Case File 13 references that the perpetrator is a “violent man with a history of violence against women”.

Whilst escalation has been disputed as a precursor to homicide and serious harm (Bland & Ariel, 2020) and may not be present in all AFV relationships, there is an interesting contradiction here. Current practice tools, such as the DASH RIC, and narratives on risk, as emphasised in the policy section, still place weight on the context of escalation as high-risk. However, here are examples of escalation not being treated as high risk in the context of AFV. Only Case File 13 obtained a high-risk grading, however, this was subsequently downgraded to medium, as indicated:

> Whilst recorded as a High Risk DV, following review by the [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub] ... incident has been reclassified as medium, with no immediate safeguarding concerns. (Case File 13, Police Force Two)

It can be argued then that this is because AFV does not fulfil the idealised conditions of DVA and is therefore othered. Furthermore, a history of DVA offending and substance abuse are often regarded as factors which increases risk. These risk factors are all present in these case files, however, the lack of high-risk grading highlights how they are potentially not associated with AFV as high risk factors.

Case File 13 is additionally poignant as this case includes threats to kill. These behaviours contradict with the statement “no immediate safeguarding concerns” used to justify the downgrading in risk grading. What is furthermore significant is that there were children present in this abusive situation. Therefore, despite the presence of high risk factors and risk factors which are explicitly linked to the eventuality of serious harm and homicide, these are not treated as severe in this relationship. Questions could be

raised regarding whether they would be treated with more severity should the relationship fulfil the conditions of the ‘ideal DVA relationship.’

The casefiles also illustrate the presence of fear and concern displayed by the victim-survivors. As demonstrated in the following quotes, victim-survivors are often afraid of the violence escalating or getting worse:

> [Perpetrator] has made threats to harm the victim and his wife. These have never been followed through, but victim is afraid that if he is not present and the perp threatened her mother, she may carry out her threat. (Case File 4, Police Force One)

> It is stated that this has put in fear of violence and has left he address calling the police. (Case File 2, Police Force One)

> He overpowers me and loses his temper so quickly. Can… switch and get in your face and I'm afraid that one day he will hit me. (Case File 18, Police Force Two)

> He is violent and I fear what he'll do next. (Case File 15, Police Force Two)

Within the quotes, there is language such as “fear,” “scared,” “afraid,” “fearful” as well as perpetrators becoming “unmanageable” and “threatening.” The DASH RIC assessment includes questions regarding escalating behaviours and victim-survivors' feelings of fear, therefore highlighting their status as key risk factors. As discussed in the policy section of this chapter, victim-survivor perceptions of risk are integral to the formation of an informed risk assessment. It could be interpreted from the case-file information presented previously that AFV is therefore a high-risk form of DVA in which victim-survivors are highly fearful. However, the quantitative data presented previously conflicts with this given AFV is routinely risk assessed as standard risk. The reasons

for this conflicting narrative are unclear; however, it may indicate the discursive influence of the 'ideal DVA relationship.'

Of furthermore significance is that despite the indications of high-risk as discussed previously, notes in the case files can minimise these experiences. This is exemplified in the following quotes:

> There are minimal [Domestic Violence] incidents and I consider the [Threat, Harm and Risk] aspect of this incident as low. (Case File 1, Police Force One)
>
> The threat, harm and risk towards the assaulted officer and the grandfather are low as the suspect has not made any attempt to use them or threatened to use them. (Case File 8, Police Force One)
>
> No further incidents were disclosed since criminal damage has taken place, leaving [Threat, Harm and Risk] to be low. (Case File 9, Police Force One)

Case File 8 is particularly interesting as, as discussed previously in this section, this case file includes alarming behaviours and patterns of escalation (e.g. the presence of multiple weapons, fear, and so-called complex needs). However, the threat, harm and risk are repeated to be "low," and it was ultimately graded as medium risk. It is interesting that the judgement of the threat, harm and risk likelihood being 'low' is precipitated on not using or threatening to use the weapons. This contradicts the intimidating or dangerous nature of simply owning weapons. Similarly in Case File 9, the threat is deemed to be low due to the lack of further incidents. This adds to Barlow and Walklate's (2021) work on how despite the introduction of the offence of coercive control, police officer assessments of risk continue to be focussed on the lens of physical harm. This also mirrors the discussion in the policy analysis which encouraged indicators of homicide or severe physical harm.

This is further displayed in the following excerpts:

> Incident said to have happened 3 days ago, with *no escalation.* (Case File 8, Police Force One; emphasis own)

> Due to the nature of the incident, *the low level of injuries* to both parties and the fact that emotions were obviously high at the time of the incident due to its nature, I do not believe it to be proportional to pursue this investigation any further. (Case File 11, Police Force Two; emphasis own)

Case File 11 states that because of the “low level of injuries”, it is not deemed worthy to pursue further. This highlights that the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of risk as harm, namely physical harm, has consequential impacts for the types of support provided to victim-survivors. This is however similar to the contexts of IPV (Robinson et al, 2016b; Barlow & Walklate, 2021), where again the lack of physical signs of abuse are often excluded from what police consider to be immediate risk. However, not only was physical harm used to justify risk-based decision making, but the context of AFV contributes to how risk is graded and assessed. This can be reflected in the following excerpts where the lack of heteronormative IPV associated risk factors are used by professionals to justify grading of risk:

> There is tension between the 2 parties due to a bereavement. This has caused issues and the harassment against the victim. Support can be offered in terms of a [Domestic Violence] … and *there is no referral pathway for low-risk victims at this time... There are no children involved and the parties do not reside togethe*r. (Case File 10, Police Force One; emphasis own)

> No referral required. *No children involved. Low level [Domestic Violence].* Victim just wanted matter logging. No consent to share info. (Case File 1, Police Force One; emphasis own)

The lack of children is used within both these quotes as a justification for the ultimate standard risk grading. This adds nuance to the 'ideal DVA relationship' as directly influencing the way risk is recorded and assessed in the context of AFV. These AFV dynamics are lacking typical heteronormative risk factors, such as the presence of children or pregnancy as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, therefore are deemed to be low risk.

We can see the impacts of the threshold of risk in Case File 10, where it states, "there is no referral pathway for low-risk victims at this time". This can be further observed in Case File 20:

> Within the last 12 months there has been eleven [Domestic Abuse] reports and not been to MARAC. To conclude this is [medium] risk [Domestic Abuse], consent has been declined so unable to share with IDVA. (Case File 20, Police Force Two)

This reflects the governmentality perspectives which consider risk to act as a sorting tool or threshold to determine resources, as discussed in chapter three of this thesis. Therefore, getting risk gradings right matters as it impacts the outcomes, support, and experiences for victim-survivors. Thus, should the perception of risk and what is risky be based on the conflated 'ideal DVA relationship,' and therefore IPV, AFV may be prevented from obtaining or being referred to appropriate support.

8.4. Conducting risk assessment for AFV on the frontline.

8.4.1. Navigating incompatibility: using SPJ tools to risk assess AFV.

To explore the influence of the 'ideal DVA relationship' on narratives of risk further, the chapter now moves to assessing the findings of the interviews. Professionals and victim-survivors were asked about their thoughts on processes of risk assessment and the use of SPJ risk assessment tools. It became apparent that many professionals perceive these tools, particularly the DASH RIC, as difficult to use for circumstances beyond IPV. As can be seen in the following excerpts, many professionals feel that current SPJ tools are built solely to respond to IPV:

> It is targeted towards sort of like partner relationships um… Everything else sort of... comes not so much second but is... after that. (Blue, police officer)

> It's completely… ineffective if I'm honest for family violence… Not all questions, but some of them are not relevant at all… It does create problems cause it's like I have to ask these even though they might not be relevant. You know, it's sort of a robotic form… I'm not a fan of the DASH questions if I'm being honest. (Kendal, police officer)

> Even sexual abuse might be an issue it's just the DASH has framed it in such a way that it's in the context of intimate partner violence. (Aubrey, practitioner)

> It's just framed in a way of this perpetrator and this victim... not actually... that further network of the family then and who is around that person and what have they been exposed to and being shown to as normal. (Fran, practitioner)

As highlighted by Blue, Aubrey, and Kendal, SPJ tools are "tailored to intimate partner violence" and therefore AFV is excluded from focus within current risk assessment tools. This is further exemplified by the fact none of the four victim-survivors in this

research had experienced the DASH RIC, the DARA or any risk assessment specifically orientated around DVA. Blue stresses that they feel that IPV is the focus of risk assessment and other relationships “come after.” This further demonstrates the presence of the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ and its influence on the risk assessment process.

The DASH RIC or other SPJ tools are ineffective for the participants in this study for assessing AFV. As discussed by Fran, the DASH RIC replicates the perception that DVA is tied to two people, “this perpetrator and this victim.” Fran suggests SPJ tools only focus on one perpetrator at a time and therefore they cannot capture or assess the impact of the wider ‘web’ (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022) or “network of the family”. This highlights how the policy construction of DVA, or the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ holds discursive sway. Fran’s perspective of SPJ tools being limited in this respect is often raised by other interview participants, as exemplified in the following quotes:

> Theres many other people affected in that you know it might be parent grandparent mother brother all being abused by this person… The DASH wouldn’t go anywhere near managing that because it doesn’t have the capacity to deal with these sorts of questions. (Noah, practitioner)

> The DASH doesn’t lend itself to... more complex… situations. (Charlie, practitioner*)*

As discussed by both Charlie and Noah, the DASH RIC only captures one perpetrator and the experiences of this abuse from the perspective of one victim-survivor. Professionals highlight that to capture multiple victims and multiple perpetrators; multiple risk assessments would have to be completed. Given professionals also raised that risk assessments are exhausting and traumatic for victim-survivors, given

the number of questions and the content of these questions, this adds to the burden of victim-survivors and increases the potential for trauma (Parsons & Bergin, 2010; Elliot et al, 2014). It can be argued that this focus on a singular victim-survivor and perpetrator in risk assessment reflects the 'ideal DVA relationship' and the binary nature of this.

This focus on binary relationships in SPJ tools and the inability to capture the wider 'web' (Chowdhury, 2021) of relationships, is seen in the following quotes as limiting the ability to fully understand the proximity of risk for victim-survivors in the context of AFV:

> There is the question to with has the abuser ever hurt anyone else that you're aware of? I think that's a massive one, especially with familial, because if it's happening from parents to child… it also brings in extra risk for… siblings… Especially with honour based, because if it's with one daughter then chances are it's happening to the other daughters? So, I think that one needs potentially a bit more focus. (Ari, police officer)

> There might be other things actually that we might not have thought about like, what about the risk of if the victim gets a partner? …In a partner relationship that's like obvious. Like, oh, victims got a new partner for ex partner that's gunna increase the risk… but, you know, do we have an understanding of how that increases the risk if it's a son? (Bailey, practitioner)

Ari suggests that SPJ tools do not assess the impact of a network of abuse and how this may pose heightened risk of harm or homicide to victim-survivors, and the wider family. This reflects the consequences of a binary framing of both SPJ tools and risk. Furthermore, as highlighted by Bailey, what relationships are being assessed impact

how risk is experienced. Whilst there is sufficient evidence on the links between post-separation and IPV (Monckton-Smith, 2019), as evidenced in the policy section of this chapter, we do not know what life events for AFV may lead to increases of risk.

There is a particular concern amongst professionals in the study that due to the normalisation and minimisation that may take place within some families, the questions in SPJ tools may not be appropriate nor suitable for assessing AFV. This is outlined by Jay:

> Maybe their families were violent in the past and or maybe they've seen violence in you know other parts of their families... So, we can't just base it on... what they see as a fear and I think that's what frustrates me the most… because basing it on the victims fear but they don't always see fear and it's like oh, they're not fearful and there's a lot to be frightened about here. (Jay, practitioner)

Here Jay raises concerns with both the assumption of risk as a visible escalation in fear, a construction emphasised in the policy analysis and reflected in questions included in the DASH RIC (Richards, 2009). They raise that visible expressions of fear may not be as overt in the context of AFV due to family norms and trauma. Jay states that this presumption that risk and fear are visible and physical forensic objects that can be measured is frustrating for professionals as it does not capture the realities of risk. This highlights the 'hard and complex' work (Davies et al, 2023) that goes into risk assessing AFV within the wider discursive power of the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of DVA and risk.

Jay's frustration with the question 'are you frightened' alludes to other frustrations raised by professionals in the study about some of the questions included in SPJ tools.

Professionals hold concerns that questions currently included in the lens of risk are concentrated on responding to IPV (Standing Together, 2021). This is especially in relation to questions relating to separation, pregnancy, child contact, and sexual violence. Interestingly, these are factors discussed in the policy analysis as fundamental precursors to 'high risk,' serious harm or homicide. However, as can be seen in the following excerpts, professionals are conflicted and experience tension with these questions:

> I have always had an issue… with question 16 so does the abuser do or say anything of a sexual nature that makes you feel bad or hurt you? … It's not that I'm afraid to ask that question it's just more that you've got to ask that question at the right time… Thinking about family abuse if this person was sat or was talking about with their like mum, or their children for example, they're not gunna want to answer this question. (Drew, practitioner)

> If I'm asking a brother about something that their brothers done to them, I'm not going to start, asking them if they've got a child together. (Ari, police officer)

> Theres specific questions to intimate partner violence on the forms but there's none to… um family violence. (Courtney, police officer)

As discussed by Drew, asking these questions in a homogenous manner and without an explicit awareness of the context of the relationship you are assessing may compound the trauma and stigmatisation experienced by victim-survivors. Drew raises that although these questions, such as the sexual violence question, could be relevant, the way it is worded and the expectation of asking it may be especially traumatising and stigmatising for those who have experienced abuse in the family. Courtney raises that whilst risk assessment tools ask specific questions about experiences of IPV,

evidenced through questions which relate to separation and child contact, there is no such provision for AFV.

What is especially difficult for professionals in the study is the requirement or expectation to complete these risk assessments despite being aware of their limitations or lack of nuance. This is exemplified by Ezra, who discusses the tensions between being required to ask every question on the risk assessment and the professional knowledge of knowing it is not fit for purpose:

> That's generally mainly focused on intimate partner... Is there extreme jealousy? Is there… was the violence used in self-defence? Is there alcohol involved? Is there drugs involved? You know, there's all these, like, you know, is there harassment and stalking involved? Is there a child, is there separation involved... I understand why they put them all in because you can just say no to the ones that are not relevant… But these are questions that you'd expected to ask every single one of the victims. (Ezra, police officer)

This demonstrates the ‘hard and complex work’ (Davies et al, 2023) for professionals when having to risk assess AFV. Despite professionals knowing tools are not quite fit for purpose, they are still obliged to complete this under organisational expectation. The feelings of tension here contradict the emphasis in policy on holistic, dynamic, and contextual risk assessment as discussed previously in this chapter. This highlights how policy aims are not always replicated easily in practice (McPhee et al, 2021).

8.4.2. Capturing the complexity of AFV in risk assessments.

The focus on IPV in risk assessment questions is further problematic as professionals highlight that these questions do not capture the realities of risk for AFV. As raised previously, AFV is regarded as complex in comparison to the 'ideal DVA relationship.’

Therefore, professionals raise that there are additional considerations in the context of AFV that can increase risk. Some of these are presented in the following excerpts:

> They don't have jobs either so all day every day they're in the house on top of each other... and then when something goes wrong… I think the parent knows that they're the only people that they can rely on at that time. So, I think they use that to like put power over the um the older son. (Aspen, police officer)

> You have a lot of... people with a lower level of income and they rely on families a lot more, which means that you then result in the stress, which then results in incidents occurring. (Ari, police officer)

As highlighted by Ari and Aspen, proximity and interdependence may lead to increased "stress" or pressure on the family which may increase the likelihood of harm. What is particularly interesting is the reference to socio-economic status, deprivation, and employment status. This is something discussed by professionals across the interviews. As highlighted in the following quotes, geographic, societal and community contexts are seen to influence risk for AFV:

> I think it is more like it's very much like social, economical, instead of... like mental health or like um additional needs… It's more... so because of like... how they live. (Sunny, police officer)

> It's becoming more and more of an issue actually with... housing and cost of living... cost of everything really. It's impacting on their financial, so, they're looking for quick wins… There's an entitlement that because of that their parents should give them everything and then if they don't get it there's a resentment there. (River, practitioner)

> A lot of the violence was actually coming from his mental health and the fact that mental health wasn't being supported… That was like a constant battle and I think actually that's like a common theme probably across the country in terms of like provision for like mental health. (Charlie, practitioner)

Charlie and River make connections between societal issues such as mental health provision and the cost-of-living crisis to demonstrate how they may impact proximity to risk and experiences of abuse. This challenges the notion presented in the policy analysis that risk only occurs in the context of an individual relationship and the perpetrators behaviour. Risk for AFV is considered by professionals in this study to be influenced by wider societal and structural constraints, challenges, or changes. Whilst IPV is similarly impacted by contextual factors, professionals see this is particularly relevant for AFV relationships given the complexities of care and loyalty which are often uniquely experienced in relation to family. For example, Charlie discusses how the lack of mental health provision may especially impact mothers caring for their adult sons as it places them in a difficult scenario where their responsibilities as a 'mother' conflict with their experiences of being victimised. However, the desire to 'care' for adult sons means victim-survivors be subjected to abuse for prolonged periods. This is compounded by local and societal factors, such as governmental funding and local provision for so-called complex needs. This further speaks to how gendered dynamics impact abuse, and thus the experience of risk. This adds to wider criminological discussion about 'gendered risks' (Hannah-Moffat & O'Malley, 2007). In the context of AFV for instance, as presented by participants in this study, it is the intersection of gendered familial roles in the abusive relationship, the individual perpetrators vulnerabilities and wider societal contexts which shape experiences and the level of

risk. This suggests there is a need to look beyond the relationship and at the wider context which surrounds abusive relationships.

This reinforces that the problematic representation of DVA as pertaining only to an individual relationship, normally an intimate partner relationship within SPJ tools. As has been discussed in this thesis, this absents the wider contexts and structures which compound experiences of abuse. Professionals in the study for instance felt there were other dynamics that need to be assessed and considered when understanding risk in the context of AFV. As can be outlined so far in this discussion, professionals stress an understanding of family, local provision and society.

This conflict between the realities of risk in the context of AFV and the widely accepted notion of risk factors has consequences for both professionals and victim-survivors. The numerical threshold of the DASH RIC and other SPJ tools is a specific concern. Participants feel that AFV is more likely to score low in risk assessment due to the wider assumption of IPV. As is exemplified in the following quotes, participants in the study see AFV achieving high-risk status as an unlikely outcome:

> I'd say lower, maybe standard or medium risk to be honest as the worst… I think it depends on the individual, to be honest. (Sunny, police officer)

> The ones that I can recall have only sort of been low risk… I've haven't had one been medium risk... It's sort of… at the point I've attended, not low level in that sense, but in terms of the risk at the time of me attending has been relatively low. It's been not that significant in terms of threat of violence, harm injury. (Paris, police officer).

> I don't think we get high risk ones like when it's like parents, kids… Unless it's a serious incident. (Mo, police officer)

Mo suggests that AFV only scores as high risk when it is a “serious incident”, again potentially reflecting the conflation between risk, significant harm and crisis as discussed in the policy section of this chapter. This is linked by participants to the current expected process for assessing risk, as is illustrated in the following quotes:

> It will score low because they’re not asking the correct questions so it will score low, but I think if its justified correctly... you establish that pattern of behaviour and that escalation you know professionally... I mean the referrals that we get through, and it is adult family violence, it's not particularly done to a good standard. (Ali, practitioner)

> We risk assess honour-based abuse... it’ll score quite low because it’s sort of family members they may never like have been like that many incidents before they may not have a criminal history. (Alex, practitioner)

> It’s hard when it’s... like family violence… those kinds of questions are not relevant… does this need to be referred to MARAC? Some of those questions aren’t actually applicable… I suppose that’s why it's quite good that we then can then refer through on professional judgement because if it purely goes on that score they’ve then got less of a chance of getting that support. ... I did a, like, an assessment the other day and as I was going through, I was just ticking no to these in my head like thinking oh they don’t apply but… is that a fair assessment then? No probably not. (Jamie, practitioner)

Ali and Jamies raise that the right questions are often not asked in the context of AFV and the benefits of using professional judgement are limited due to a lack of knowledge about how AFV may present. This is discussed further by Ezra, who feels that risk assessment practices are representative of a ‘tick box culture’ in policing:

> In all honesty… in terms of domestic violence, I think our referral forms… I feel like they're a tick box exercise for the police… Okay, they have to be done, but I feel like sometimes they do them for the sake of doing them. (Ezra, police officer).

Ezra's perspective reflects the concerns expressed in the literature review that risk assessment has become risk adverse (Heaton & Tong, 2022) and there is an absence of professional curiosity within current practice. There is a lack of looking beyond the questions posed on SPJ tools and a lack of emphasis on assessing wider dynamics which surround and compound experiences of abuse. As raised by Alex, this leads to AFV not being considered within the discourse of what is assumed to be high risk, again reflecting the power of the 'ideal DVA relationship.' Jamie doubts the extent to which SPJ tools for risk assessment, such as the DASH RIC, are fair. This helps to provide some explanations for the police case file data discussed earlier in this chapter and why these datasets are conflicting. On the one hand, professionals feel bound to complete risk assessments due to organisational expectations but on the other hand are aware that the questions are not appropriate and perhaps not suitable for capturing the realities of risk in AFV relationships.

Florian reflects some of the concerns raised in the case file section of this chapter, indicating that AFV is likely to score 'lower' because it lacks some of the obvious or common risk factors. As is demonstrated in the following quote:

> From my experience… um most or more than half of the um referrals a lot of times are lower risk because it may be a lower-level offence... there's been sort of no like repetition... If it's incidents involving um children, for example, with child, child witnesses, that does make the score a lot higher and then again, we

> would be able to look into it a bit more um for this person and um hopefully get those um referrals in place. (Florian, police officer).

Florian highlights that the presence of children and children witnessing the abuse does "make the score a lot higher." Whilst this demonstrates that the provisions and legal protections for children in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are being implemented in practice, it does indicate the reliance on heteronormative standards of risk to risk assess DVA relationships. As has been discussed, it is unclear for professionals how the presence of children may impact experiences of risk and abuse in adult familial relationships.

This is further problematic as it means, as discussed in the literature review, that relationships of AFV are disproportionately underrepresented within high-risk, intensive support such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC's), which have been evaluated to have positive outcomes (Robinson et al, 2014). This is discussed by Bailey and Kendal:

> Having a high risk case like a MARAC case was actually easier in a lot of ways than having a medium to low risk case because... everyone was like on your side... Suddenly, the police are doing everything you want them to do, housing are doing everything you want them to do, social care, you know, start doing, you know, everyone kicks into gear when it's a high risk case but a medium to low you know you're on your own... It's really difficult to get things to happen so, sending a case to MARAC is a really positive thing for the client. (Bailey, practitioner)

> I was involved in… the new… MARAC screening process and... we established um that there was… difference between domestic abuse and adult violence,

> and that perhaps... the criteria we were using fitted more for intimate partners than it did adult family violence um… So, that sort of had to be um… adapted. (Kendal, police officer).

This unfair nature of risk assessment and the exclusion from appropriate support due to a 'lack of fit' is further reflected by the experiences of victim-survivors. Despite not being subjected to formal risk assessment, victim-survivors sometimes considered that their experiences had been somewhat missed or had been failed to be taken seriously when they presented to professionals. As can be outlined in the following quote from Lex:

> I don't think… they take it seriously enough... I think people's perception of the level of risk is um… a lot lower because it's like my child… Domestic abuse like everyone knows for that like the risks are really high… but... I really don't think people see children as like harmful risk you know. (Lex, victim-survivor)

As identified by Lex, assumptions are often made about what victim-survivors knew about their situation and what risks they are experiencing, and the extent of this risk. Lex discusses that because their experience did not fit in with what was assumed to be DVA, they were not taken seriously by professionals who they sought support from. This again contributes to nuancing the results from the police data and the prevalence of standard risk gradings as it shows that preconceived assumptions of an abusive relationship, and the dynamics within this, may impact how seriously it is taken and how it is risk assessed.

This was exemplified further by professionals, who raise that the quality of risk assessments varies by service, geography, and individual:

> I think it’s a lack of training and also a lack of knowledge… when people think of domestic abuse you think of you know man woman man’s perpetrator... Like, especially with the police, when they get a call out and it's between a woman um a mother and daughter, they only know how to do that DASH when it's between a woman and a man. And I think they find it very difficult... to utilise it in a way that would actually get the risks. (Ali, practitioner)

> I think it's difficult because it's that professionals sort of… view on the risk which can, you know, vary and even if you're referring it through on a score… you'll get different scores like between housing and a domestic abuse service. So, in terms of the professional judgement you’ve just got to like… trust that someone is really paying attention. (Jamie, practitioner)

> You can make on the basis like on professional judgement anyway… but that also depends on the understanding of the person who is doing it so, like the training the level of understanding the expertise is required as well, you know? It's not just about risk assessing but it's about understanding as well believing the victim, believing the sense of fear. (Cameron, practitioner)

In these quotes, whilst it is agreed that risk assessment should be a holistic and contextual process rather than a systematic, tick-box exercise, something encouraged in policy, this has not ‘trickled down’ into practice. Indeed, risk assessment is subject to a ‘justice by geography’ (Davies & Biddle, 2017) where the quality, seriousness and richness of an assessment is impacted by the location of services, public awareness, and individual experience. This adds nuance to the discrepancies in risk grading between the two police force datasets, with one force having differential ways to record this. The consequences of this are exemplified by Ali who argues that professionals

often do not have the skills to understand risk in the context of families and only have the skills to complete a DASH “when it's between a woman and a man”, or perhaps the ‘ideal DVA relationship’.

8.4.3. Follow-up questions, adaptations, context: equipping professional curiosity.

Aligned with the theoretical framework, conversations in the interviews regarding risk assessment highlighted an awareness of systemic limitations. Subsequently, professionals highlighted that they adapt current tools and systems to risk assess relationships of AFV. Many professionals felt that risk assessors are competent enough to adapt the risk assessment, emphasising the benefits of using follow up and additional questions. Therefore, discretionary practices, whilst perhaps compounding a ‘justice by geography’ (Davies & Biddle, 2017), may also support more informed practice. As discussed in the following quotes, professionals see the questions on SPJ tools as a starting point for risk assessment:

> I think more than adding additional questions its more about breaking down a lot of the questions… So, when you'd ask about is the abuse happening more, often you'd think about okay, so what does that look like? How… is it getting worse? Because we need to know how quickly this is escalating and how much worse this is getting. (Brooke, practitioner)

> Any risk assessment or screening tool is only going to be improved by asking other questions… We’re not computers we’re not algorithms. It’s the qualitative exploration of that we add to that as practitioners that helps us to formulate safety plans. (Eden, practitioner)

As outlined by Eden, it is about the “qualitative exploration” of risk rather than the numerical scoring system. This challenges that risk assessment should be systematic

and asserts the need to incorporate a qualitative emphasis. Brooke stresses that this means professionals and risk assessors need to break down questions or add follow-up questions to better explore the contextual dynamics of risk, especially in the context of AFV when these dynamics are overlooked by the content included in current SPJ tools. This is shared by other professionals in the research who, as exemplified in the following quotes, highlight some additional considerations that they feel need to be explored when risk assessing relationships of AFV:

> I'll just ask you know, right what's your relationship like?... How long have they been living here? Why do they live here? Things like that... Do you get along? ...Have they moved out before? Did they move back in? Have they got any plans to… move out? You know, things like that. Just to like, unpick, yeah, how they've come to be living there you know? And if there's any sort of plan... that gives me an idea how the family works. (Paris, police officer)

> Has anything like this happened before? And more, so like, what's caused this? Like, do you still live at home? Are you working? …What's your previous relationship been like with your family? Um, and sort of look to why it's happening, like hasn't been one standalone event or whatever or has there been a build-up of things? (Sunny, police officer)

> Asking about that persons upbringing… when… did this start and how has it escalated to where we are now? …A lot of it is about trying to unpack... you know their experiences also growing up… I think it's important as well to ask about those elements of controlling behaviour. I think that should be really focused on because a lot of people going through adult family violence may not think… that their family member can control them in the way... I think they'll

> recognise that when um if it was a partner but not necessarily when it's a family member. (Ali, practitioner)

> Listen to their boundaries and understand what do you want to happen here? ...What are you happy with? ...What do you want to change? ...How do you want to be treated? ...Get them to hear their own voice and hear actually, I don't like it when they do that and I don't like it when they do that. (Elliot, practitioner).

As discussed in the excerpts above, professionals stress the need to understand the wider history and context of the family when understanding the true extent of risk. As outlined by Ali, understanding familial norms is crucial as it helps to establish and contextualise experiences, perceptions and expressions of fear. Similarly, Elliot emphasises understanding the wider context, the victim-survivors wishes and what is currently in place to support victim-survivors. Elliot emphasises the importance of a strengths-based approach within this, perhaps somewhat reflecting their position as working for a DVA service and thus being focused on empowerment. Paris and Sunny both discuss examining what is going on with living situations, care dynamics and other factors that may contribute to a "build-up of things." This further reflects that understanding context, and the family is important for determining the level of risk in the context of AFV. Interestingly Ali emphasises ensuring questions are asked about coercive control, referencing that they feel that coercive control is not currently well understood in its presentation in AFV, especially by police. This further points to the fact that much public and policy discussion focuses on IPV.

It is also considered important, especially for AFV, that risk assessment takes place within a relationship of rapport and trust between victim-survivors and risk assessors. Professionals identified that risk assessment is traumatic and therefore a secure

relationship needs to be established prior to victim-survivors being expected to disclose their potentially traumatic stories. Particularly as SPJ tools are focused on IPV, and therefore the questions risk othering experiences of AFV, professionals suggest it is crucial to undertake risk assessment through an informed lens. Although victim-survivors in this research study had not experienced formal risk assessment, they do stress the value of being listened to by professionals:

> Having that relationship, that foundation is really important… just understanding enough context as you can about those relationships. I actually think is really important too. (Blair, victim-survivor)

> She let me speak… she took notice of what I was saying and she took me seriously. (Lex, victim-survivor)

Here Blair articulates that building a rapport and a relationship is crucial for services being considered as victim-survivor led. Furthermore, Lex emphasises the value of being able to speak openly about their experiences of abuse. This is further discussed by Red who indicates that undertaking formal processes and conversations, such as risk assessments, with victim-survivors from a trauma-informed lens is vital. She stresses that when talking to professionals she often felt the strains of disclosing trauma or telling professional about the full extent of abuse and therefore balancing being ‘too complex’ or ‘not complex enough’:

> The fact that they do these formal processes I think is good... but... there's a lot of ignorance and there's a lot of us versus then mentalities and there's a lot of othering... I feel like I walk a balance beam and I feel like I have to tell them about the trauma and the difficulties enough for them to understand, but I have to seem to be sorted enough for them to say that I'm not fucked up. Excuse my

> French, but if I'm too sorted, they won't believe there's any problems. (Red, victim-survivor)

In this quote Red indicates that for victim-survivors of DVA, but especially so for AFV victim-survivors, feelings of 'othering' are common in interactions with professionals. However, an informed and positive service interaction can disrupt this. As can be outlined in the following quotes, an awareness of trauma and the limitations of current risk assessment models impact how and if professionals complete risk assessment forms:

> I've had the training for... negotiating... I know what questions to ask and even just being like yeah mmhmm yep mmm like active listening, it makes a big difference... Then you can get that a much better threat, harm, and risk without asking you know a million questions. (Ezra, police officer)

> I don't do DASH's unless I think they are appropriate and they are ethical because this person has already had who knows how many DASH's done… There's so much the DASH doesn't cover you know, it's based on homicide; it's not based on the nuances. (Noah, practitioner)

> There's always going to be some one of the officers that... the victim is more willing to speak to than the others… You really need to… build… that rapport and that, that openness… just asking as many questions as you can um… Even if the victim hasn't even alluded to sort of certain offences or some… sometimes it's good to ask… um a good example of that is like in Section 17 about the non-fatal strangulation. Especially, I guess with family… you know most um… the victim doesn't… even know that that's an offence. (Blue, police officer)

> When they do the DASH, they go... you know have you had an injury? Have you had this? Is this worse now? And they go through it like clockwork... People aren't going to give you oh, I'm frightened of this person. Like, sometimes when I do a DASH, it takes me three or four times before someone goes that makes me frightened when he does that or she does that and I'm like... here we go... now its gunna start unfolding. (Jay, practitioner)

In these quotes, a conversational approach is considered as especially important for victim-survivors of AFV given the experiences of AFV may have been going on for a long time, many may not have the language to articulate these experiences as DVA, or many may fear the repercussions from the wider family of labelling violence as abusive. As highlighted by Blue and Jay, building rapport can lead to a disclosure, particularly important given the lack of language to articulate experiences. Whilst risk assessment is traditionally used to respond to incidents, by professionals in the study it is used as part of a conversational approach. As outlined by Jay, sometimes they complete the DASH RIC multiple times rather than an insistence of simply getting through it. Noah's perspective is somewhat differential as they stress that they sometimes forego the DASH RIC completely if they do not believe this is "ethical." Here connection with victim-survivors and the ability to understand their needs meant professionals can use discretion to disregard the risk assessment, to empower victim-survivors. It is therefore crucial that for AFV, the risk assessment process is not merely used as a reactionary response or tick-box exercise but forms an integral part of a wider, trauma and contextually informed approach.

Whilst this shows the discretionary power professionals may have, it is important to note caution. Professionals in this study came forward because they were interested in AFV and were especially sensitive to the realities of this form of abuse. Therefore,

their awareness of AFV and the ability to adapt the DASH RIC or other SPJ tools to suit these dynamics may not be shared or experienced consistently on a national basis. The extent to which professionals adapt risk assessments and operationalise an informed understanding in assessments of risk is thus still unclear. Whilst Noah's ability to take a trauma informed approach to the DASH RIC is appreciated, the lack of consistency to how risk assessment is broached for AFV is concerning. As discussed previously, some professionals complete this as it is written. This indicates that considerations of risk in the context of AFV are influenced by a 'justice by geography' (Davies & Biddle, 2017)

Despite these concerns, it was felt amongst the participants in the study that there are systemic issues and incompatibilities in the SPJ model for risk assessment. As outlined by Cameron, there exists scepticism about whether the DASH RIC has been built in an appropriate way:

> It's not from the lens of intersectional feminism you know it's not from voices of… um other women, black women... There's no acknowledgment that this actually might not work for… family members. (Cameron, practitioner)

Cameron rejects the DASH RIC as reflecting the positivist legacies of risk science and ignoring the subjectivities of risk (Walklate, 1999). It is unclear whether SPJ tools are appropriate for DVA, particularly for AFV or for relationships of DVA in the context of minority ethnic groups. This may suggest that a new tool or new way to practice risk assessment is needed. However, professionals in the study held mixed opinions about what was the best way forward to deal with these the incompatibilities of risk assessment for AFV. Cameron further reflects that the lens of risk assessment needs changing before more questions are added or a new tool is built. This perspective is

shared by other professionals in the research, as evidenced in the proceeding quotes, who express uncertainly about whether simply creating a new tool will be effective:

> There's less emphasis around um like needs, you know? So, when it comes to… family abuse it could be different, there are different needs and different barriers but were not looking at it from that lens and so, maybe we need to like refocus it around that around needs led… rather than risk led. (Cameron, practitioner)

> It's been done by another service and maybe it's not very good and you've got to come in and do it again and they've just done it like last week or something... It just feels like unnecessary like, if... we communicated effectively like between agencies... then maybe we wouldn't need to do so many DASH RIC's … Some people have said to me oh it needs to be shorter... but obviously each question is an indicator. Like what question do you remove if they are all indicators of homicide? (Brooke, practitioner)

These quotes suggest that rather than adding or changing questions permanently or creating more risk assessment tools, change may occur because of a shift in lens. Brooke raises that some of the questions and risk factors are linked to homicide therefore it is potentially lifesaving to still ask these and thus these cannot be supplemented for other risk factors. Brooke further alludes to the need for consistent quality and practice regarding risk assessment across multi-agency services. This reflects concerns that have been consistently raised in DHR's.

This again replicates concerns that a 'justice by geography' (Davies & Biddle, 2017) in awareness and provision for risk assessing AFV is ever-present in current multi-agency practice. As discussed by Courtney and Fran, funding, time, and expectations

are significant barriers for professionals to conduct professional judgement or informed assessments of risk:

> I don't know if they're seen as just less of a risk or… if it's just a lack of funding?... There is definitely a massive, like, difference between the two... It's… the same with everything... a lack of funding and lack of staff, a lack of recognition and willing to help. (Courtney, police officer).
>
> We had… targets to hit and numbers to do… They used to push us to do a DASH in under an hour sometimes like 30 minutes at a point and we had to say actually you know that's not possible like for the details you're wanting (Fran, practitioner).

This indicates that any changes to the process of risk assessment in the context of AFV must be scaffolded by adequate funding and provision.

8.5. Conclusion.

This chapter has addressed the second research question of thesis and explored how policy narratives of risk influence how risk is recorded and assessed in the context of AFV. Firstly, this chapter highlighted that the 'policy story' of risk conflates this with IPV, mirroring the findings of the previous chapter. Significantly, these construe risk with a visible escalation or increase in physical violence as well as manifesting in risk factors associated with intimate partners, such as pregnancy, child contact, sexual violence, and separation. It is argued that this constructs who and what is 'risky' (Butterby & Donovan, 2024) and inadvertently trains the practice gaze to look out for and identify IPV and thus inadvertently overlooks AFV.

In police case file data, AFV is unlikely to achieve a high-risk grading. This contradicts the behaviours identified in the case files. Despite displays of high-harm, high-risk risk factors and escalating behaviours as well as the presence of victim fear, AFV is still likely to be graded as low. As is observed in the case files, this is often justified by referencing the lack of heteronormative risk factors in the relationships. For example, threat, harm and risk are low when children are not present. This demonstrates the continued influence of the 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) on police staffs' constellation of risk (Robinson et al, 2016b).

In the interviews professionals raised that the realities of risk in the context of AFV contradict with perceptions of DVA related risk. AFV is intertwined with wider structural and contextual constraints as well as changes in the family. These dynamics impact the propensity of risk for victim-survivors, however, are not considered in current risk assessment practice due to the continued emphasis on IPV. Participants raised that risk assessment tools are built to assess IPV and therefore do not capture the risks in AFV. Due to SPJ tools depending on a numerical threshold, AFV is routinely excluded from high-risk gradings and multi-agency support. However, professionals navigate this lack of fit by adapting questions, adding questions, and gathering a 'bigger picture.' Overall, it was queried by professionals whether it was simply just the tools that are unsuitable for AFV or whether the current lens of risk assessment needs to be adapted. This requires adequate resources and funding as well as clear guidance and training for risk assessors.

Chapter Nine: Findings – Supporting victim-survivors of AFV.

9.1. Introduction.

This chapter represents the final findings chapter and addresses the third and fourth research questions. These questions examine how the construction of DVA and the understanding of AFV has influenced the response and support provided to victim-survivors by professional services, and whether this meets victim-survivor needs.

This chapter firstly examines the findings generated from the policy analysis. This section of the chapter highlights how legacies of risk and the criminalisation thesis (Goodmark, 2017) have influenced the priorities for supporting victim-survivors outlined in policy documents. Furthermore, whilst there is a reference to victim-led support, the framing of response continues to presume IPV and the 'ideal DVA relationship.' The chapter then discusses the police case file data pertaining to outcomes. In both the qualitative and quantitative data, it is likely for victim-survivors to withdraw from pursuing criminal justice action. The chapter then presents the semi-structured interviews, where it was reflected that current systems of support are orientated around IPV. The chapter concludes by highlighting some of the suggestions made by professionals and victim-survivors for best practice.

9.2. The policy frame of DVA response.

9.2.1. Evidence, prosecution, and the 'criminalisation thesis'.

When examining the policy documents, the analysis finds an emphasis on policing and criminal justice systems. Whilst it is recognised that not all victim-survivors desire or can access policing support, emphasis is on the importance of an effective criminal

justice response. As can be seen in the following excerpts, the role of criminal justice systems is considered paramount:

> The response from criminal justice agencies to those affected can be pivotal in identifying domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity, offering support, and helping to break the cycle of victimisation and offending. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

> Encourages the police and allows members of the public to take responsibility for the safety of the potential victim and their family. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance)

> The ongoing safety of the victim and any children *should be of paramount concern to the police.* (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)

This reflects Goodmarks (2017) 'criminalisation thesis' and concerns that the response to DVA in England and Wales increasingly relies on a recourse to law (Williams & Walklate, 2020). This is reflected by the criminalisation of facets of DVA, such as coercive control under the Serious Crime Act 2015, and the movement of civil protections, such as DAPOs, into criminal justice policy. On the one hand, criminalisation may support victim-survivors and the public to label experiences as problematic (Douglas, 2018). However, by considering the silences which occur from this framing within policy (Bacchi, 2009), the role of third sector and advocacy organisations are left unnuanced. This is concerning as, as identified in the literature review, there are demonstrable concerns regarding the impacts of misogyny and racism in the police response (Baroness Casey of Blackstock, 2023) as well as established systemic barriers for victim-survivors in accessing the criminal justice

system (Cretney & Davis, 1997). These barriers may additionally in the context of AFV be compounded by familial loyalties. For example, research has indicated that family members are often unlikely to desire prosecution and instead may wish for support for the perpetrator (Bates et al, 2025). And furthermore, as has been raised in the context of HBV and CPV, victim-survivors may be especially reluctant to pursue support from the police due to fear of repercussions from family members or fear of criminalising family members (Gill, 2010; Miles & Condry, 2015; Aujla, 2021).

Whilst the policy documents do reference the cruciality of multi-agency services and specialist services; there is still an emphasis on policing and criminal justice systems as core components of the response to DVA. When discussing appropriate responses to DVA, conducting rigorous investigations and collecting evidence for the purposes of prosecution are considered vital responses in the policy documents. This is illustrated by the following excerpts:

> Effective evidence-gathering is crucial to the prosecution case, particularly where the victim decides to withdraw from the case. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)
>
> Early consideration must be given to the gathering of evidence and the need to make contact with a Superintendent who may not be readily available. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)
>
> It is vital for maintaining the confidence of the victim and the efficacy of the protective order regime that all reported breaches are *thoroughly investigated, and that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner.* An arrest should be made at the first opportunity, as any delay may increase the risk to the victim.

> (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)

As evidenced in the quote from the DVPN and DVPO guidance, there is often a centring of “appropriate action.” It is suggested that “an arrest should be made at the first opportunity,” should a breach of a protective order occur. Whilst this may be beneficial for establishing immediate safety, this reliance on arrest mirrors positive action and pro-arrest policies (Sherman & Berk, 1984) despite critiques of this approach, outlined in chapter four of this thesis. There is mixed evidence whether arresting perpetrators in the context of AFV is effective given the risk for splintering the family network and thus compounding victim-survivor trauma (Miles & Condry, 2013b). However, these barriers fail to be acknowledged and nuanced in policy. Subsequently, it becomes unclear what intervention in the context of AFV should consist of.

When discussing the role of evidence within the policy documents, there is a repeated on how evidence can help establish a pattern of behaviours. Notably, this is a pattern of coercive control, escalation and harm. This is highlighted in the following excerpts:

> It is important for police officers to look beyond the individual report or call they are responding to, to consider the wider context, and to conduct enquiries around potential patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour and other forms of abuse being perpetrated. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

> Given the insidious and often hidden nature of domestic abuse, it is critical that social workers employ professional curiosity to recognise patterns of behaviour over time. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

> The senior police officer will need to consider other relevant information and evidence, such as any incident reports from previous call outs. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)

As discussed in previous chapters, the focus on coercive control, specifically the 'pattern of power and control' has inadvertently been conflated with IPV or the 'ideal DVA relationship.' Less is known currently about how coercive control presents in the context of familial relationships and therefore what officers should consider when attending callouts of AFV. However, in these excerpts there is an emphasis on response staff (notably police), to establish patterns of power, control, and coercive control when responding to callouts of DVA. Concerns have been raised in academic literature that policing continues to operate on an incident-focused lens (Barlow & Walklate, 2021) and thus police tend to respond to incidents within a binary framework. This may suggest that the contradictions between the need to establish evidence regarding 'power and control' and the lack of evidence on how this presents within AFV circumstances may lead to these relationships being missed by frontline response. This highlights tensions, as raised by McPhee et al (2021), about the applicability of policy into practice.

The emphasis on gathering evidence for prosecution is observed further in the following quote, which links gathering evidence as instrumental in the eventual prosecution of coercive control:

> Consideration of the cumulative impact of any behaviour, particularly where this includes control or coercion within the relationship, is crucial. This approach supports any prosecutor to *effectively assess whether a pattern of behaviour*

> *exists*, whether this behaviour amounts to fear that violence will be carried out or has caused the victim serious alarm or distress, and whether this has had a substantial adverse effect on their usual day-to-day activities. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance, emphasis own)

To some extent this reflects the expectation of the report-to-court model (McPhee et al, 2021) when responding to incidents of DVA, problematic for AFV given previous discussion on the barriers to accessing the criminal justice system and the complicated experiences of familial loyalty, care and expectation. However, this also stresses that establishing fear, pattern and impact are important when conducting evidence gathering. There is an emphasis on "serious alarm and distress" and "substantial effect," mirroring the language of risk discussed in chapter eight which emphasised 'high harm' and the physical impacts of harm. However, as has been discussion, high-harm and thus high-risk behaviours in the context of DVA are routinely conflated with the 'ideal DVA relationship.' Therefore, it is unclear whether this emphasis on establishing a pattern of risk and fear is conducted effectively and in an informed way when responding to more complex relationships, such as AFV.

Furthermore, it is unclear how police, and other multi-agency staff, identify and establish patterns of abuse in the context of AFV given the lack of emphasis on this form of abuse. This is even directly referenced in one document, as highlighted:

> In responding to abuse by family members, services should consider the ways in which the patterns of abuse may differ from, or in cases relate to, patterns of abuse found in cases of intimate partner abuse. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

Whilst it is appreciated that patterns of family abuse in this document are nuanced from IPV, there is no subsequent evidence or examples used of the differences between these two.

The use of civil orders, protection orders, or other legal protections such as the DVDS are discussed throughout the documents. This is by virtue of most of these documents being produced by the government in intention to support practice, however, this still creates interesting findings. As is illustrated in the following excerpts, protection orders, disclosures and information sharing are considered key intervention measures for supporting victim-survivors:

> When attending callouts or when victims report offences, police officers should offer victims of domestic abuse guidance on the types of protective orders available to them. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)
>
> Information shared at multi-agency panels where used may inform considerations around disclosure where relevant, but the final decision on whether or not a disclosure will be made rests with the police. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance)
>
> Although the power to issue a DVPN and subsequent application for a DVPO lies with the police and ultimately the criminal justice service, the success of any such process will be reliant on the partnership work with other agencies. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)
>
> To protect victims from domestic abuse and reduce re-victimisation and re-offending by providing a wider, more flexible range of prohibitions and

> conditions against the perpetrator. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)

As outlined in the literature review, there is currently no literature on the use of protection orders in the context of families, and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) is not available for AFV. This demonstrates that responding to DVA is conflated with a criminal justice response but subsequently, this criminal justice response is anchored around the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of IPV or the 'ideal DVA relationship.’

9.2.2. Victim-survivor needs and multi-agency services: the lingering heteronormativity of risk.

Alongside the need to gather evidence, put in place supportive measures or pursue a prosecution, there is also discussion within the documents of the importance of understanding the bigger picture of an abusive relationship. As is observed in the following excerpts, understanding context, relationships, and wider dynamics are pivotal for responding to DVA:

> It is important for police officers to use professional curiosity and look beyond what may be presented to them at the scene, in order to identify any patterns of behaviour. Police officers must always consider the wider context. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

> Be aware of the potential for domestic abuse to intersect with other harms, taking into account other safeguarding functions when considering the needs of victims, alongside pathways for intervention for perpetrators. Many harms and adverse experiences intersect with one another to either drive abusive

> behaviour, or to exacerbate vulnerabilities. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

In these excerpts, there is an emphasis on encouraging police and other agencies to look beyond the immediate picture and consider the relationship, wider dynamics and other behaviours and harms. Much like the previous chapter in which risk assessment was encouraged to be a holistic exercise, here policy emphasises the role of professional expertise and contextual understanding when implementing intervention or responding to victim-survivors of DVA. This is observed further in the policy documents where it is often encouraged that the person responding is trained to a senior standard, as outlined in the following excerpts:

> An effective multi-agency response means that all frontline agencies consider domestic abuse and are trained to understand both the complex dynamics and the signs of domestic abuse. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

> Police staff with *appropriate expertise*, such as a Public Protection Unit, should complete this stage of the process, as they will have *experience and knowledge* of managing domestic abuse offenders and investigation into domestic abuse incidents. This *requisite knowledge and experience* in this high-risk area of public protection will inform the relevant questioning and assist in assessing risk. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance, emphasis own)

As exemplified in the second excerpt, there is an emphasis not only on the police response but on the specialist public protection service to respond to DVA. The emphasis on “knowledge,” “experience” and “trained” suggests that to both assess risk and support victim-survivors, sufficient breadth of understanding of DVA is needed.

This is helpful for AFV as specialised and well-informed support may be crucial for both identifying and supporting complicated and multi-faceted relationships. However, this thesis is critical of the extent to which this emphasis on context and in-depth, specialist training is implemented in practice. Concerns have regularly been raised in thesis regarding a 'justice by geography' (Davies & Biddle, 2017) in relation to funding, awareness and training thus to some extent emphasising individual experience reinforces what Myhill et al (2023) discuss as 'the officer effect'. Thus, intervention is at the discretion of individual level of experience rather than being part of a wider, standardised approach amongst all professionals.

It is clear however that in the policy documents there is an emphasis on prioritising the victim-survivor perspective. As can be seen in the following excerpts, there is a focus on upholding principles of a trauma-informed approach:

> Responding officers should focus on the welfare of the victim and their safety, including through de-escalation techniques, emotional awareness, active listening and both verbal and non-verbal communication, to help ease victims who may be traumatised. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

> It is vital to work with victims in a trauma-informed way to support them through an investigation process and to prevent re-traumatisation. Victims may withdraw their support for prosecution if they experience a lack of communication, empathy, and support. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

Trauma-informed approaches to victim-survivor support are considered useful for victim-survivor journeys (Bryan et al, 2016; Bracewell et al, 2025). For AFV, this may

be especially important given the intersection with vulnerability, trauma and so-called complex needs as discussed in previous findings chapters and in the context of the literature review. Trauma-informed practice is constructed in the documents as an especially important of a larger multi-agency approach. As evidenced in the following excerpts, this is routinely stressed alongside criminal justice support as a valuable route to pursue:

> It is vital that agencies work together to manage risk and maximise the opportunity for the victim and their children to rebuild their lives… is vital that every statutory and voluntary service plays their part… working together to keep victims safe, prevent harm, and tackle perpetrator's behaviour. (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance)

> Agencies must work together and share information to ensure they are able to draw on all the available information held within each agency to build a full picture of the victims, including children, and perpetrators. This includes looking holistically at an individual's case and circumstances to identify appropriate multi-agency support. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

> The police, with input from domestic abuse specialist organisations or an IDVA, or the multi-agency panel if used, will consider what safeguarding measures could be introduced to support A in the short, medium and long term, and *determine the roles and responsibility of each agency to ensure that the safety plan remains victim-centred*. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

As discussed in chapter four of the thesis, multi-agency approaches have been evidenced as useful for increasing victim-survivor safety and preventing repeat

victimisation (Steel et al, 2011; Robinson et al, 2014). Therefore, this emphasis is welcomed for AFV given the wide range of professionals that may encounter both victim-survivors and perpetrators. However, the quotes presented emphasise the need to understand and provide safety for the victim “and their children” when implementing intervention as well as managing “risk.” Whilst multi-agency support services are considered important, this emphasis on risk management and children continues to reflect heteronormative risk factors associated with the ‘ideal DVA relationship’. This is further nuanced in the following quote:

> Decision-making about what to share, and when, should be governed by a clear, collective understanding about the risks to safety for an individual and family, and how those risks and the other needs within that family can be addressed. Information sharing should happen with the express intent of reducing risk to one or more family member. (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance)

The quote states “information sharing should happen with the express intent of reducing risk”. Whilst reducing risk and maximising safety is important, this has ‘unintended consequences’ (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) for AFV given the concerns about the construction of risk, and who is perceived as at risk (Butterby & Donovan, 2024) raised in the previous chapter. The understanding of ‘risk’ is conflated with the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ and it is unclear what risk looks like in the context of AFV, how current prioritised risk factors impact dynamics of AFV and whether current risk assessment strategies capture the harms of AFV. Therefore, it may be argued that the “intent of reducing risk” is conflated with addressing, removing or preventing risk factors associated with IPV.

The legacies of risk in discussions of intervention are also observed in the following quotes:

> Working together can help to protect adults and children from *further harm, as well as preventing escalation and recurrence of abuse.* (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> Ongoing safety planning is crucial and cases which meet the high-risk threshold should be shared with Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to ensure that any *possible risks of harm t*o A are fully assessed. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

> Police should inform partner agencies, such as probation, social care etc., of any alleged breach and associated details which could inform any risk management plans the partner agencies are undertaking in respect of the perpetrator. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)

Here there is a focus on responding to risk and specifically responding to risk-as-harm. This incurs notions of physical violence and abuse, as discussed in the last chapter, and therefore may ostracize AFV from intervention or as a priority for immediate safeguarding given the likelihood of more concealed, insidious forms of abuse. Therefore, the response to DVA remains tied to this notion of the 'ideal DVA relationship' and the conflation between heteronormative IPV and risk factors. This is furthermore observed in discussions on how professionals can reduce risk, whereby risk factors associated with IPV continue to be used to shape the direction of intervention. As observed in the following excerpts, heteronormative IPV can be seen

to influence who it is considered that professionals should support when implementing intervention or responding to DVA:

> A multi-agency response is critical to identifying and supporting *victims and their families* at an early stage and responding to the perpetrator. Multi-agency working enables professionals to get a better understanding of all the risks to, and *needs of, the victims, including children and young people.* (Controlling and Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> Should a decision be made to disclose information to A, then this will also be accompanied with a robust safety plan tailored to the needs of A, and *any relevant children.* (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> Working together is essential to help with identifying domestic abuse at an early stage and with responding to domestic abuse in a manner that can *reduce the risk of escalation. It is vital to appropriately safeguard victims, including children, regardless of the level of risk.* (Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)
>
> *The ongoing safety of the victim and any children should be of paramount concern to the police.* Safe enquiry with the victim and use of an appropriate specialist domestic abuse risk assessment or screening tool in consultation with partner agencies is *essential to safeguarding victim safety and reducing the risk of further harm.* (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance; emphasis own)

Securing safety for those considered vulnerable, notably victim-survivors and their children, is thus constructed in the excerpts as fundamental in the response to DVA.

This is especially the case when enacting investigations, using protection orders or undertaking information sharing. As can be outlined in the following excerpt, the guidance pertaining to legal protections routinely emphasises the consideration of children:

> The police have a duty to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when exercising their functions; in all investigations the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount should be observed. (Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) Guidance)
>
> Once the police have determined whether the initial trigger can be categorised as a “concern” or “no concern”, best practice is that cases should be referred to a multi-agency panel for any additional input or considerations about whether information should be disclosed and next steps for safeguarding A and any relevant children. (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance; emphasis own)

Whilst this thesis does not dispute the impact of DVA on children, it must be stressed that the intersection of children is discussed in a heteronormative context. There remains little expansion of how the presence of children in AFV impacts risk, the experience of DVA or how it may be managed. Therefore, support is orientated around the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ (Christie, 1986; Duggan, 2018b).

Some good practice exists within the policy documents regarding trauma informed approaches, victim-voice, multi-agency working and considering the wider context. However, this is not properly nuanced in the context of AFV. The extent to which policy

is thus implemented in practice, and the effect of this lack of nuance, therefore needs to be considered.

9.3. Outcomes and trajectories for AFV relationships in police data.

9.3.1. The dominance of Outcome 16.

To assess how support is offered by policing, data pertaining to outcomes was requested for the quantitative datasets. Across the two police forces, three outcome codes hold a proportion of 5% or above in both datasets. These are, Outcome 1 (Charge/summons); Outcome 15 (evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim supports action) and Outcome 16 (Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim does not support further action). This is presented in table 7, however, a full overview of the data is provided in Appendix 27.

	Police Force One	**Police Force Two**
Outcome 1: Charge/summons	6.20%	6.40%
Outcome 15: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim supports action	15.20%	12.60%
Outcome 16: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim does not support further action	**75.70%**	**70.10%**

Table 7: Outcome data by police force.

As is consistent with research on DVA more widely (McPhee et al, 2021; Phoenix, 2023; Bates et al, 2025), the most common outcome across all relationship types is ‘Outcome 16’, where the suspect was identified but the victim-survivor withdrew support or did not wish to take further action. This is reported in 75.7% of AFV cases in Police Force One and in 70.1% of cases in Police Force Two. This is consistent

across all relationship types in both datasets. This is supported by research conducted by Bates et al (2025) who found that familial abuse was linked to early victim-survivor disengagement (pp. 3) and Barbin et al (2025) who similarly found that cases involving intimate partners are more likely than family members to result in a charge (pp. 6).

This is contradictory to the emphasis on criminal justice, discussed in the policy section of this chapter. The prevalence of Outcome 16 speaks to the difficulties victims have in accessing and feeling supported by the criminal justice system (Mulvihill et al, 2018; Hopkins, 2023). There may be additional barriers for those experiencing familial violence and abuse, with Barbin et al (2025) raising that family members were more likely than intimate partners not to support action (pp. 8). In the context of CPV and HBV, there have been reports of the complicating feelings of familial loyalty, a desire not to criminalise family or the fear of repercussions from the wider family that may impact this, as has been discussed in previous findings chapters. Bates et al (2025) indicate that many victim-survivors call the police for immediate safety or help for themselves and the perpetrator, highlighting that this is especially the case for familial violence and abuse (pp. 6). Therefore, there is a reluctance to pursue formal action and instead a police response is seen only as an immediate or crisis response.

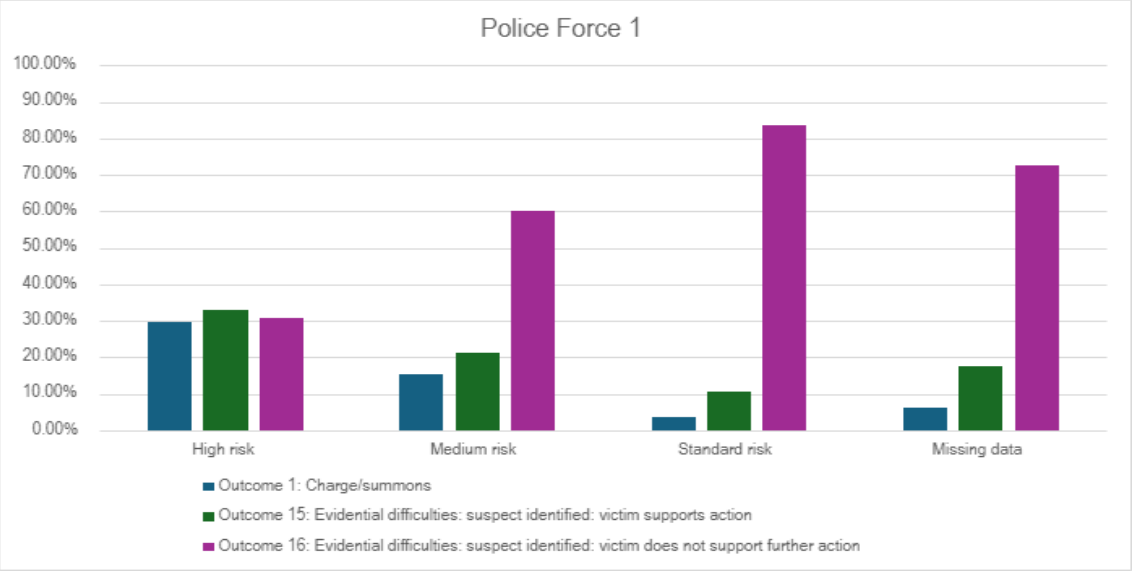
Some caution however must be applied to the use of Outcome 16, as indicated by Robinson et al (2025) who state that ‘Outcome 16’ is often used despite a victim-survivor not wanting criminal justice action in the first place. Furthermore, it does not give a full contextual rationale for victim disengagement and the barriers to engaging (Home Office, 2025). However, in the context of this study, outcome data helps to begin to understand the trajectories of support for AFV victim-survivors when interacting with the police.

Although there is a high prevalence of ‘Outcome 16’ in both datasets, Outcome 15 also has a notable representation across both forces. Outcome 15 refers to when the suspect has been identified and the victim-survivor supports formal action, however, there are subsequent evidential difficulties which mean further action is not able to be undertaken. This is situated within a context where there has been an ongoing decline in DVA being referred to the CPS (Home Office, 2025). Whilst there is a large amount of evidence base exploring Outcome 16 and victim withdrawal (McPhee et al, 2021; Bates et al, 2025; Barbin et al, 2025), there is less specifically focusing on Outcome 15. However, barriers in police resourcing, the demands of evidence gathering and the burden of proof have routinely been reported to impact this (Ellison, 2002; Bishop & Bettinson, 2017; Home Office, 2025).

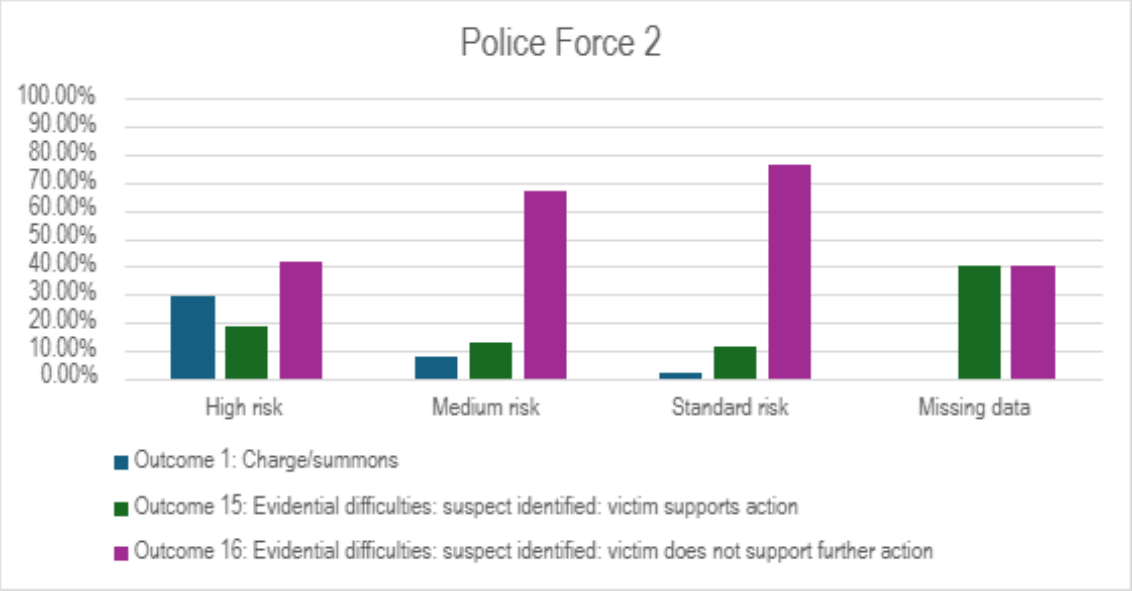
Bishop and Bettinson (2017) raise critical questions over the burden of proof in the context of coercive and controlling behaviour, where the very nature of the offence does not include visible evidence. As has been discussed, the behaviours and dynamics of AFV may be more insidious or less visible to police officer constellations of risk (Robinson et al, 2016b) thus may be additionally difficult to ‘prove.’ This may be further impacted by the lack of consistent knowledge and awareness about what abuse and coercive control presents as in the context of AFV. As discussed in the policy chapter, this demand on ‘evidence gathering’ may be focused on the ‘ideal DVA relationship,’ one which is conflated with physical violence or coercive control in a heterosexual IPV relationship (Rogers, 2013). Therefore, despite victim-survivors supporting action and perpetrators being identified, there may be a lack of knowledge of how to respond to familial violence and abuse and support victim-survivors. This was referenced in chapter seven, where professionals queried whether DVA between family members would be seen as DVA or just a ‘family incident.’ This demonstrates a

need to critically explore whether the burden of proof is sufficiently supported by a nuanced understanding of how different abusive interpersonal relationships present.

The quantitative analysis also explores whether perceptions of risk impacted the outcome. Therefore, the analysis considered the percentage of outcomes found within each risk grading, focusing on Outcomes 1, 15 and 16.



Graph 7: Police Force 1 – outcome by risk grading



Graph 8: Police Force 2 – outcome by risk grading.

As observed in Graphs 7 and 8, incidents graded as high-risk are more likely than the other risk gradings to result in a charge or summons. This mirrors work undertaken by Bates et al (2025) who found that victim-survivors graded as high risk are more likely to engage with the police (pp. 5). Whilst this may indicate that more severe crimes are more likely to justify formal action, when these findings are contextualised, they produce interesting conclusions. The previous chapter highlighted that crimes of 'violence with injury' were more likely to result in a high-risk grading than other crimes, such as stalking, harassment or violence without injury. Therefore, should high-risk crimes be more likely to achieve a charge or summons, it may be argued that like risk gradings, formal action operates through a 'tunnel vision' (Barlow & Walklate, 2021) focus on physical violence. This has also been discussed in the context of IPV and DVA more generally (Barlow et al, 2020). This may be due to the incident and physical-led routinely expected in the context of policing (Barlow & Walklate, 2021; Barlow, 2023) but may also be reflective of priorities placed on formal action by victim-survivors. It could be argued that in the context of families, it may take a significant incident of violence to result in formal action. Thus, more exploration is needed.

Although more high-risk graded cases result in a charge or formal action, there are also a considerable number of high-risk cases that result in evidential difficulties. In both police forces over a third of high-risk cases result in evidential difficulties, thus posing questions over the extent to which victim-survivors are being offered support. This suggests that there are barriers for victim-survivors of AFV within the current system. It is additionally worth noting that:

> 'Positive outcomes' from a victim's point of view cannot simply be equated with certain crime disposal codes. Victims may not have a 'positive' criminal justice

> outcome but can still feel positive about their experiences. (Robinson & Davies, 2026:205).

Therefore, whilst there is a high prevalence of case closure or decisions not to pursue prosecution in the datasets and within data on DVA more widely, it can be argued that it matters more how victim-survivors are treated and responded to by professionals during these interactions. Thus, it is fundamental to explore the decision-making processes that scaffolded these decisions.

9.3.2. Fear, family, and helplessness: case files outcomes.

To expand upon the findings of the quantitative analysis, the case file analysis examines how support is offered during police encounters with relationships of AFV. Across the casefiles, Outcome 16 is a common experience. For example, as can be outlined in the following quote, victim-survivors often are recorded as not wanting to engage with the criminal justice system:

> Neither brother wishes to engage further with police or support a prosecution. (Case File 6, Police Force One)

> She does not wish to provide a statement to police and does not support a prosecution. (Case File 8, Police Force One)

> The victim has severed contact with the police and there is insufficient supporting evidence to facilitate a prosecution. (Case File 19, Police Force Two)

This lack of desire to pursue prosecution is consistent with the quantitative analysis and broader literature on DVA. As discussed, this may be due to complex feelings of loyalty exacerbated by so-called complex needs, familial roles, and vulnerabilities

(Bracewell et al, 2022) as well as perceptions of the police, fear of repercussion from the family and previous negative experiences dealing with the police.

Despite many victim-survivors not actively wanting to pursue formal action, it is interesting that many of the case files indicate that victim-survivors still desire to report the incident. As can be indicated in the following quotes, this is often because victim-survivors anticipate further incidents of violence or an escalation in the abuse:

> He has had issues with his brother in the past and he feels this won't stop; he just wanted police to be aware. (Case File 1, Police Force One)

> Does not wish to make a formal complaint at this time as he does not wish to make the situation worse. Does not believe [perpetrator] will see out the threat however would like the matter recording in case anything happens in the future. (Case File 3, Police Force One)

Case File 1 suggests that the victim-survivor wants the police to “be aware” as they are concerned the abuse “won’t stop”. Similarly, whilst the victim-survivor in Case File 3 did not want to make a formal complaint, they wanted the matter recording “in case anything happens in the future”. In both these case files victim-survivors perceive that things will continue to happen or escalate. This not only demonstrates that victim-survivors may have unique insights into their proximity to risk (Barlow et al, 2021) but stresses the need to actively listen to what victim-survivors desire when interacting with professionals.

Case File 3 indicates that there is a perception that reporting incidents to the police may “make the situation worse”, which contradicts the emphasis in policy of the importance of the police response. Thus, there is a potential conflict between the realities of responding to AFV and what is typically expected from a DVA response.

This is further exemplified by Case File 15, as outlined in the following excerpt, where the victim-survivor in this case file demonstrates a serious reluctance to engage with the police and the criminal justice system:

> There is a protection from harassment restraining order in place to stop offender from contacting him. Victim was unaware of this, and offender turns up on an almost daily basis... Victim doesn't want offender there but doesn't do anything to stop him from entering... Victim said police arrest... just for the courts to release him on bail and the same thing happens again and that it's a vicious cycle.
>
> Victim has said... he wants nothing doing about this as every time he makes a complaint that nothing happens, as the courts just release him on bail, leaving him free to turn up at his address.
>
> Victim was asked on 3 occasions to provide a statement, but he couldn't be convinced due to previously feeling let down by the criminal justice system... victim just wants to be left alone and fears what the offender is going to do next but did not want offender arresting or to support a prosecution.
>
> (Case File 15, Police Force Two)

In the case file victim-survivor states that "nothing happens" or "the same thing happens" and highlights how police action and the interventions put in place by engaging with the criminal justice system action perpetuates a "vicious cycle." The victim-survivor and perpetrators relationship was subject to a restraining order, but the victim-survivor was not aware, speaking to wider issues regarding communication when implementing protective measures such as protection orders. This further poses a challenge to the recourse to law presented in policy.

The decision to engage with support and formal action are further influenced by perceived repercussions on the familial network which may occur because of pursuing formal action. As can be outlined in the following excerpts, victim-survivors' anxieties about the wider family impact their desire to seek support in these case files:

> The victim does not support a prosecution because the suspects are her children and understood why they did what they did. (Case File 16, Police Force Two)

> She states that her family have been having lots of issues with her brother for some time now. Victim has advised that she would like her brother speaking to about his behaviour. She said she was unsure what to do about this as she doesn't want to cause issues within the family. (Case File 12, Police Force Two)

> Victim and his wife are safe and well, but they are desperate for some help.... they are looking to get an injunction… they do not want to lose her totally as she is their daughter, but they are in need of some respite. (Case File 4, Police Force One)

As exemplified in Case File 16 and Case File 4, there is a tendency for victim-survivors to accept behaviours because of familial relationships, exemplified by “the suspects are her children” or “they do not want to lose her totally because she is their daughter”. Thus, the desire to maintain family connections is important and contradicts the presumed benefits regarding pro-arrest or positive action. Case File 12 also highlights the worries victim-survivors may have about the repercussions from the extended family, as discussed in literature on HBV (Bafouni et al, 2024). Furthermore, in Case File 4, victim-survivors highlight they are “desperate for help” and “in need of some respite” further highlighting the tensions between reporting to the criminal justice

system and the desire to obtain holistic support. The family in this situation want to maintain contact with the perpetrator (their daughter) but want some support. Typical policing and criminal justice responses operate based on temporary or permanent separation or removal, thus highlighting the lack of ‘fit’ between the needs of this family dynamic and the current model of support.

This addresses a wider lack of fit between the complex realities of AFV and the 'ideal DVA relationship.’ The notion that a criminal justice response should primarily be relied upon does not suit the wider complex and contextual ‘web’ of AFV (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022).

9.4. Supporting victim-survivors of AFV on the frontline.

9.4.1. Family, belonging, and loyalty: barriers for victim-survivors.

The interviews also sought to explore help-seeking and support provided by professionals in the interviews, and the influences which may shape these journeys. Across the interviews, the presumption of the family as a safe space, a haven, a place of love (as also constructed in the policy analysis within the first findings chapter) contradicted with the experience of violence and abuse. This leads to victim-survivors often struggling to contend with feelings of loyalty, care and expectation. As outlined in the following quotes, participants feel familial expectations shape the likelihood of victim-survivors seeking professional support:

> If the perpetrator is your ex-partner... current partner yeah you have certain loyalties like towards them, but I think for families, for a lot of people, it's like yeah, they’re blood... I’m not gunna do anything I’m not gunna say anything...

> It's about the impact saying something could have on their life. (Charlie, practitioner)
>
> It's the common term we don't grass our own family... There's a lot of pressure in society isn't there that you look after your own... it's just not the done thing to call the police. (Elliot, practitioner)
>
> In the family, like, the expectation was if you have issues … you don't talk about them with people outside of the home. (Blair, victim-survivor)
>
> At the end of the day it's their family, their loved ones um which makes it a bit of a barrier for us… You also get conflicting stories um… and people trying to hide what's going on um… They don't want to... get anyone in trouble… in their family. (Florian, police officer)
>
> They're unlikely to report it because of the um grass culture and then fear of not…. not fear of not being believed. (Ezra, police officer)

As indicated by both Elliot and Ezra, a "grass culture," i.e. one in which speaking to the police is frowned upon, often impacts whether victim-survivors feel able to engage with the police. This "grass-culture" is reinforced by the notion indicated by Charlie that you do not report family because "they're blood." This alludes to wider societal and cultural norms regarding family which shape experiences of abuse and help-seeking. Elliot references that this may be due to socio-economic and geographical ties, something which is discussed by many of the police officers in the study. In one police force, the participants indicated that due to a cultural distrust of the police, they struggle to implement positive action or obtain victim-survivor support for prosecutions. This highlights that the response to DVA needs to be sensitive to the wider context

which may surround experiences of abuse (Robinson et al, 2025), especially in the context of AFV.

Florian perceives that family members often do not want to report their family members for worry about the consequences of this for the perpetrating family members criminal history or mental health. This alludes to the complex feelings of loyalty and the dynamics of care which may characterise relationships of AFV. However, Ezra states that it is not just this feeling of wanting to protect family members but also the idea that they may not be believed by the wider family. This is further exemplified by Blair who links this back to AFV being constructed as part of the personal realm stating that familial problems are not usually expected to be discussed with people “outside the home.” The reference to “expectation” stresses that decisions to seek professional support are complex and shaped by familial expectations, norms, and relationships.

This was discussed by other participants in the interviews, with, as is illustrated in the proceeding quotes, professionals reflecting on the perceived fear or judgement of the wider family or community amongst victim-survivors that they interact with:

> They might want help and want to, like, stop whatever's going on with them... but because of the um the connotations of speaking to the police and things like that… they can’t... A third-party agency... would... help them just like just like we would… because they're not police, um, they've got no issues speaking to them… they won't get the fall back off it either from um family. (Blue, police officer)

> I think it’s um like retaliation from all family members, you know, when you get the police involved and then it causes arguments and friction in the family and then it's sometimes um just genuine disbelief. (Aspen, police officer)

> Theres a massive barrier in understanding that abuse can happen from these types of people, you know, it's not… that openly shared that that can happen. And if you were to say my sibling or my aunt or my uncle are doing that um that makes massive consequences to the family network. (Fran, practitioner)

This builds on the findings discussed in the case files as here many of the professionals' reference "consequences" and "fear" for victim-survivors when deciding to report or access support for experiences of AFV. This helps to explain the high rates of Outcome 16 recorded as indicated in the datasets. This suggests that the constraints placed on victim-survivors due to familial obligations as well as intersections with societal context, community and culture impact the support desired, offered and accepted by victim-survivors. The typical report-to-court model (McPhee et al, 2021) is therefore not accessible for victim-survivors of AFV due to these constraints. Fran suggests that experiences of AFV are not yet "openly shared," indicating that AFV has not yet been problematised within the wider discourse of DVA. Therefore, there are barriers for both professionals and victim-survivors in identifying and understanding these relationships as a form of DVA and subsequently responding in an appropriate manner.

Alongside the worry related to how the family may perceive or respond to allegations of abuse, it was suggested that there are also wider complex feelings of guilt and shame tied to familial, often gendered, roles. This is especially the case in the context of CPV and mothers as victim-survivors. As can be outlined in the following quotes, stigma (Goffman, 1963) often influences how and the extent to which victim-survivors present or respond to professionals:

> Like entangled abuse that goes on with that household… So, we've got pretty complex cases and the isolation that an um mother… generally a mother or parent feels... is that um they can't let anyone know because the abuse will continue and its embarrassing. It's a lot of guilt. (River, practitioner)

> That's a big part of our job, you know, empowering victims to put themselves first but… I actually don't have the language to try and help a mother… stop feeling responsible for her child and stop caring about what happens to him... What the mother needs to is make her son homeless… it's quite a different thing to… making your partner homeless. (Bailey, practitioner)

These quotes capture Holts (2022) discussion of the 'double stigma' in the context of CPV. Victim-survivors must manage their experiences of abuse, their feelings of loyalty towards the child, wider feelings of shame originating from society as well as the needs of the perpetrator. Bailey discusses that positive action policies may inadvertently increase this stigmatisation and exacerbate the burden carried by victim-survivors as removing an abusive perpetrator from this situation may trigger worries about homelessness, mental health, and so-called complex needs. It is therefore no surprise why victim-survivors may be reluctant to support criminal justice action. Furthermore, as discussed in the policy context, the ideals of positive action such as the intent to secure safety, implement safeguarding and conduct multi-agency planning are tied to assumptions of either IPV or heteronormative contexts of risk. Therefore, appropriate responses to AFV may fall between the gaps.

9.4.2. A lack of training, systems, and services: barriers for professionals.

Whilst there are complex barriers in place for victim-survivors in reporting their experiences and accessing support, the analysis also reveals that there are barriers

in place for professionals to respond appropriately. Across the interviews, current models and expected pathways of supporting victim-survivors within the framework of DVA are seen to be based upon the 'default' of IPV, thus the 'ideal DVA relationship.' In comparison, AFV and the needs of victim-survivors often contradict with typical safety planning, advocacy, or victim support.

As is identified in the following quote by Ari, police staff particularly find it challenging to respond to AFV given the expectation that they must separate the perpetrator and victim-survivor:

> It's… more taboo, it's not as obvious. It's not blatantly in front of them and then it's harder to deal with because with partners, it's like right. Let's separate them. Done. That's… your job sorted... Give her some safeguarding or give him some safeguarding. Smash him. I've done it. With them, it's not... because… We've got victim suspect victims, family suspects. Family might be potentially the same family and then dealing with all of them. (Ari, police officer)

Ari articulates that due to the complex network of families,' it is difficult to implement intervention measures, such as separation or removal, which are typically expected within the policing organisation. This reflects Arnull and Ryders (2025) assertion that the lack of definitional specificity and consistency for all forms of DVA and relationships directly impacts praxis (pp. 502). Thus, it is not necessarily, as discussed previously, that victim-survivors feel unable to pursue formal action but also professionals struggle to appropriately respond to AFV. This highlights how the emphasis on criminalisation, positive action, and risk management, as discussed in the policy analysis, influences how intervention can be undertaken. It is interesting that Ari states that AFV is "harder to deal with than with partners" highlighting the conflicts professionals encounter on

the frontline perhaps because of the conflict between the expectation of IPV and the reality of AFV. This furthermore alludes to an ‘othering’ of AFV whereby it’s contradiction with the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ means it is routinely considered as difficult or complex.

This inability to separate families is further reflected by professionals in the study. Morgan highlights that the ability to recommend or put in place protection orders is complicated by the fact that often victim-survivors have legal or caring responsibilities for perpetrators. This is considered as especially the case for instances of adult CPV. Furthermore, they may also have nowhere else to go. Morgan demonstrates how this often puts victim-survivors at an increased risk:

> I don’t know what the solution would be but having a perpetrator on bail to the same address as the victim... it just massively heightens that risk cos that perpetrator is going to come back knowing that there's been a complaint put in… and they're going back to that same home... I think that is an area that needs sort of focused on. (Morgan, practitioner)

This is part of a wider, systemic issue in the current criminal justice process for responding to DVA. As reflected in the following quotes by professionals, much of the expected safety planning or referral processes are conflicting for the needs or dynamics of AFV:

> Sometimes safeguarding can be a bit robotic... advice to phone 999, making sure their phones charged… You're always gonna give that advice… realistically, adult family violence are just less likely to call the police than intimate partners.… What also doesn't really work is going into refuge… Very often it's their house… the suspect is living with them, perhaps, or... might come

> around often, so… realistically the suspects gonna have free reign of the house… because of the family relationship… I've never known adult violence outside of honour-based abuse going to a refuge. (Kendal, police officer)
>
> You can send them the alarms the like personal alarms the windows doors… tell them to download like apps but you... cannot do anything else if they do not want to do it but I think because there has been like coercive control... and they live in this kind of situation, it is very difficult. (Jesse, practitioner)
>
> In terms of safety planning... with this client... it is really difficult... he's there twenty-four seven ... so, it's just ... sort of keeping yourself safe in the home and picking up on what the triggers are and trying to... avoid him as best as you can. (Morgan, practitioner)

Throughout these quotes there is again the notion that responding to AFV is “difficult” or hard. Both Jesse and Kendal suggest that victim-survivors are unlikely to desire or be able to access typical responses which professionals can and are expected to recommend or put in place. Whilst this can be attributed in some respects to the influence of the family, it is also clear that professionals consider the advice or safety measure itself as inappropriate. Jesse suggests that victim-survivors are unlikely to be able take onboard safety planning advice, such as implementing target hardening, due to the impacts of coercive control as well as the desire to provide safety for family. Similarly, Kendal suggests that options like refuge, separation and arrest are fundamentally not appropriate options for those experiencing AFV given the complexities of familial obligation. Morgan similarly stresses that safety planning for their client had to revolve around the reality that the victim-survivor and perpetrator

were going to continue to reside together. Morgan then had to adapt the service offering around the needs of their client.

This was furthered by professionals who raised that not only is typical safeguarding advice inappropriate but legal and civil protections are only accessible for those experiencing IPV:

> When we talk about domestic abuse and we talk about a family members... are you really going to put a non-molestation order in place to keep yourself safe? (Jay, practitioner)

> Victims can do check Clares Law which… it's not obviously concrete we know this... I don't think those things can be accessed by family members actually, can they? (Fran, practitioner)

> When there are triggers like substance use involved its quite heartbreaking like, that advice you give, like you don't really know what to say to them. Especially like, getting like, non-molestation orders... they don't want that. (Cameron, practitioner)

Fran recognises that Clares Law is not accessible for victim-survivors or concerned parties of AFV, reflecting the gaps raised in chapter four of this thesis. Furthermore, Cameron and Jay highlight that protection orders are not suitable because of the barriers discussed previously in relation to the family. This conflicts with the policy emphasis on utilising protection orders and disclosure schemes, further highlighting how AFV may have been neglected to have been considered when models of support were built and designed in policy. This suggests these legal frameworks have been designed to orient around and provide intervention for the 'ideal DVA relationship.' This demonstrates that it is not simply the case that victim-survivors withdraw from criminal

justice action, as is inferred from the rationale of Outcome 16 (Robinson et al, 2025), but rather systems of intervention and support are not designed to meet the needs of victim-survivors of AFV. This helps to provide an explanation for the quantitative data previously presented in this chapter. The gap in legal representation and support is summarised in the following quote from Kendal, who feels that legal terminology and provision need to be much clearer in who it incorporates:

> I think there's a gap definitely, yeah… in the legislation… I know it's been widened… but I think it needs to be more clear… about the... non intimate partners scenario. (Kendal, police officer)

Kendal highlights that whilst experiences of IPV are accepted to be IPV, AFV lacks this clarity when it comes to discussing legislative protection.

The lack of clarity of how to support victim-survivors of AFV is compounded by a lack of specialist services, programmes or organisations that have the capacity, time, and resources to respond specifically to AFV. As can be exemplified in the following quotes, professionals in the study feel there is not enough tailored support which exists for AFV:

> There isn’t enough… out there... that’s specialised you know? Like, even child to parent abuse... when we have parent to child, we have the whole social care system but the other way around you know, these people are crying out for support for their children... Theres just very few services... it's all a bit new. (Noah, practitioner)

> It feels less understood... for example we do the group work programme... which is brilliant… but it doesn’t specifically look at like parents… that sort of

> violence. Like, it doesn't look at it, there's no specific group for it... I don't think there's that like nothing specific really that I'm aware of. (Charlie, practitioner)

Noah discusses that victim-survivors of familial violence and abuse "don't always fit" either with the youth justice approach emphasised for CPV or the criminalisation agenda emphasised for DVA. This mirrors Hester's (2011) discussion of the tensions between 'planets' of support and the current lack of clarity of whom should be responsible for responding to AFV. Lex, as demonstrated in the following quote, feels that whilst every so often there is media attention and attempts to problematise AFV or CPV, this quickly loses momentum:

> Although there are multiple domestic violence services out there you... there's little very little child to parent violence and abuse... service provision attached to those mainstream services… which um I find… quite puzzling actually… I think it comes in like… waves you know … Like, everyone starts going oh my gosh, talking about it and then it will go quiet and then another couple of years will go by and its back being talked about. And, um I think it always relies on like... something ends up popping up in the media. (Lex, victim-survivor)

Lex's assertion that there are 'waves' of media and public attention reflect Holt and Shon's (2016) discussion of the 'tip of the iceberg' moment (pp. 367). Notably that CPV and AFV often comes close to 'social problem status' but never quite achieves this for complicated reasons. These "waves" of momentum discussed by Lex stand in stark parallel to the recent wider political and media climate in relation to IPV and VAWG more generally. For example, there has been consistent attention on the need to reduce the prevalence and severity of VAWG for a long time (Purdy, 2025). Thus, if AFV comes in "waves" this alludes to the fact it is not consistently considered an

essential form of VAWG and therefore efforts to prevent AFV are not considered to be a strategic priority.

The complexity and difficulty of currently providing support to AFV within the framework of DVA means that AFV is often excluded from mainstream support services. As outlined in the proceeding quotes, the perceived complexity of AFV prevents the adequate support for victim-survivors:

> I think that sort of adulthood… there's not that kind of provision for it like that what I found like… When I had those sorts of cases it felt a bit like where do you go with it? (Charlie, practitioner)

> When a case like that comes through like even as a professional, I think oh god what am I gunna do with this? (Jamie, practitioner)

> With… sort of um… adult families… you're limited on what you can do. (Paris, police officer)

> It just gets pushed in the too hard to do, pile. (Ari, police officer)

The language of not knowing where to go, being "limited," not being aware of where to refer families or the response to AFV being "too hard to do" produces this idea that AFV is too complex to deal with using existing systems. This language, especially as indicated by Ari, inadvertently constructs AFV as 'the other' (Gill & Brah, 2013). The complex webs and dynamics considered to be involved in relationships of AFV are therefore considered by professionals in the interviews to conflict with typical intervention or expectations of support. This is compounded by the fact there is no specialist knowledge or intervention, subsequently causing tension, frustration, or othering.

Aubrey highlights that the lack of specialist services is especially stark in the context of adult perpetrators, such as those involved in AFV. As they discuss in the following quote, whilst social care may deal with children, family abuse in adulthood lacks a specific referral pathway:

> I think social work would deal with it if it was a child like maybe against parents but there isn't really anything specific for adulthood I guess... just kind of refuges and Women's Aid and things like that … I don't know of anything specific really. (Aubrey, practitioner)

This notion that the intersection of adulthood and family violence adds to the complexity of responding to AFV is shared amongst some of the professionals in the study. As can be seen in the proceeding quotes below, the confusion of being unsure how to proceed with supporting victim-survivors is exacerbated by the age of the perpetrator, as an adult, as it becomes unclear who was responsible or should respond to these relationships.

> As soon as they hit eighteen everything kind of just stops, doesn't it? With the support... you don't get as much support and recognition, and it doesn't happen as fast as what it does when there's a child involved. (Courtney, police officer)

> Services drop off for the seventeen, eighteen to like twenty-five and that's frustrating as that's a crucial time to help... because once they get older like the thirty plus and forty that gets so difficult to engage with… So, if we can really help those individuals... help them with those additional needs to take that forward into their adult life and into adult services … I think would make the world of difference. (River, practitioner)

> If we're looking at adults like young adults who are still living at home, it's still like where do they go? Where do they get placed? Going back to the housing crisis like there's those barriers around that too... you know there can be financial difficulties as well like if a young adult is dependent on their parent putting them through university for example or… um just providing, cos of the cost-of-living crisis. (Jamie, practitioner)

It is noted to be especially unclear where to place a perpetrator who is over the age of 18, especially in the context of CPV, due to the transitional period between children's social services and into criminal justice or advocacy services. Whilst current DVA services do not meet the needs of AFV, adult social care, youth justice, and other services are also not suitable nor accessible for these groups due to thresholds based on age and vulnerability. Drew alludes to this further in the following quote, highlighting how they feel that the lack of specialist services for perpetrators of AFV is related to the understanding of 'vulnerability':

> A lot of the time we look at vulnerable people being children, people with additional needs and marginalised backgrounds and um many things... Definitely on, a lot of the time, the risk to children, the risk to children but actually just because you're over 18 doesn't mean the risk goes away. (Drew, practitioner)

In Drews opinion, children are seen as inherently vulnerable by services but adults neglect to obtain this. This reflects the concerns addressed in the policy findings where both vulnerability and responding to vulnerability is conflated with responding to children and therefore responding to facets associated with the 'ideal DVA relationship.' Furthermore, Drew suggests that perceptions of risk are tied to this

understanding of vulnerability. They indicate that risk is assumed to be lower in adulthood and asserts that “just because you’re over eighteen, doesn’t mean the risk goes away.” This further links to chapter eight of this thesis which indicated that risk is commonly associated with vulnerability, the presence of children and heteronormative risk factors as opposed to familial violence and abuse.

This conceptual confusion between childhood and adulthood is discussed further in the context of sixteen and seventeen-year-olds, reflecting the fuzziness of current legislation, as discussed in the literature review. In the following quotes, professionals often felt unsure how to proceed with responding to family violence cases above the age of sixteen but under the age of eighteen:

> It was a case actually that I tried to get sent to MARAC, but they wouldn’t take it because he the perpetrator he was 17. So, they said he's not an adult but... had pushed his mum down the stairs he’d threatened to kill her, she, you know? …It was a constant back and forth with MARAC cos they were saying that it’s a problem for social care but social care were saying it was domestic abuse and it was a very sort of kind of grey area situation... Domestic abuse is 16 and above but I was told that maybe it’s the victim that’s 16 and above but in cases where someone is perpetrating abuse they have to be 18… It just feels wrong to label anyone under 18 as a perpetrator. (Bailey, practitioner).

> I worked in homelessness and I worked in services that would be like 16 plus and I saw a lot of people at 16, 17 coming through that’s just like, I can't live at home I can’t live with my mum… some of it was like they just really didn’t get on, some of it was domestic abuse, some of it was like domestic abuse between the parents and the child was like I don’t want to live here anymore. So, it's like

> we kind of like put a responsibility on to on to the like 16- or 17-year-old whose… clearly a child to, like, make that decision themselves. (Alex, practitioner)

This highlights the conflicting narratives in chapter two of this thesis, where the 'bracketing off' of services and abusive relationships (Holt & Shon, 2016) has meant those that cross-over theoretical boundaries slip through the cracks. This highlights a wider issue to look at transitional safeguarding and to consider 'who goes where and when' when victims and perpetrators reach the age of eighteen (Cocker et al, 2021, 2022). As reflected in the quantitative data in Chapter 7, AFV may occur across the life course therefore there needs to be ongoing provision.

The need for ongoing support was considered fundamental by Lex, as outlined in the following quote:

> Carrying on with the support is essential I think to um protect them and protect families because it just doesn't stop... It may change and morph into something else, but it doesn't stop. (Lex, victim-survivor)

Lex's quote is particularly powerful about family violence and abuse morphing and changing in dynamics and presentation but not stopping. Lex discussed how they had experienced CPV from their child long after their child turned eighteen and achieved 'adulthood.' They demonstrate that despite the continuation of DVA, support often dropped off. This caused feelings of disappointment, exclusion and frustration and speaks of the need to ensure the transition between services recognise how dynamics of AFV may also change.

9.4.3. Centring context, relationships, and the family in practice.

Rather than professionals merely accepting the limitations of current intervention however, many professionals in this study had strategies that they feel are important

to utilise to support victim-survivors of AFV despite systemic failures. As discussed in the policy section, whilst there is a clear emphasis on criminal justice frameworks, there is also encouragement to use professional curiosity and a trauma-informed approach. This is identified by professionals as fundamental for support in the context of AFV, as is illustrated in the following quotes:

> It’s lots of sessions... to build trust and then talk about their feelings and understand... their behaviours. (Elliot, practitioner)

> I think there should probably be a bit more of an understanding… it's a different relationship completely isn't it between people? Um especially if there's like a mother and a child involved or grandparents who've taken on the child like they're going to be a lot more inclined to um let them stay in the house... and try and support them because without them, they've got nobody else rather than like within intimate partners…. They might be more like susceptible to be able to leave them and feel supported if they did leave them. (Courtney, police officer)

The quotes above highlight how practitioners engage in adapting the service according to the needs of victim-survivors, reflecting a victim-centred approach. As discussed by Elliot, rather than fitting AFV around a set number of sessions, it can be useful to add more sessions of support to help build trust and facilitate disclosure. For Courney trauma-informed support consists of understanding the barriers for victim-survivors and understanding the relational dynamics. This subsequently allows them to ensure safeguarding and safety planning are conducted in a manner which does not presume the ending or separation of a relationship. Whilst this shows discretionary agency, it must be noted that professionals in this study were keenly aware of AFV and their

decision to take part was motivated by an interest in these relationships. Therefore, it can be argued that they had more motivation than others to resist the 'public story' of IPV (Donovan & Hester, 2014) through informed practice. It is unclear the extent to which these strategies occur across the national multi-agency picture.

Nonetheless, professionals in the study highlight the need to understand the wider context surrounding dynamics of AFV. Professionals emphasise building an awareness of the dynamics of the abusive relationship, the wider family, and the societal backdrop. This reflects some of the messages embedded within policy which urge a contextual understanding of the 'bigger picture,' although in policy this is framed as part of evidence gathering. As can be outlined in the following quotes understanding context is continually stressed as fundamental for effectively supporting victim-survivors of AFV:

> Exploring that family dynamic asking questions especially about previous partners and other family members and getting an almost family tree. (Ali, practitioner)

> You're gunna want to understand the person… I always want to say that you're feeling when you respond to certain things is like mapped out against like a… background… of like... a much wider context of like stuff… even if you're just dealing with an individual person their wider background of like stuff is going to influence how they like engage with things. (Blair, victim-survivor)

Here Ali stresses taking the time to understand the "family dynamic" by using professional curiosity to explore victim-survivor perceptions of the wider family, other relationships, and normalised behaviour. They stress how professionals could use this information to map a "family tree." Therefore time, careful consideration and rapport

building is important – suggesting a wider governmental requirement to invest in services and resources that can undertake more sustainable and organic support. Blair reinforces this by highlighting that their experiences as a victim-survivor were very much shaped by their "context," which professionals need to understand if they were to try and support their needs in an appropriate manner. Gathering context from the perspective of participants in this study therefore means understanding the life course of the person and the family, understanding how the relationship has fluctuated over time, understanding the norms of the family context and identifying supportive or protective factors for the victim-survivor. This involves moving beyond just understanding what is currently happening for a victim-survivor.

It was also important that support is conducted in a way which is non-judgemental and trauma informed. As reflected in the following quotes, professionals stress that acknowledging the familial relationship, even though it may be abusive, can be important for victim-survivors of AFV:

> I remember one person on my caseload and there was um abuse from her dad... She would tell me how great her dad was and how loving her dad was and she had a great relationship with him... I had to support her by not removing those things for her... I'm not here to go has a bad man and he did a bad thing, I'm actually here to go that's really nice and it's okay to miss him. (Fran, practitioner)

> They've got to find some commonality with you… that you get them and you're here to... care about their needs and their wants… If they want to live in isolation then that's okay... What is it they like about the perpetrator? What is their connection?... Do they love them? ...It's okay to love them. (Noah, practitioner)

As Fran and Noah suggest, non-judgement support involves not making assumptions about their interpretation of the relationship and acknowledging complex feelings of familial loyalty that may complicate victim-survivors desires for professional intervention. This highlights the strategic impression management (Goffman, 1959) and emotion work (Hoschild, 1983) done by service providers in adapting a model of support to meet differing contexts and needs. A non-judgemental, holistic and an informed approach is seen to have benefits for victim-survivors. As reflected in the following quotes, the cruciality of active listening, empathy, and trauma-informed practice (Bracewell et al, 2025), is fundamental for positive interactions between victim-survivors and professionals:

> They threw services at us... but they never actually said how are you? They never actually said those words. How are you? How are you doing? (Yale, victim-survivor)

> I could speak to her freely… she was the only professional at the time that I felt comfortable going to purely because it was like a safe space where I could go like um and tell her things. (Lex, victim-survivor)

> When we are interacting with social services, this is one of the worst days of our lives. Like, not necessarily... the worst day of my life. But this is a flashpoint. Crisis point. (Red, victim-survivor)

The discussion by Yale that despite all the services offered, no professional ever asked “how are you?” is powerful and speaks to the cruciality of a victim-centred response. Although there is a need to respond and prevent abuse from re-occurring, as emphasised in the policy focus on reducing risk and harm, there is also a need to support victim-survivors as people. Empathy and care are thus instrumental. As noted

by Red, when interacting with professional services, this is a “crisis point” therefore there is a need to recognise this within the parameters of a trauma-informed approach. There is a need to recognise the presentation of victim-survivors and their stories of abuse without resorting to immediate public protection, safeguarding, or criminal justice approaches unless absolutely necessary. Asking what victim-survivors desire or want to happen next is crucial. The focus on evidence gathering and pursuing prosecutions in policy therefore may conflict with victim-survivor needs. This is further demonstrated by Lex who centres the importance of support providing a “safe space.” This reflects academic arguments about the importance of procedural justice and victim-experience (Robinson & Davies, 2026).

Although victim-survivor support and centring the desires and needs of victim survivors is considered fundamental, professionals in the study raise that there is a need to offer support to perpetrators of AFV, given the loyalties and obligations often felt by victim-survivors and the intersection of overlapping vulnerabilities. However, this is exceedingly difficult to do, especially in the context of advocacy frameworks. This is discussed by Kendal as presented in the following quote:

> All the support seems to be based on the victim, whereas the reason why this is happening is because of the um suspect’s behaviour... If more support was given to the suspect… it would help… I've often wondered why they can't also support the suspect. (Kendall, police officer)

Kendal questions why the multi-agency framework does not adequately support the perpetrator. This highlights how response is often equipped to respond to the victim-survivor, which although important also reflects a responsibilization of victim-survivors (Renehan et al, 2023). Kendal's suggestion of embedding a multi-agency approach of

care towards both victim-survivors and perpetrators in the context of AFV may help to address the simultaneous prevalence of so-called complex needs within these relationships. This may also support victim-survivors' feelings of comfortability to pursue action as it is not framed by the criminal justice system.

9.5. Conclusion.

In conclusion, this chapter addresses the third and fourth question of the thesis. These questions examine how the wider 'public story' or construction of both DVA and AFV on the policy level may have impacted the response to and support of victim-survivors of AFV. This chapter suggests that despite efforts to encourage a holistic and contextual approach, the framing of intervention in policy emphasises criminal justice action. Furthermore, this is often focused on reducing risk, preventing harm, and pursuing prosecution. This chapter argues that this continues to be based upon an assumption that DVA is IPV and therefore that there are clear directions of power, clear intent, and visible signs of abuse. Whilst a multi-agency approach is referenced, the legacy of risk lingers and thus inadvertently constructs multi-agency support as existing predominantly for the 'ideal DVA relationship.'

This chapter used the police data to highlight that victim-survivor withdrawal from criminal justice action is common for experiences of AFV. Whilst this is consistent with literature on IPV (McPhee et al, 2021), the case file analysis highlights that this is not in absence of victim-survivor desires for support. On the contrary, many victim-survivors desire incidents recording in anticipation of events escalating. This raises a need to understand the barriers in place to accessing prosecution.

Whilst the case file analysis highlights some of the barriers in place for accessing support in the context of AFV, including complex familial belonging, the interviews expanded on this further. Barriers exist for both for victim-survivors and professionals in the interviews. Participants discussed how the family impacts decisions regarding reporting, disclosing, and seeking support for abuse. Namely feelings of shame, guilt and expectation intersect to fuel a stigmatisation for victim-survivors. Furthermore, there is a concern of the repercussions of reporting for their family lives and therefore social networks. However, the interviews reveal that it is not a simple question of the familial nature of abuse impacting the desire for help or support, but rather current systems are not built for the needs or realities of responding to AFV. Instead, they are built around the 'ideal DVA relationship.

Amongst professionals there is confusion, tension, and difficulty in providing support for AFV. Many practitioners reflected on broken systems of housing and mental health, and how this exacerbates barriers to seeking support. Professionals reflected that despite structural barriers, it is also difficult to support AFV within the DVA framework. Key legislative protections and models of support, such as protection orders, disclosure schemes or safeguarding advice, are fundamentally not available or appropriate for AFV relationships. To navigate this 'systemic incompatibility,' professionals often invoke strategies of empathy and care to resist these limitations and better meet the needs of AFV. It is stressed that taking the time to build a rapport and then understand contextual dynamics and histories of the person, the abusive relationship, the wider family, and the societal backdrop without judgement is fundamental.

The subsequent chapter summarises the findings chapters together to address the research questions, highlight the implications of this research as well as stressing the further avenues of research which have arisen.

Chapter Ten: Discussion.

10.1. Introduction.

This chapter integrates the key findings from the research and discusses the implications of these for the field. This discussion will address the research questions by summarising how AFV was understood, identified, and responded to as a form of DVA in the datasets analysed. Within these discussions, implications for theory, policy and practice will be discussed.

10.2. Embedding complexity: conceptualising AFV as a form of DVA.

10.2.1. The discursive shadow of the 'ideal DVA relationship.'

The first research question posed concerned how AFV was understood and conceptualised within the wider umbrella of DVA. As was outlined in the introduction and first literature review chapter, whilst AFV is included within the legal parameters of what is considered DVA (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021), it remains absent from policy, practice, and public discussions. This research explored this by conducting an analysis of policy documents, which although aimed to support professional practice, reinforce a conflation between DVA and IPV. Specifically, this 'public story' (Donovan & Hester, 2014) of DVA in policy documents is a narrative of heteronormative coercive control between one active perpetrator and one passive victim-survivor. Here DVA thus becomes a problem of individual relationships, with one perpetrator intentionally controlling or exerting power over a weak, passive victim. This thesis coined this as the 'ideal DVA relationship,' building on work by Nils Christie (1986).

Of particular concern in the policy findings is the adoption of Starks (2007) coercive control framework without a critical appreciation of its original context. The emphasis

on power and control in the policy documents situates the norm as IPV, a problem of the relationship and typically involving two people locked within clearly defined boundaries of 'victim,' 'perpetrator' and 'power over.' The blame is firmly placed on the individuals within this dyadic relationship. This ignores subtle forms of coercive control that may have been normalised within a wider context of family life or family norms. Furthermore, this ignores both the interconnected networks and 'webs' (Chowdhury & Winder, 2022) of the family as well as the connection of DVA to wider structural and societal norms (Gangoli et al, 2018). This is compounded by the fact, in the policy documents analysed, there is a lack of nuance between different DVA relationships.

In comparison to the 'ideal DVA relationship,' when AFV is discussed in the policy documents analysed, this is often constructed to be 'either/or' (Aldridge, 2020) HBV, the abuse of vulnerable adults or as a secondary form of violence following IPV. 'The family' is conflictingly perceived as a safe space or a place for victim-survivors to retreat to following abuse by an external, perpetrator located outside of the family. Given the symbolic power of policy to govern social expectations of what is considered a 'problem' or 'problematised' (Holt, 2012), this is a significant 'unintended consequence' (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) as it subsequently erects a discursive 'story' (Jamieson, 1998) of what is considered to be DVA and AFV.

10.2.2. The 'non-ideal status' of AFV.

The 'ideal DVA relationship' is a mythological relationship. No relationship of DVA, even heterosexual IPV, fulfils the conditions of this 'ideal DVA relationship.' DVA is notoriously complex as a 'wicked social problem' (Devaney & Spratt, 2009). Therefore, this relationship has limiting consequences for all DVA relationships. However, it has specific consequences for the way AFV is understood, recorded, and encountered by

professionals. In both the police data and the interviews, AFV conflicts with this 'ideal DVA relationship' and exists beyond the 'either/or' framing of so-called HBV, the abuse of vulnerable adults or as a secondary form of violence and abuse.

AFV is often perceived by professionals as a 'complex' relationship and involving different dynamics to what is typically expected from DVA relationships. AFV can involve multiple witnesses, perpetrators, and victim-survivors, therefore challenging a 'binary' relationship. Experiences of AFV are often characterised by complex feelings of familial belonging, norms and loyalty and thus contradicting the sole problematisation of the relationship. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of AFV is seen to be impacted by overlapping vulnerabilities and intergenerational cycles of violence therefore challenging both the understanding of the perpetrator as an intentional actor and the clearly defined boundaries of 'victim' and 'perpetrator.' This challenges the current definition of DVA and the current widely accepted frameworks of radical feminist theory.

The lack of nuance to different contexts in current policy and theoretical understandings of abuse mirrors concerns expressed by Goodmark (2015) about how policies may be 'exported without a license'. Goodmark suggests that the recourse to law as a response to DVA in the United States has been 'exported' across the world. Despite the "best intentions" (pp. 4) of this, this ignores the cultural, relational, political, social, and economic differentials across the globe (pp. 5). She provides the example of how the use of protection orders in the context of China may lead to a woman being ostracised by her whole family (pp. 6). As raised by Walklate and Fitz-Gibbon (2019), "the mere introduction and 'travelling' nature of such polices should not be misinterpreted as evidence of their effectiveness in practice" (pp. 101). In the context of AFV, the 'exportation' of DVA and Starks (2007) power and control model to all

relational contexts without nuance, has arguably led to the concealing of AFV. This stresses the need to critically unpick what is currently propositioned to be DVA and nuance different relational contexts. It is argued that the contexts of AFV are different than IPV and thus both policy and theory should make this clear. This queries the effectiveness of umbrella categories of DVA or GBV and urges a look at relational contexts.

The complex realities of AFV consequently result in AFV being othered, minimised, or silenced. This silencing is experienced both systemically and individually with the findings raising a lack of space to record the complex realities of AFV within organisational data systems, a lack of training on the nuances of AFV as well as a lack of 'name' to problematise experiences. When AFV is described, it is constructed through minimising language such as 'rivalry' or 'argument.' This exemplifies both the unintended consequences of its conflict with the 'ideal DVA relationship,' and its subsequent construction as a 'non-ideal relationship' (Fohring, 2018).

10.2.3. Dismantling the umbrella of DVA and creating space for complexity.

Current definitions of DVA in policy and theory are thus not fit for purpose in the context of AFV (Standing Together, 2021). As discussed, the conflicts between the realities of AFV and the 'ideal DVA relationship' leave victim-survivors without a framework to articulate their experiences and leave practitioners unsure how to record, respond or support these relationships. This asserts the need to "open the conceptual and methodological dialogue" (Holt & Shon, 2016:918) regarding how DVA is understood, explained, and researched. Context, particularly the relationship context, matters when understanding, recording, and responding to forms of DVA (Turner et al, 2019; Arnull & Ryder, 2025; Robinson et al, 2025).

When AFV is discussed in this study, experiences include both similarities and differences to IPV. Whilst the dynamics of power and control are sometimes unclear, some participants stated that control can be a key feature. However, the context of this coercion differs, normally it relies on gendered, familial expectations. Participants also stressed the intersection of other key factors alongside gendered coercive control. Participants indicated that dynamics of care, intergenerational transmission, influences of familial norms and systems as well as dynamics of power and control intersect in experiences of AFV. Gender, geographical location, and social position are also important, as is the wider social and local context and climate. In addition, there is the existence of multiple witnesses, victims, and perpetrators as well as complex and overlapping vulnerability and interdependence that shape and compound both experiences of abuse and the ability to seek support. There is therefore a need to isolate AFV from the umbrella of DVA to exemplify and pay adequate attention to these nuances.

Inspired by the ecological and web-like structures built by Heise (1998) and Chowdhury (2021), this thesis builds these factors and considerations of the experiences of AFV into the following visual model:

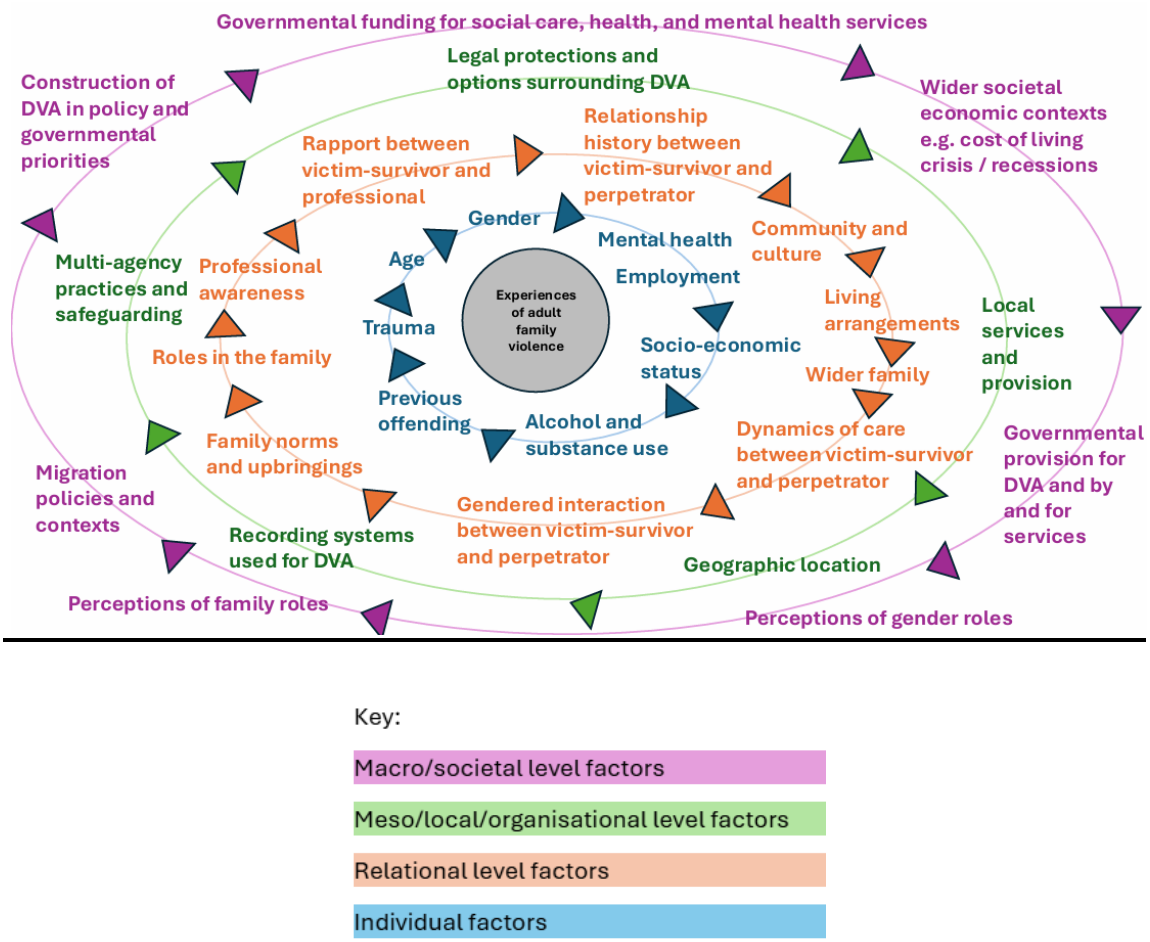


Figure 7: The complex experience of AFV.

This model advocates for an embracing of theoretical 'mess (Stanley & Wise, 1993) and complexity (Lewis, 2014; Blake & Nobles, 2025) by bringing together gender and other factors into account. It builds on the theoretical integrative strategies discussed in the first literature review chapter, such as the ecological theories suggested by Lori Heise (1998). However rather than see these spheres as static, this thesis argues that these are interactive and intersect to shape not only the experiences of abuse but the experiences of help-seeking. This intersecting nature is influenced by perceptions of web-like models of DVA (Chowdhury, 2021). Whilst aspects of this model may be applicable to all DVA relationships, the factors listed in orange are considered particularly key for AFV given the findings emphasise the importance of family roles,

family norms, gender, relationships and caring dynamics. However, it is the intersecting nature of these relational dynamics with the other spheres that especially compound upon experiences of abuse and help-seeking. For example, macro assumptions of what is DVA may impact the ability to record AFV in organisations and how AFV is subsequently addressed between victim-survivors and professionals. This emphasis on relational contexts and its complex relationship to individual, societal and organisational factors therefore need to be embraced in policy representations of AFV, in recording practices, in service design and in training.

Whilst this model is appreciated for understanding the complexity of AFV, there are some issues with ‘bracketing off’ forms of DVA. In a landscape where funding is already scarce and dependent on a ‘justice by geography’ (Davies & Biddle, 2017), there is a risk that this may indeed do more harm than good. For example, this may ostracize certain relationships from the wider international political landscape of GBV. It is for this reason rather than 'bracketing off’ approaches, all theoretical conceptualisations of DVA need to allow space for relational contexts, structural factors, and individual experiences as well as how these may intersect to structure both the experiences of abuse and the ability to navigate support. The social world and social actors within and surrounding both DVA and AFV are fundamentally complex and thus theory and the legislative application of theory must consider this. Therefore, this model is not only applicable to AFV and can be used to theorise DVA more widely. DVA is fundamentally a ‘wicked social problem’ (Devaney & Spratt, 2009) and is thus complex. Whilst gender is clearly a central feature, there are intersecting factors in all relationships. By embracing complexity and mess alongside gender, this therefore allows better representation of all DVA relationships and encourages a context-led understanding of abuse.

10.3. Operationalising curiosity: risk assessing AFV.

10.3.1. The legacy of the 'ideal DVA relationship' on perceptions of risk.

As discussed in the literature review, academic explorations of risk have proliferated in contemporary literature especially in the context of DVA. Understanding what risk and what risk factors are and how they may facilitate or escalate the occurrence of abuse is a cornerstone of DVA response. Furthermore, the point of risk assessment often occurs during a first point of contact between professionals and victim-survivors and therefore symbolises a key touch point for implementing effective intervention and prevention of harm. However, as discussed, much of the evidence base on both what risk looks like and how risk is assessed is founded in data pertaining to IPV (Benbow et al, 2023).

In addition to the formation of the 'ideal DVA relationship,' the policy analysis found that the construction of risk in policy is centred around a conflation with IPV. Risk and high-risk are discussed as visible escalations in severity or frequency of harm. This idea of harm is often based on physical markers of violence and abuse, therefore, offering both a contradiction for the adoption of coercive control in policy as well as difficult for the realities of AFV. As discussed in the previous section, AFV involves subtle and insidious forms of control such as the manipulation of familial roles. Therefore, again the policy construction of risk absents or inadvertently others the realities of AFV.

This is further identified as problematic as policy constructions of risk are often conflated with behaviours associated with the context of heteronormative IPV. For example, stalking, sexual violence, child contact, separation, and pregnancy are all

discussed frequently as markers of the potential for escalation. Therefore, this thesis argues that high-risk is conflated with IPV relationships and thus ignores how the contexts of the family and wider society may contribute to the proximity of being at-risk. Thus ‘high risk’ relationships are precipitated on the image of heteronormative IPV involving a binary of two people with clear dynamics of power and control. It is argued that this policy construction encourages the professional gaze (Ash, 2013) to focus on this context of risk, consequently silencing other ‘risky relationships’ (Weir, 2024).

It is established that this policy construction influences both the recording of risk and assessment in professional practice. Across both police datasets, AFV is often recorded as standard risk, despite both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of case files indicating the existence of high-risk behaviours such as stalking and harassment as well as indications of escalation, fear, and severity. In the interviews professionals specifically noted that risk assessment practices, especially structured professional judgement (SPJ) tools, and the DASH RIC, are centred around IPV rather than AFV.

10.3.2. Understanding risk for AFV: context matters.

Professionals raised that there exists a systemic incompatibility between both the content and framing of risk assessment tools and the complex realities of AFV. SPJ tools, such as the DASH RIC, are considered in their current form unable to capture the unique dynamics of AFV, such as the overlapping dynamics of vulnerability, the changing identities of victims and perpetrators as well as the ‘web’ like networks of familial violence. The DASH RIC especially exists in the context of a binary, with it only being able to record one victim and one perpetrator. Therefore, it cannot, as raised by

Hannah-Moffat (2016) “account for complex interactions between social contexts, agency and changes over the life course” (pp. 36).

This has further consequences as it is indicated AFV is subsequently disproportionately unlikely to reach the threshold of MARAC support. This was despite professionals raising that AFV holds the potential to be experienced as high-risk. Professionals felt that wider societal contexts, dynamics, and inequalities impact upon the level of risk for victim-survivors of AFV. Similar to the model presented in Figure 7, it was raised that risk assessment practice for AFV needs to consider the relationship dynamic and history, an awareness of victim-survivor and perpetrator needs, an understanding of wider family dynamics, an awareness of geographic and cultural contexts as well as an acknowledgement of wider structural and socio-economic contexts such as gender, cost-of-living crisis’ or governmental provision. For example, it was noted that the cost-of-living crisis, the lack of social housing and waiting lists for mental health services are likely to increase dependency or increase a reliance on family members for support. This places victim-survivors in positions of vulnerability and risk.

Whilst risk assessment encourages risk to be reduced through identifying and subsequently eliminating static risk factors (Hannah-Moffat, 2005), the presence of societal, structural, and contextual risk factors in the context of AFV may infer that a contextual safeguarding approach (Firmin, 2020) may be beneficial. Firmin's framework, although focused on young people's experience of exploitation, encourages the assessment of wider social conditions (Walklate & Barlow, 2025). This both challenges the individualistic framing of DVA and the current artefact approach to risk (Kemshall, 2003). This again calls into attention the importance of context and complexity when responding to relationships of AFV.

These concerns are somewhat addressed by the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) tool. The shortcomings of the DASH RIC to assess AFV are compounded by the static nature of counting and numerical thresholds. As stressed by many of the professionals in the study, the questions in the DASH RIC quite simply do not lead to a fair score for AFV as the questions do not tap into relational and situational contexts. The DARA has been propositioned as allowing for the in-depth exploration of abuse through the ability to scale answers. This is seen as beneficial, especially in the context of coercive control, as it allows assessors to establish the bigger picture. This may be beneficial for AFV as it may allow for a natural rapport to form. However, despite some reported benefits (Wire & Myhill, 2018), Myhill et al (2023) asserts that "improvements to the risk tool itself can only take you so far" (pp. 19). The importance of training, nuanced information, and adequate resourcing is still highlighted.

10.3.3. Emphasising professional curiosity for 'non-ideal' relationships.

Despite professionals identifying barriers in current risk assessment practice due to the influence of 'the ideal DVA relationship,' they often equipped principles of professional curiosity, discretion, and trauma-informed practice. This included asking follow-up questions, rewording questions, and emphasising the historical context of the family. These strategies were considered preferential to creating new tools or adding more mandatory questions to current tools. Professionals stressed the importance of embedding a feminist ethics of care, a trauma-informed practice and professional curiosity in current practice rather than an adopting a masculine, objective, and scientific approach to risk. This highlights the overarching need to explore frameworks of risk assessment which are grounded within an awareness of care, complexity, and context.

The ability to implement discretion and professional curiosity conflicts with the wider context of ‘risk science’ (Walklate, 1999; Kemshall, 2003). Whilst concerns around the ‘officer effect’ (Myhill et al, 2023) and the influence of police culture on the response to DVA remain valid (Carrillo, 2021), the removal of discretion completely without a valid alternative has negative repercussions for AFV as it leaves the possibility to adapt risk assessment practice in an informed, discretionary way as impossible. Inspired by Hannah-Moffat's (2016) emphasis on disentangling risk from need and recidivism, this thesis argues that risk and risk assessment must be uncoupled from scientific prediction. Instead, risk assessment should be encouraged as an integrated approach, with emphasis on the strengths and perspectives of victim-survivors, contextual and relational dynamics as well as the curiosity and expertise of professionals.

To some extent this reflects a ’needs assessment' or 'safeguarding assessment’ rather than risk assessment. As emphasised by Myhill and Hohl (2016), a lot of risk assessment work is often about ’matching and intervention’ rather than just identifying and then removing risk factors. They raise further:

> Different forms of domestic violence have different underlying dynamics and represent different levels of harm. The challenge of risk assessment for the practitioner is to identify accurately which form of domestic violence he or she is presented with and recognise the degree of harm. (pp. 4481).

Thus, practices of risk assessment, especially in the context of AFV, should not be focused solely on identification of risk but rather should form an integral part of a wider holistic attempt to understand a victim-survivor, the abusive relationship, the wider relationships around them, needs, strengths, and desires for the future. This helps

build relationships, rapport and therefore may also facilitate disclosure (Bryan et al, 2016).

Whilst the DARA may offer some fruitful practice, given the scaling of questions may allow for rapport and looking beyond the immediate picture (Stark, 2012), simply building another tool, or adding more questions was not considered by participants to reflect a sustainable response. Indeed, creating more tools reinvents a wheel that is not currently working. Emphasis on the use of follow up questions, rapport, and contextual appreciation rather than reaching a certain numerical threshold is considered best practice. Some of the key follow-up questions, alternative considerations or themes highlighted in the interviews are presented in the following model, this could be offered as a supplementary guidance for current tools or training:

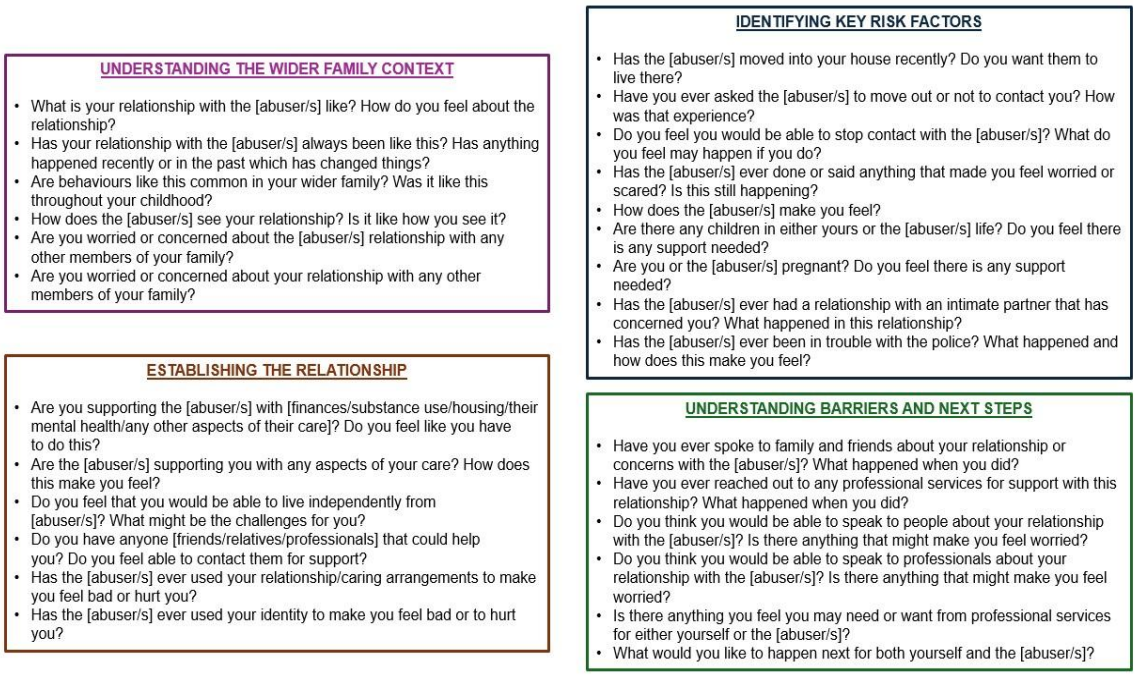


Figure 8: Questions to help explore risk in the context of AFV.

This model uses the complexity of causation presented in Figure 7 and provides optional additional questions, things to consider or ways to re-word pre-existing risk

factors when confronted with a situation of AFV. For example, instead of asking “are you frightened,” professionals could ask “What is your relationship like with the [abuser/s]?” Similarly, instead of asking “have you separated from the abuser,” professionals could ask, “Have you ever asked the [abuser/s] to move out?” This considers that victim-survivors may not always present as fearful and may be affected by feelings of care, loyalty, and expectation. This also recognises the complex living dynamics involved in AFV. This is further explored by questions such as “are behaviours like this common in your family” and “do you feel able to stop contact with the [abuser/s].” Whilst this should not replace the need to understand immediate safeguarding factors, such as threats to kill or harm, these questions allow a qualitative exploration of the relationship and help facilitate a contextual understanding of abuse, familial barriers and victim-survivor wishes for what happens next. There is an emphasis on structural, local, and relational contexts, understanding the family, understanding the needs and risks associated with the perpetrator and the relationship as well as centring the wishes of the victim-survivor.

This could be used alongside tools such as the DASH-RIC or DARA and be embedded within existing policies and guidance. Therefore, rather than immediately eradicating risk assessment forms or reinventing the wheel, this thesis demonstrates that ‘space for action’ (Sharp-Jeffs et al, 2017) exists in current practice. Providing a suggested list of ‘things to consider’ emphasises a ‘professional curiosity’ approach as a communicative skill to explore, understand and challenge taken for granted practice (Phillips et al, 2022; Dickens et al, 2023). The professional judgement option already contained within the DASH RIC and the DARA approaches to risk assessment allow ‘professional curiosity’ to be seamlessly integrated into practice without placing increased pressures, time, or resources on existing organisations. By embedding this

within practice, it would call attention to the realities of risk in AFV and therefore disrupt the discursive influence of the 'ideal DVA relationship.'

There are concerns that 'professional curiosity' may be used as a "quick fix approach to risk assessment" (Phillips et al, 2022:334), especially as the SPJ model of risk assessment is engrained within the cultural and policy response to DVA in England and Wales. Therefore, changing this will take time and must be adequately supported by provision, time, and resources. Furthermore, whilst the pre-existing condition of professional judgement may allow professionals the space to use discretion to respond to all relationships, to deal with complex challenges and to think creatively, there are systemic issues that must be addressed. In the specific context of AFV, there is a need to invest time, resources and funding into awareness raising, training on different dynamics of AFV and the development of specialist interventions. Furthermore, the interviews in this study also spoke of a discrepancy between services, therefore, there is a need to ensure risk assessment practices and support regarding this in the context of AFV is replicated and funded consistently on a national scale.

10.4. Centralising context: supporting victim-survivors of AFV.

10.4.1. Tensions between AFV and the 'criminalisation thesis.'

The final two research questions addressed how professionals supported victim-survivors of AFV and whether this meets the needs of victim-survivors. As discussed in the literature review, implementing an effective approach to DVA in both policing and the wider multi-agency team occupies significant space in academic, policy and practice literature. This may be a result of the fact that the interaction between victim-

survivors and professionals is considered what Davies and Barlow (2024) suggest as a ‘high-stakes’ opportunity (pp. 11). However, much of what is known regarding ‘what works’ (Sherman & Berk, 1984) or what does not work has not been nuanced for AFV.

The policy analysis finds that the understanding of DVA is often conflated with a perception of IPV-related coercive control. This framing has consequences for the way responding to DVA is envisioned within policy. Consistent with academic literature regarding the coercive control ‘creep’ (Walklate & Fitz-Gibbon, 2019, 2021; Barlow & Walklate, 2022, 2025), the policy analysis highlights an emphasis on criminalisation, evidence-gathering, and the role of the police. There is a particular emphasis on the role of positive action or the use of civil and legal protections. Positive or appropriate action is conflated with decisions to arrest (Barlow & Walklate, 2020; Walklate & Barlow, 2025), further highlighting the dominance of a criminalisation approach. A recourse to law or criminalisation approach may be detrimental for AFV given feelings of familial loyalty raised in research regarding CPV and HBV. The unproblematised encouragement of a homogenous positive action response therefore arguably further assumes the presence of the ‘ideal DVA relationship.’ Despite literature and practice continually recommending a multi-agency approach, this is stressed predominantly in the contexts of vulnerability or heteronormative IPV therefore inadvertently excluding AFV from this intervention.

Although the policy analysis highlighted some factors of best practice, including the encouragement of professional curiosity, there is a lingering focus on reducing risk implicated within the discussion of response. Reducing risk, preventing harm, and safeguarding vulnerable people are considered intrinsic to response. Given the conflation between risk and IPV (namely the ‘ideal DVA relationship’), established in

the secondary findings chapter, this raises implications over whether the current response model conjured in policy effectively meets the needs of AFV.

The police datasets shed some light on this, with the high prevalence of 'Outcome 16', meaning that despite perpetrators being identified victim-survivors often withdraw from the process of prosecution. Whilst this is consistent with literature on IPV (McPhee et al, 2021), it highlights that there are fundamental tensions between the criminal justice system or the policing system and the needs of victim-survivors of AFV. Interestingly, the second most common outcome is 'Outcome 15', which suggested that even if victim-survivors do want criminal justice support, there are wider barriers which mean charges do not arise. This may be related to AFV 'not fitting' the typical response model or the typical response model 'not fitting' the complex realities of AFV.

10.4.2. The 'hard and complex' work of responding to AFV.

This lack of fit was pursued further in both the case files and the interviews. Professionals in interviews felt responding to AFV involved 'complex' and 'difficult' work (Davies et al, 2023). Due to familial loyalties, desires to protect the family as well as wider fears about familial breakdown or other repercussions, it is unlikely that victim-survivors will feel able to or desire to pursue formal action. However, professionals also raised that barriers exist for them. Current systems are seen to be incompatible or have unsuitable options for professionals to implement, recommend or signpost to victim-survivors. Significant examples of this include positive action policies such as arrest or separation and the use of civil and legal protections such as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) or 'Clares Law' (Home Office, 2023) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO) (formerly known as Domestic Violence Protection Orders/Notices) (Home Office, 2024). Professionals suggested

that Clares Law is only available to those experiencing or at risk of experiencing IPV and that DAPO's are unsuitable for many family members due to the complex feelings of belonging and loyalty which may conflict with the requirements of no-contact.

This lack of fit is exacerbated by a lack of training, awareness and development specifically focused on AFV as well as a system incompatibility. Current recording systems and response models are designed to respond and capture the 'ideal DVA relationship' leading to the gaze not being sufficiently focused on addressing AFV. This causes tensions for both victim-survivors and professionals. As well as systems being designed only to record the 'ideal DVA relationship,' expectations of risk assessment, positive action and safeguarding are again built around this. AFV is often excluded from intervention development due to perceived complex familial influences and this systemic incompatibility.

It was further raised that there are no specific support services which attend to the complexities of AFV. In comparison, many existing services are incompatible. For example, professionals raised that the assumption of an intentional, external perpetrator meant that victim-support and perpetrator support are often considered two islands of provision (Renehan, 2022; Renehan & Gadd, 2024). Professionals raised that given the overlapping vulnerabilities, familial loyalties, and so-called complex needs in the context of AFV these relationships would instead benefit from a dual approach of support for both victim-survivors and perpetrators. However, this was complicated by the dynamics of adulthood and familial violence in adulthood. The age of eighteen was seen to represent a shift away from child or family centric support towards the criminal justice or advocacy system. However, both latter two systems are seen as built to respond to IPV.

Much like the findings from risk assessment, it was deduced that service provision is orientated around the ‘ideal DVA relationship.’ This focuses on reducing risk using separation, positive action, and criminal justice. This has consequences for the experiences of AFV which requires a non-judgemental, trauma-informed, and context-led approach. This therefore suggests that service design could benefit from utilising the voices of those on the frontline.

10.4.3. Embedding curiosity, context, and complexity into service design.

Participants often discussed how they resist the discursive influence of the ‘public story’ (Donovan & Hester, 2014) in practice. Professionals raised that they regularly attempt to obtain a contextual understanding of the family as well as an ethics of care and professional curiosity when responding to victim-survivors of AFV. Whilst these may be taken for granted assumptions within practice (Latour, 1987), they are beneficial strategies. Furthermore, whilst the professionals involved in this study obviously have a keen awareness of AFV in comparison to the national picture, it is important to begin to think about how some of these interventions could be implemented into practice.

It is identified that responding to AFV requires support for perpetrators, victims, and the wider family. This alludes back to the need to embed context and complexity into frameworks of response. As raised by Arnull and Ryder (2025) “ignoring context and the interplay of context causes harm and inaccuracy” (pp. 512). Thus, responding to AFV involves looking at the barriers, facilitators and challenges that exist on the macro, meso and micro level or to understand the victim-survivor on the individual, familial, community and societal level, as indicated in Figure 7. For example, this could involve support identifying who the victim-survivor is, how they understand and experience

family, as well as their needs. And may also involve identifying how social events, conditions or family and life course events have impacted the abuse.

A contextual understanding of the family, victim-survivors and society is subsequently crucial as raised in both Figure 7 and Figure 8. To this extent, this can be again seen as complimentary with Carlene Firmin's (2020) ‘contextual safeguarding’ approach. Whilst often utilised in the context of children's social care, peer-on-peer abuse, and extra-familial harm, Walklate and Barlow (2025) have begun to explore the possibilities of applying this to the context of policing DVA. Firmin and Lloyd (2020) raise that contextual safeguarding is built on three core principles: contexts of harm can be changed, “inequality is both the cause of consequence of contextual harm” and “harm occurs in an interaction between individual choice and structural/environmental constraints” (pp. 6). They stress that when this framework is applied, professionals should consider their ‘collective capacity,’ critically assess their own roles in identifying harm and consider relationships (pp. 6). Robinson et al (2025) have recognised the importance of context in police responses, stating that “taking a context-led approach to investigating means recognising and responding to the different relationship contexts subsumed under the statutory definition” (pp. 18).

Applying a contextual framework therefore fundamentally involves a shift in focus from individuals to the system (Firmin et al, 2024). The focus would be no longer on the individual ‘ideal DVA relationship’ but would be shifted to critically examine the wider societal, familial, and individual conditions that may facilitate or influence experiences of abuse. A framework which recognises the wider contextual conditions of AFV helps to avoid blaming or labelling individuals. This is beneficial especially for AFV given the overlapping labels of victim and perpetrator and the complex feelings of familial responsibility and care. By looking at the wider system, a context-led support

framework allows professionals to consider society, communities, location, relationships, and histories when supporting victim-survivors as well as leaving space to support perpetrators. This is complimentary given the interviews and case files indicated a desire by victim-survivors to support the wider family.

The following model presents some key considerations that may be considered by professionals when supporting victim-survivors of AFV:

VICTIM-SURVIVOR STRENGTHS & NEEDS

- Establish what the victim-survivor would like to happen next for their relationship with the perpetrator.

Victim-survivors may not want the relationship to 'end' or may not feel able to leave/end contact. Victim-survivors also may not consider their experiences as 'domestic abuse'. It is important to understand what they would like to happen next and use this to inform later referrals and safety planning.

- Understand whether there is anything the victim-survivor is struggling with and that they want support with.

This may help to understand what referrals may need to be made e.g. health and social care, mental health, legal support, financial support.

- Try and capture what are the victim-survivors' strengths and wishes for the future.

A strengths-based perspective is vital for empowerment. Victim-survivors may not always present as fearful and this may be a good way to understand their wider context and life history. This can help to support with facilitating disclosure or understanding the extent of abuse.

- Document what support networks are currently in place for the victim-survivor.

This could be other family members but may also be friends. This may help to set up whether separation or protection orders will be useful.

PERPETRATOR NEEDS

- Understand whether the perpetrator can live independently and whether this is something the victim-survivor would wish for.

Victim-survivors of familial violence and abuse may feel responsible for or may have caring responsibilities for perpetrators. It is important to understand these for safety planning and to consider whether protection orders would be a supportive option.

- Establish what/whether any agencies are currently involved with the perpetrator.

This may help with partnership working and information sharing.

- Establish if the victim-survivor feels there is anything the perpetrator needs support with.

Victim-survivors may feel responsible for perpetrators. It may be the case that they would like some advice or help with making referrals for their family member. It is important to emphasise and empower victim-survivors.

- Capture whether the victim-survivor would like to support criminal justice action or prosecution if there is evidence of a crime.

Victim-survivors may not want to bring criminal justice action against family members due to stigma, fear of repercussions or care for the perpetrator. It is also important to document what they feel the perpetrators' reaction to criminal justice action may be. This can be used in assessments of risk.

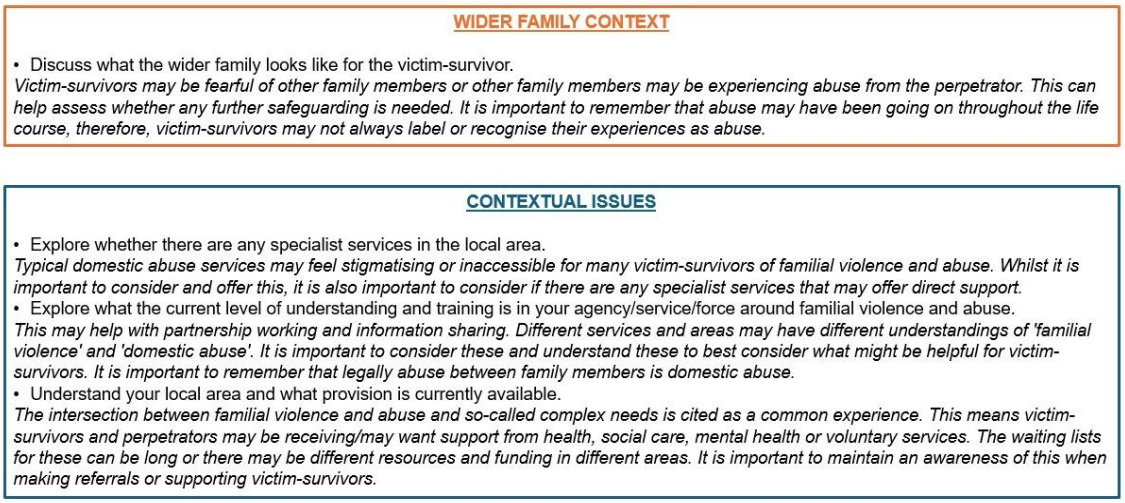


Figure 9: Things to consider when supporting victim-survivors of AFV.

This could be used in safety planning, in advocacy meetings or as a reflection exercise alongside existing guidance: This is not only is it complimentary with the models of AFV and exploring risk previously introduced (Figure 7 and Figure 8), but it also critically assesses if the system is working and considers wider societal inequalities. This supports a shift away from the individual to considering context. This therefore opens the possibility to assess whether the policing, criminal justice, legal protections are appropriate or enough for the complexities involved in AFV, or DVA more widely, and represents a way to start thinking about holistic futures. Furthermore, it allows room for victim-survivors to explore their options, maintain their familial relationships should they wish and gain key knowledge.

10.5. Conclusion.

This discussion has cemented that the current understanding, identification, and response to DVA is conflated with an idealised form of IPV. The discursive trickle-down of policy can be exemplified in the ways practice, services and systems have been

built around this image of DVA. The complex, overlapping and multi-systemic realities of AFV raise that theoretical understandings, services and practices need to consider context, complexity, and mess.

This thesis raises that this has implications on multiple levels. Firstly, theoretical and policy constructions of the problem of DVA need to consider relational, contextual, and ecological contexts as well as the interactions of these. This would help to recognise and centre the realistic complexity of individual lives, families, and social worlds (Blake & Nobles, 2025). By recognising theoretical complexity, this may have positive benefits for the way services, organisations and responses are developed. Secondly, an emphasis on complexity, curiosity and context needs to be extended to risk assessment. Risk specifically needs to be disentangled from the emphasis on recidivism and prediction and instead needs to be accompanied by a committed investment in funding, developing, and encouraging principles of professional curiosity. Relationships, trauma-informed practice, and motivational interviewing are fundamental in unpicking true risk, strengths, and needs.

Finally, this emphasis on context, complexity and curiosity needs to be embedded into service design and frontline response. Understanding the family, the individual and the wider societal context is fundamental for AFV and for providing supportive outcomes for both victim-survivors and perpetrators. Embedding contextual safeguarding further facilitates a critical reflection on current systems as well as turning the lens to focus on the contexts of abuse as opposed to the individualised relationship.

These conclusions and implications allow the thesis to now move towards the concluding chapter. This chapter addresses the limitations as well as the scope for future research and recommendations for policy, academia, and practice.

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion.

11.1. Introduction.

This closing chapter provides a summary of the findings, implications and conclusions of the research as well as addressing the research questions. By addressing these questions, the chapter provides knowledge around the nature of AFV, how these relationships are understood, risk assessed and responded to by professionals and the extent to which victim-survivors are supported. This chapter also addresses the main limitations of the research, including the limitations generated by the scope and methodology of the research.

11.2. Summary of the research.

This study aimed to illuminate the experiences of AFV within the umbrella of DVA. The research identified that there was a gap in the literature regarding how AFV is understood, identified, and assessed as well as how victim-survivors are supported. Although DVA is a 'high stakes' (Davies & Barlow, 2024:11) area of concern, this thesis raised that there was a significant lack of research beyond IPV. Specifically, this research identified that DVA had become conflated with IPV – termed a 'public story' (Jamieson, 1998; Donovan & Hester, 2014) - and therefore raised the need to examine the extent to which this conflation existed and what consequences this had for understanding, identifying and responding to AFV.

This thesis used a feminist-interactionist framework and multi-methodological research design to address this problem, highlighting the need to explore how public stories emerge and what discursive implications they hold (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). This methodological approach highlighted that assessing the different

components in the overall system of response to DVA was important to understand the potential impacts of the ‘public story’ of DVA (Donovan & Hester, 2014). To undertake this, the research focused on examining the macro, meso and micro spheres. This was reflected in the methodological strategy by examining policy documents (macro), police case file information (meso) and semi-structured interviews with professionals and victim-survivors (micro). To address the research questions and bring together the datasets, Moran-Ellis et al’s (2006) ‘following the thread’ approach was used. This involved identifying three overarching thematic threads and assessing how they emerged in each dataset.

The findings at the macro-policy level show there is a continued reliance on a ‘public story’ of IPV (Donovan & Hester, 2014). Notably this is understood to be a relationship involving two people in an intimate partner relationship whereby there was a clear imbalance of power and one intentionally exerted control over another. This thesis understood this to be an ‘ideal DVA relationship’ (Christie, 1986). Other relationships, such as AFV, were othered or considered as secondary. This is an ‘unintended consequence’ (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) of the increased operationalisation of coercive control to fit all DVA without critical nuance. This relationship was often conflated with heteronormative risk factors, such as the presence of children, pregnancy or separation, or physical violence and harm. The encouraged practice gaze within policy documents further reinforced this by encouraging a criminalisation approach (Williams & Walklate, 2020).

The 'ideal DVA relationship’ had consequences for how organisations and individuals could understand, record, risk assess or respond to AFV. In comparison to the ‘ideal DVA relationship,’ AFV was considered complex – involving overlapping vulnerabilities, interlocking inequalities, and multiple relationships. Power dynamics

and victim-perpetrator binaries were often harder to distinguish, often influenced by familial norms, learned behaviours, familial roles, and structural factors. This often led to AFV being othered as a form of DVA due to current systems lacking nuance to record these differential dynamics. The simplistic lens of DVA, reinforced through policy and theoretical definitions, therefore renders AFV invisible. This has further consequences, such as that many victim-survivors may slip through the support net due to a lack of space for victim-survivors to problematise their experiences and a lack of clear definition for professionals to identify this abuse.

The lack of possibilities to record AFV mean less is known about the reality of AFV. Thus, AFV does not become a social problem and is missed from official statistics, discussions, and policy. This in turn means the development of knowledge around AFV, its severity and complexity and how it should be responded to, is slowed. This thesis argued that this queries the current appropriateness of an 'umbrella' of DVA and made the case for embedding complexity into theoretical models, policy conceptualisations, and service design. Specifically, in walking the 'uneasy tightrope' (McRobbie, 1982) between radical feminist perspectives and governmental policy theories of DVA and risk have inadvertently moved away from relational, contextual, and holistic framings as well as appreciating structural factors. Instead, the focus relies on 'pursuing individual perpetrators' (NPCC, 2023). This has significant implications for the often-complex realities of AFV, as discussed, but also all forms of DVA.

Risk in the context of AFV relationships was observed to be a combination of individual, dynamic and structural factors rather than individual static, forensic or calculable object. For example, perpetrators often have mental health difficulties however this as a 'risk factor' was exacerbated by the desire for victim-survivors to care for family members and by the long waiting lists in current mental health services.

This meant family members were often left in proximity to potential violence for significant periods of time. Henceforth it was not the individual's mental health that was the ‘risk factor’ but the wider context around this. However, risk recording and assessment practice reinforced the ‘public story’ by being built only to respond to individualised risk factors – usually associated with IPV. Risk assessment tools and questions were deemed inappropriate for AFV and were seen to result in AFV relationships often scoring low or being missed completely in risk assessment and thus these experiences are at a disadvantage for multi-agency support.

It became clear that actuarial tools are inappropriate for capturing the fluid, dynamic and systemic nature of risk in the context of AFV and risk assessment needs to be undertaken in a holistic way. This urges a shifting of the lens of risk to consider individual needs, familial contexts, community experiences, and structural forces as well as how these intersect. This led the thesis to raise the potential for a return to focus on how discretion and professional curiosity can contribute to interactional, holistic justices and assessments of risk (Mulvihill et al, 2018). However, rather than simply encouraging professionals to ‘look beyond’ the relationship (Stark, 2012), this thesis raises that there needs to be consistent expenditure and investment in improving the awareness, knowledge, and skills of professionals to ensure a consistent practice.

Furthermore, the desire to maintain family connections and support perpetrators was seen to be incompatible with current systems and service design regarding victim-support. It was likely that victim-survivors withdraw from the criminal justice system or that the criminal justice system would not meet their specific relational, familial and contextual needs. Both 'positive action' and standard advocacy practices were seen to be built in the image of IPV, and it was unclear ‘what works’ (Sherman & Berk, 1984)

for victim-survivors of AFV. However, much like the contexts of risk, it was found that it would be beneficial for responses to AFV to operationalise an understanding of context – specifically individual, familial, community and societal contexts – which surround the experiences of abuse.

Gender roles, family roles, family norms, family histories, societal narratives, policy decisions, community provision, relational dynamics, individual needs were all seen to contribute to characterise experiences of abuse and help-seeking. This thesis argues that this is consistent with the work by Carlene Firmin (2020) in the context of a 'contextual safeguarding approach'. This stresses the need to go beyond individual people and relationships to go beyond binaries (Firmin, 2024) and examine wider structures of inequality and harm (Walklate & Barlow, 2025).

Overall, this thesis has highlighted the need to recognise AFV as a form of DVA however, urges caution on recognising this without specific nuance. The complex realities of AFV challenge the 'black box' (Latour, 1987) of what is currently taken for granted in understanding what DVA is and how we should identify, assess, and respond to this. This complexity further stresses the benefits to acknowledging mess and complexity (Stanley & Wise, 1993) in theoretical, policy and practice explanation of and responses to harm. Social realities and social actors are interconnected, overlapping and complex and thus our understanding and response to all forms and relationships of violence needs to embed and operationalise this.

11.3. Limitations.

11.3.1. Limitations in scope.

By the very nature of focusing on AFV, this thesis did not address sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds despite their inclusion in the legal parameters of 'domestic abuse' (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021). However, academic literature on CPV has raised that this may be a high-risk life course period with perpetrators at the peak of their physical power (Condry & Miles, 2013b; The Guardian, 2022; Baker et al, 2025). Furthermore, in this research, professionals often discussed the difficulties in responding to children and adolescents in abusive contexts as well as raising difficulties in the transition from children's to adults' services (Cocker et al, 2021, 2022). Therefore, this research misses a specific age group category that exists within a liminal state between childhood and adulthood whereby services, support and dynamics are fundamentally different. Further research is needed to understand the appropriateness and impact of lowering the age to 16 in the context of family abuse (Home Office, 2013).

Additionally, whilst this thesis recognises that HBV may be experienced within the context of AFV, it was not at the forefront. However, HBV was continually discussed in interviews as a high-risk and complex form of familial violence. Thus, more efforts could have been invested in the research to further nuance experiences of HBV. The interviews also raised that there was an uncertainty whether HBV was AFV, DVA or a distinct form of GBV given the 'web' of actors involved (Chowdhury, 2021; Chowdhury & Winder, 2022). Therefore, further research could explore this further.

This points to problems with the use of the catch-all term of AFV. As recognised in the quantitative coding and police data, there are a wide variety and forms of relationships that may sit within this umbrella. In recognition of the 'unintended consequences' (Burman & Brooks-Hay, 2018) of the umbrella of DVA and the need to understand relational contexts, the homogenous term of 'adult family violence' may not be appropriate either. Whilst this was seen as needed to disentangle families from the

‘public story’ of IPV (Donovan & Hester, 2014), it is important that caution is urged that AFV does not within itself become another homogenous label. As stressed in the discussion chapter, appreciating relationality is fundamental.

This points to another limitation in the research that more evidence is needed about the behaviours associated with AFV and each of the individualised relationships within this. Given this research aimed to look at the consequences of the public story for recording and response, an in-depth examination of behaviours was outside of the scope of the research. This was another strategic decision to avoid traumatisation in the telling of stories by victim-survivors as it wished to instead capture their thoughts, reflections, and experiences of the support they were provided. However, we need to understand how AFV may differ from or be like IPV (Bracewell et al, 2022).

11.3.2. Methodological limitations.

The choice of datasets, participants and methods should also be carefully considered. The policy documents are for instance limited to national policy during a specific timeframe and do not reflect the ‘localism’ (Davies & Biddle, 2017) of policymaking. The interview samples are limited in size, geographical distribution, and professional roles. This is in part due to the time and financial constraints of a PhD level project as well as the occupation of being a ‘novice’ in the field. However, this does have ramifications for generating conclusions. For example, in the context of interviews there lacks voices from statutory services, such as adult social care and health services. This is despite the research attempting to meet these groups. Furthermore, there is a limited number of victim-survivor interviews. Whilst qualitative research prioritises quality over quantity, this still stunts the findings from being fully representative. Further research needs to engage more proactively with the

communities it aims to represent through collaborative, participatory and action research approaches as well as edits to the recruitment strategy, materials, or research design.

As touched upon in chapter six, the reliance of the research on police data may be problematic. Police data is not created for the purposes of academic research (Lovett et al, 2022; Spence & Crivatu, 2025) and instead serves to justify decision making (Campbell, 2004). This resulted, as outlined, the researcher having to make certain decisions regarding the coding of datasets which may have led to experiences being missed. For example, the relationships were blanketed into four categories and specific nuances were missed. Furthermore, police data captures only those incidents or relationships that come to the attention of the police - especially problematic as this research utilised crime rather than incident data - and police have considerable discretion in inputting data (Terpstra & Kort, 2017; Moretti & Buil-Gil, 2021). Robinson et al (2025) therefore raise specific cautions in the use of police data to make generalisable conclusions. They assert that high-levels of missing data “make it hard to apply a victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led approach” (pp. 13).

Robinson et al (2025) further raise specific concerns with the recording of AFV in police data, suggesting it is rarely differentiated whether this is DVA or an incident in a ‘domestic space’ (pp. 23). They state that these two incidents are recorded and responded to in the same way, and that this:

> Raises urgent questions about domestic abuse data integrity and interpretation. Is all crime committed against someone the perpetrator is personally connected to domestic abuse? Is this what the broader public understands to be domestic abuse which they see published in domestic crime statistics or are they reading

the statistics as meaning something more connected to... pattern of abuse. (pp. 38).

Therefore the ‘picture’ provided by the police data may not be fully representative of the realities, scale, extent, and dynamics of AFV and must be observed to be only a potential and thus partial, subjective snapshot of ‘the problem.’ Further, more insightful work could be done on examining third-sector or statutory agency datasets to compare, contrast or further nuance the experiences of AFV across the multi-agency sphere.

This idea that this research only provides a snapshot is reflective of wider limitations in the research design and especially in the context of ‘multi-layered’ research strategies. Whilst the research had the ambition to explore the wider system that relates to DVA, which was argued to be reflective in the research design and the and decision to incorporate multiple datasets, the richness of this was hindered by the reality of the research being a PhD project and thus subject to significant time constraints. Therefore, only a small sample of policy documents, interview participants, case files, and a limited geographical and cross-sector quantitative data was examined. Furthermore, as discussed throughout the methodology chapter, there were often changes, adaptations and ‘bumps in the road’ during the data collection so there are challenges for the replicability of this thesis.

11.4. Recommendations.

11.4.1. Further research.

There is often a tendency in academic research to suggest policy and practice change and thus feel we have done ‘our bit’ (Stanko, 1998). However, academic praxis must

also look inwards. There should be an acknowledgement of the perpetuation of the public story and therefore a remedy to correct this within our own systems of knowledge. This thesis has illuminated a gap in the theoretical evidence base on DVA in relation to AFV. As a starting point, any evaluations or research into DVA, risk and practice must define what relationships they are researching rather than using catch-all terms, such as DVA.

Further research is therefore needed on AFV, who does what to whom in this context (Hester, 2009; Bates, 2020), how these relationships change and fluctuate over time as well as how the dynamics of 'power and control' are experienced. Research is needed to examine whether these dynamics are consistent or contradictory with behaviours outlined in frameworks such as the homicide timeline (Monckton Smith, 2019) and the power and control wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1986). Whilst this research offered some insight, a more rigorous and representative recruitment of victim-survivors and multi-agency datasets is needed. There is also a need to better research and evaluate 'what works' (Sherman & Berk, 1984), what does not work and what could work as well as a rigorous evaluation of risk assessment and identification practices within this context. Given recent concerns raised regarding the effectiveness of the SPJ model to prevent or reduce escalation and repeat offences (Turner et al, 2019), this is a 'high stakes' opportunity (Davies & Barlow, 2024:11) to make social change.

11.4.2. Policy changes.

As highlighted in the literature review and in the research, the legal terminology and definitions used to both define DVA and shape practice in responding to DVA neglect the specificities of AFV. Furthermore, the umbrella legal terms of 'domestic abuse'

assume the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ which has led to subsequent legal protections being limited to this mythical typology (because of course there is no ideal relationship of abuse). The narrow ideal relationship of abuse has limitations not just for AFV but also for the wider complexity of all abusive family and intimate forms of abuse which exist beyond the heteronormative, cis-gender, binary model. However, rather than simply adding more laws, more legislation and rules and thus falling prey to the criminalisation agenda (Goodmark, 2017), this thesis suggests more nuance, caution, and representation should be embedded within current policy. This is defined by Kim (2020), “a slowness but not a hesitation- a reflection on what feels connected and right rather than a reaction to what is going wrong” (pp. 323).

Policy should therefore be evaluated and assessed, where possible, with ‘expert communities’ to create a collaborative, representative, and informed definition of AFV as well as recommendations for best practice. Policy must acknowledge the different relational contexts of abuse in more detail and with a larger and more representative evidence base. Careful attention to the nuances, dynamics and forms of AFV need to be considered as well as providing information on pathways for support, best practice, and appropriate referrals. Policy research can equip a participatory action approach and embed the voices of those on the frontline and those with lived experience to ensure this is adequately representative.

Specific acknowledgement and discussion need to occur on the policy level regarding the civil and legal protections offered to victim-survivors. As raised in the thesis, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) (Home Office, 2023) is not available at all for AFV and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO) (Home Office, 2024) are limited. A full assessment of the suitability of these interventions as well as other mandated practices needs to be conducted.

Given the contextual approach and complexity emphasised in this thesis, there is a need to critically assess whether current policies and governmental decisions beyond the sector of DVA, influence AFV. For example, the cost-of-living crisis, delays in allocating mental health provision, decisions not to provide HBV and harmful practices with statutory definition, wider hostile migration policies, gender critical debates, and the lack of conversion therapy ban, all may play a role in allowing abuse to occur within the family. DVA and AFV is not individually located but situated within a climate of harm.

11.4.3. Practice suggestions.

As Harwin and Barron (2000) assert, legislation alone "can never be the complete answer" (pp. 223), therefore change must occur across 'planets' (Hester, 2011) of core response. Similarly, Burman and Brooks-Hay (2018) assert that "legislative change cannot on its own lead to improvements. Whatever laws we have will be only as effective as those who enforce, prosecute, and apply them" (pp. 78). Throughout the interviews, professionals often stressed the importance of providing victim-survivors with a non-judgemental space and being able to offer support to perpetrators. Taking the time to build rapport and understand the contextual dynamics of the family was seen as crucial for adult family violence given the complex layers of shame, loyalty, and kinship. Similarly, victim-survivors highlighted the importance of time and language in supporting disclosure. Therefore, robust investment and expenditure into the ability to do this within the constraints of a frontline role needs to be developed.

The absence of knowledge of AFV needs addressing through better information sharing, learning events and training. Space must be made for professionals to share best practice in the context of AFV and be up skilled to be able to respond

appropriately. Large scale evaluation needs to occur to consider whether current practices of support and risk assessment are appropriate for the realities of all DVA relationships. There is currently not enough space, time, the right tools or systems for practitioners and professionals to record the nuances of AFV in detail. A critical lens therefore needs to be applied to recording systems and efforts to develop this need to be encouraged.

Furthermore, professionals must be able to work as a cohesive system given the need to develop perpetrator support and management. Professionals should be able to work as both part of a whole family (Stanley & Humphreys, 2017) and whole systems approach (Cordis Bright, 2019) to explore best outcomes. The benefits of applying a contextual safeguarding approach must be considered for AFV and DVA in general – especially in the context of victim-support and risk assessment. Risk assessment and support should move away from encouraging a homogenous assessment or approach and instead there should be a focus on interactional justice (Mulvihill et al, 2018), holism and discretion.

11.5. Concluding remarks: more questions than answers.

In conclusion, this research has aimed to highlight how current understandings, identification approaches, and response models to DVA are limited to the contexts heteronormative IPV. AFV remains a neglected area of study. The complex, messy and overlapping realities of AFV pose a challenge to the 'black box' (Latour, 1987) of current thinking regarding DVA. It dismantles assumptions of what DVA is as well as the appropriateness of this umbrella, the taken for granted adoption of coercive control theoretical frameworks, the individualisation of risk and the criminalisation agenda.

Instead, it urges for complex and contextual awareness to be embedded in theory, in practice and interactions.

This fracturing of the ‘black box’ (Latour, 1987) opens a pandoras box of questions, possibilities, and challenges. Is DVA an appropriate term? Is AFV an appropriate term? Can there be one grand explanation for DVA? Can we consistently identify risk? Can we consistently respond to risk? Does the response to DVA rely on contextual relations? How as individual actors can we dismantle structures of inequality and harm? This questioning reflects an important stepping stone for further research, policy development, and practice change. The current existence of AFV and its conflict with the ‘ideal DVA relationship’ reminds us to resist grand narratives, unholy alliances, and homogenising. It reminds us to be critical, reflexive and to embrace complexity.

This conclusion and the thesis, however, would not be possible without those that facilitated or took part in the research. Therefore, I would like to conclude this research by extending my gratitude for the police force staff involved in the project, the practitioners who shared their thoughts and experiences, and the four victim-survivors who shared their stories, reflections, and contexts. This research could not have been done without listening to these voices.

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Appendices.

Appendix 1: Ethical approval letter. 356
Appendix 2: Partnership agreement letter (template) 357
Appendix 3: Advertisement for professional participants. 359
Appendix 4: Advertisement for victim-survivor participants 360
Appendix 5: Email sent to DVA organisations requesting support. 361
Appendix 6: Email sent to professional networks requesting support. 362
Appendix 7: Information sheet for police participants. 363
Appendix 8: Information sheet for practitioner participants. 368
Appendix 9: Information sheet for victim-survivor participants. 373
Appendix 10: Consent form for professional participants 378
Appendix 11: Consent form for victim-survivor participants. 380
Appendix 12: Consent form for summary report 382
Appendix 13: Interview guide for professional participants 383
Appendix 14: Interview guide for victim-survivor participants 385
Appendix 15: Vignette for professional interviews 388
Appendix 16: Debrief sheet for professionals. 389
Appendix 17: Debrief sheet for victim-survivors. 390
Appendix 18: Policy sampling decisions 391
Appendix 19: Quantitative data decision-making 395
Appendix 20: Case file overview 396
Appendix 21: Interview samples and overview 398
Appendix 22: Policy coding and thematic tables (illustrative examples) 400
Appendix 23: Case file coding and thematic tables (illustrative examples) 409
Appendix 24: Interview coding and thematic tables (illustrative examples) 419
Appendix 25: Data integration overview 430
Appendix 26: Reflexive diary entries 434
Appendix 27: Quantitative data tables 436

Appendix 1: Ethical approval letter.

University of Central Lancashire
UCLan

University of Central Lancashire
Preston PR1 2HE
01772 201201
uclan.ac.uk

8th February 2024

Charlotte Barlow / Lily Graham
School of Law and Policing
University of Central Lancashire

Dear Charlotte / Lily,

Re: BAHSS2 Ethics Panel Application
Unique Reference Number: BAHSS2 01136 FR

The BAHSS2 Ethics Review Panel has granted approval with conditions of your proposal application, 'Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner, and victim-survivor experiences. Approval is granted up to the end of project date*.

The CONDITION(S) relating to the approval are: Data sharing, Collaboration agreement and Permission letters from Organisations and Constabularies, as and when they are received.

It is your responsibility to ensure that

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved, by Committee
- you notify ethicsinfo@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to Panel
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (Existing paperwork can be used for this purposes e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available use e-Ethics Closure Report Proforma).

Yours sincerely,

Richard Davies, Deputy Vice-Chair
BAHSS2 Ethics Panel

* for research degree students this will be the final lapse date

NB - Ethical approval is contingent on any health and safety checklists having been completed, and necessary approvals gained.

Appendix 2: Partnership agreement letter (template)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Doctoral Training Centre for Industry Collaboration: 'Assessing risk in domestic abuse cases: Victim-survivor and perpetrator experiences.

The University of Central Lancashire ("UCLan") acknowledges that BLANK Constabulary ("the Constabulary") has kindly agreed to support the above-titled PhD studentship project to be undertaken by a PhD student at UCLan's School of Law and Policing ("the Studentship"). Further details of the Studentship are set out in the Annex to this Agreement.

This Letter of Agreement ("Agreement") sets out the terms on which it is agreed that the Constabulary shall support the performance of the Studentship.

(each a "Party" and together the "Parties" to this Agreement)

The following terms are hereby agreed:

1. UCLan has selected the successful applicant ("the Student") to undertake the Studentship in accordance with UCLan's usual selection processes.
2. The Student will undertake the Studentship under the direction and supervision of Dr Charlotte Barlow, Reader in Criminal Justice and Policing, School of Law and Policing.
3. In support of the Studentship, the Constabulary will provide the following free of charge:
   - access to the police systems for data collection (i.e., police information management system);
   - facilitation of interviews with Constabulary police officers;
   - introduction to partner agencies, such as victims services and probation, to facilitate interviews with victim-survivors and perpetrators;
   - allocation of a gatekeeper at the Constabulary who will be their key point of contact throughout the duration of the Studentship. This gatekeeper will also provide the Student with support and training in accessing police systems. (referred to as the "Support")
4. The Constabulary will provide the Support for the duration of the Studentship which commended on 20th March 2023 and shall, subject to earlier termination, continue until 19th March 2027.
5. In consideration of the provision of the Support by the Constabulary, UCLan will ensure a copy of the Student's dissertation resulting from the Studentship will be provided to Seagate for its own records.
6. In the event that the Student is unable to complete the Studentship for any reason, this Agreement shall terminate with immediate effect.

7. UCLan makes no representation or warranty that any results of the Studentship will be fit for any particular purpose and accepts no responsibility for any use which may be made of such results and/or intellectual property arising from the Studentship.
8. Each Party shall grant to the other an irrevocable royalty free licence to use its Background IP (Background IP means any and all intellectual property rights that exists prior to the commencement of this Agreement or created simultaneously but outside of the scope of the Studentship) belonging to it, as may be necessary for the purpose of, and for the duration of the Studentship only.
9. For the avoidance of doubt, any intellectual property rights or results arising from the Studentship will, as between UCLan and the Constabulary, be owned by UCLan.
10. The Constabulary acknowledges that nothing in this Agreement shall prevent the Student from publishing a thesis, undergoing a viva with examiners or placing a dissertation in UCLan's institutional repository.
11. To the maximum extent permitted by law, each Party's total liability under or in connection with this Agreement shall not exceed £30,000. Neither Party shall be liable to another Party in contract, tort (including negligence or breach of statutory duty) or otherwise for any indirect, special or consequential loss or damage howsoever caused even if the other Party was advised of the possibility of them in advance.
12. The Parties hereby acknowledge that they have entered a separate data sharing agreement in respect of any personal data to be shared by the Constabulary to UCLan for the purposes of the Student's performance of the Studentship.
13. This Agreement and any matter arising from or in connection with it shall be governed by and construed in accordance with English law and each Party agrees to submit to the jurisdiction of the English courts over any matter arising in connection with this Agreement.
14. Both parties enter into this Letter of Agreement with the intention of taking a co-operative approach to supporting the Studentship and do so in the hope that the Student will succeed in being awarded a PhD.

Please sign, date and return the duplicate copy of this Letter of Agreement to confirm agreement to the terms provided above.

…….

Dean of School of Law and Policing

For and on behalf of the University of Central Lancashire

Date:

……..

Print name:

Authorised to sign for and on behalf of BLANK Constabulary

Appendix 3: Advertisement for professional participants.



Appendix 4: Advertisement for victim-survivor participants

University of Central Lancashire
UCLan

Research request

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner, and victim-survivor experiences

Are you?

- **Someone who has experienced an abusive or unhealthy relationship as an adult with an adult family member and is now feeling 'safe'?**
- **Someone who has had support from professionals in regards to this relationship?**
- **Someone who is the age of 18 and interested in sharing your experiences?**

Identifying and responding to 'domestic abuse' is currently a popular topic in academia and policy. There has been a lot of work on developing risk assessment tools, sometimes called the 'DASH' or 'DARA'. However, it has been suggested that these questions are based on data relating to intimate or romantic partners and there is little research on the experiences of those who have experienced abuse from other familial members when they were also an adult.

I am a PhD student currently exploring the experiences of police officers and practitioners in risk assessing abuse between adult family members, as well as exploring victim-survivor perspectives. As part of this, I am hoping to talk with those who have had lived experience of this to hear and understand your stories, opinions and reflections. This would involve a 1-2-1 interview with myself and can take place on the phone, online or face to face.

You will receive refreshments for your time. If you are interested in learning more, would like to ask any questions or are interested in taking part, please contact me either on the email below or the QR code for more information. All participation is confidential and we can talk more about how to make this comfortable for you. Please only sign up for the study and leave contact details if it is safe and feels comfortable for you to do so e.g. participation would not be overheard by anyone you feel at risk from.

Lily Graham
School of Law and Policing
University of Central Lancashire
LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

"This research has obtained ethical approval from The University of Central Lancashire's Business, Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (BAHSS) Ethics Review Panel, Ref: BAHSS2 01136

If you feel you need further support or advice, please contact:
National DV Helpline: 0808 2000 247.
Refuge contact form: https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Contact-us
Refuge live chat service: https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en/Chat-to-us-online

Appendix 5: Email sent to DVA organisations requesting support.

To whom it may concern

Re: Research titled: Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences

My name is Lily Graham, and I am a PhD student at the University of Central Lancashire, School of Law and Policing. The PhD is funded by the Doctoral Training Centre. The DTC refers to a partnership between universities and industry partners to support PhD students to conduct research. This research is supported by UCLan and two police forces in the Northwest. Your details will not be provided under any circumstances to these partners, and the research study is designed solely by the student identified above. For more information on DTC's, please visit: https://www.findaphd.com/guides/centres-for-doctoral-training. If you have any concerns, you are welcome to discuss this with the research student.

The project will aim to conduct research on the experiences of police officers and DVSA practitioners completing risk assessment on referrals for 'adult family violence' (AFV). The project also hopes to explore victim-survivor experiences of being the subject of risk assessment. Given most research currently focuses on intimate partner violence, it is hoped that the research will deepen the understanding of effective intervention or 'what works' for adult family violence as well as highlighting the best practice of those currently on the frontline.

This research has obtained ethical approval from The University of Central Lancashire's Business, Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (BAHSS) Ethics Review Panel, Ref: BAHSS2 01136 FR

Given the importance of practitioners in holding 'front line' and practical experience, I am hoping to speak to a variety of practitioners in the Northwest. I have approached your organisation given the valuable work you and your teams do in supporting victim-survivors.

I am just writing to enquire whether you would be able to support the project with the following:

What help do I need?

- Facilitating contact with practitioners. The project hopes to conduct focus groups or 1-2-1 interviews with practitioners to explore their perspectives on adult family violence and risk assessment. This could be by identifying suitable practitioners via email. Practitioners will receive refreshments**. I am happy to work with your organisation on the process for this.**

- Identifying victim-survivors, who will be invited to a 1-2-1 semi-structured and creative interview. I **am happy to work with the organisation and your procedures for this as well as happy to attend drop-in spaces as required.** Participation will be entirely voluntary and will follow the principles of informed consent, no-harm, ethical consideration and GDPR regulation. For participation, volunteers will receive refreshments.

- Should you be willing to support with the identification of victim-survivors or practitioners, it would be great to discuss the possibility of organisation spaces being used for data collection.

- If you are unable to facilitate direct contact between myself and practitioners and survivors, please do let me know. It would be appreciated if you would be possibly able to forward advertisements for the study in your internal email staff channels or within group work/drop in spaces.

The research has the potential to influence policy and practice for victim-survivors, as well as spotlighting the crucial work and professional judgement of risk assessors. The data collection phases will take place between March 2024 to March 2025, complying with UCLan' ethical procedures and data protection requirements.

What can I offer?

- A bespoke summary of the research report after its completion.
- An acknowledgement/thank you to the organisation in associated outputs e.g. journal articles, thesis, conference presentations.
- I would be happy to assist as a volunteer at your organisation or provide support where needed.

For references or other details regarding the research, feel free to contact myself or the director of studies and supervisors from University of Central Lancashire, Dr Charlotte Barlow (CBarlow8@uclan.ac.uk) Dr Les Humphreys (LNHumprehys@uclan.ac.uk) and Paul Hargreaves (PHargreaves4@uclan.ac.uk)

Please do not hesitate to get back in touch with further questions, suggestions or feedback. I would be more than happy to meet with yourselves either virtually, over the phone or attend your organisation to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Graham

LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Email sent to professional networks requesting support.

Dear colleagues,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am a PhD student at the University of Central Lancashire. I am currently conducting a study on the experiences of risk assessment and domestic abuse services from the perspective of 'adult family violence'. This study is funded by the DTC Studentship funding and aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of what effective support may look like, which may support policy and practice. The DTC refers to a partnership between universities and industry partners to support PhD students to conduct research. This research is supported by UCLan and two police forces in the Northwest. Your details will not be provided under any circumstances to these partners, and the research study is designed by the student identified above. For more information on DTC's, please visit: https://www.findaphd.com/guides/centres-for-doctoral-training.

This research has obtained ethical approval from The University of Central Lancashire's Business, Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (BAHSS) Ethics Review Panel, Ref: XXX. I am now at the recruitment stage.

As part of my project, I am seeking participants who are working/have worked with victim-survivors of adult family violence as a practitioner in domestic abuse services, community services, adult social care and healthcare, and have completed domestic abuse risk assessments, as well as participants who have experienced violence and abuse from a family member.

I have attached the advertisements to this email, and I would be grateful if you could forward the recruitment information to anyone or any organisations you may feel would be interested in participating or learning more.

I would be happy to answer any questions or discuss the study in more detail.

Your help is much appreciated.

Many thanks

Lily Graham

LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 7: Information sheet for police participants.

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study: Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences
Version Number: **Date:**

You are being invited to take part in study titled:

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences.

This study is part of a PhD research project by Lily Graham. This project is funded by the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) Scholarship Fund. The DTC refers to a partnership between universities and industry partners to support PhD students to conduct research. This research is supported by UCLan and two police forces in the Northwest. Your details will not be provided under any circumstances to these partners, and the research study is designed by the student identified above. For more information on DTC's, please visit: https://www.findaphd.com/guides/centres-for-doctoral-training. If you have any concerns, you are welcome to discuss this with the research student.

Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to ask for more information or for clarification at LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk.

Please only consent to take part if you wish to do so. I know how busy life can be, so sparing any of your valuable time to assist with this study would be very much appreciated.

Thank you for reading this!

Version Number and Date:

What is the purpose of the study?
Background: Identifying and responding to 'domestic abuse' is currently a popular topic in academic and policy environments within the UK. Due to the many people experiencing domestic abuse, there is a need for professional services (such as the police and other professionals) to respond consistently. As a result, there has been a lot of work on the development of risk assessment tools, often called the 'DASH' or 'DARA'. These tools require professionals to ask victim-survivors a series of questions to understand the level of 'risk'. However, research suggests that these questions are largely based on data relating to abusive relationships between intimate or romantic partners. Comparatively, little research is available on the experiences of those who have experienced abuse from other familial members as an adult.

Aims: This research aims to work with police officers, domestic abuse practitioners and those who have experienced abuse from family members in order to gain a better understanding of the risks associated to these experiences, what risk assessment feels like for victim-survivors, and what those with lived experiences consider helpful. The research aims to support professional practice.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part due to your professional experience and expertise on the topic. As someone who conducts risk assessments and works with victim-survivors, your

perspective is invaluable. The research hopes to conduct around 15-20 interviews with similar people.

You may have been contacted by your employer to take part in this research or seen an advertisement for this research through your workplace. This is because police organisations are supporting the research. Your decision to participate will not be shared with your employer and will not impact your employment.

As part of the research, we also aim to conduct interviews with DVSA practitioners and victim-survivors. This is to help us understand the topic from multiple perspectives.

Do I have to take part?
Participation in the study is **voluntary**; it is your choice whether to take part or not. Throughout the study, you will have the right to stop the focus group at any point.

Details of this research may have been passed to you via an employer or workplace. We will not share any details about your participation with these organisations. **Your employment is not impacted by your decision to participate**. Your employer will not be informed of your decision, and your contributions will not be identifiable.

Please feel free to email the researcher with any further questions you would like to raise before deciding whether to take part.

What will happen if I take part?
If you decide to take part, the researcher will contact you to arrange a date/time/location for the interviews. Preferred locations are safe public spaces where confidential meeting rooms can be booked (e.g., University premises, public libraries), or organisational spaces. The researcher is also happy to discuss options further, to ensure any interview locations are accessible and comfortable for the group. It may be that the interviews are conducted online via MS Teams, Zoom or Skype.

The interview is expected to last between 30 to 60 minutes; you are welcome to leave early if you require. Before the interview begins, you will be required to sign a consent form; this will be discussed verbally before signing. With your permission and consent, the interview will be audio-recorded, and the researcher may take some handwritten notes in order to capture all of the information. Refreshments will be provided in the interview (in person), and you are welcome to take a break at any time.

The interview will be conducted by Lily Graham (email above). You may also be asked about your job title and role. This will allow the research to understand who is making assessments of adult family violence. **You can decline to answer these questions.**

The interview will consist of a series of questions regarding your experience working with victim-survivors and/or conducting risk assessment/s. You will be provided a copy of the question guide before the focus group starts. A copy will also be present on the day. Please note, this interview guide is *semi-structured*, and the researcher may ask you additional questions that they consider relevant. You are also welcome to discuss anything you feel important to you that may not already be captured within the guide. Following a discussion, you will be asked to take part in a 'mapping activity'; this will involve you reflecting on how you may risk assess a case of adult family violence using risk assessment tools (e.g. DASH/DARA). To complete this activity, you will be provided with a case study of adult family violence.

Following the interview, you will be provided with a participant debrief sheet with information about additional support.

Accessibility:
Prior to the interview, please let the researcher know if there is anything that they can do which would make you feel more comfortable and able to participate on the day (e.g., being seated near a bathroom; being in a quiet space; having materials or consent forms printed in blue paper or larger font etc.). This may also include COVID-19 safety measures (e.g., wearing a mask, social distancing, remote interviewing etc.).

How will my data be used?
The recordings will be saved under a number file, accessed only by the researcher. Following data collection, the recordings will be transcribed, and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym of your choice.

All data will be held anonymously; your name will not appear in any reports, publications, or other outputs. Your data will be stored securely, complying with personal data protection regulation (GDPR).

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. The University privacy notice for research participants can be found on the attached link https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data_protection/privacy-notice-research-participants.php

The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit". Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	Face to face interviews and recorded if agreed. Online interviews if agreed with the researcher. The researcher will use an audio recording device, which has encryption.
How will my data be stored?	All data will be stored according to UCLan Data Storage and Protection Policy and the latest GDPR guidelines.
How long will my data be stored for?	The data will be stored for 7 years after collection
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	Audio recordings and transcripts will be used only on UCLan secure, and password protected devices, and files will be password protected. Data will be anonymised from the beginning, ensuring the participant cannot be identified. Paper information will be stored in locked cabinets in Harris Building, only accessible to the researcher. Outputs from the interview (e.g., maps) will be copied by the researcher and included in PhD thesis. The hard copies will be destroyed as per below.
Will my data be anonymised?	Each set of data will receive a number file and will be anonymised, only by the researcher will have access to it. Following data collection, the recordings will be transcribed, and your name will be replaced with pseudonym.
How will my data be used?	The data collected will involve your name and job role. Your name will be anonymised in the research, and your employer will not be

	disclosed. This will help an understanding of who is interacting with victim-survivors. The data from the interviews will be transcribed and used to analyse what effective support looks like from the perspective of those working in the area.
Who will have access to my data?	The student researcher will have access to the raw data, and the supervisors will be able to view anonymised transcripts. A summary report will be provided to participants and partner organisations that have consented, for example the police forces or DVSA services. This will not include any identifiable information about yourself and hopes to support practice.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	Data collected will not be used for future research projects.
How will my data be destroyed?	Data will be destroyed after 7 years from collection. Paper documents will be disposed by using UCLan's confidential waste service. Electronic data will be destroyed using advice from UCLan ICT department.

Are there any risks in taking part?
The interviews are not intended to cause you any harm or distress; however, we understand that, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, you may feel uncomfortable during the interview. If at any point this happens, please let the researcher know and the focus group will be paused. If you wish to leave, you are welcome to do so at any time. You will not have to explain your decision.

Please note, you are not obliged to answer all questions on the day. If anything arises from the focus group guide that you feel you do not wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to inform the researcher, either in advance or on the day.

The study is designed to explore your experiences of risk assessment; you are welcome to share your professional experience/s as much or as little as you like. The information shared in the interviews should be confidential. Should the researcher feel anyone is at risk of sharing personal or confidential information, they will stop recording.

Throughout the study, you are welcome to have a break at any point.

At the end of the interview, additional information around further and ongoing support will be made available via the debrief sheet.

The interview and the information shared will be confidential; however, should any information with a potential to harm either yourself or others be disclosed, this will need to be shared with appropriate safeguarding parties. Safeguarding responsibilities will be stated on the consent form, and you will be informed of these verbally on the day. Should the researcher have a safeguarding concern, this will also be discussed with yourself.

Are there any benefits from taking part?

It is hoped that your experience and voice will help contribute to a better understanding of what works and what effective support looks like. It is also hoped that this will have direct benefits on practice and therefore support others with lived experience; and that your perspectives will help shape policy and promote a better public understanding of abusive familial relationships.

Expenses and / or payments
Refreshments will be provided by the researcher and University.

What will happen to the results of the study?
Following data analysis, the researcher intends to make a 'what works' briefing sheet to share with practitioners and police organisations. The briefing sheet will not contain any identifying information. You are entitled to receive a copy of the briefing sheet, and a consent form will be provided in your consent form pack which can be used to obtain a copy. You are then welcome to feedback to the researcher. Results from the research will be presented in the PhD thesis, shared in conference presentations, published in peer reviewed journals and presented to relevant organisations. Participants in the research will not be identifiable from the results.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

Throughout the study, you will have the right to stop the interview and withdraw your responses up to two weeks after the interview has taken place. You do not need to justify or explain your decision to the researcher. Additional information about this is included in the debriefing sheet that you can take home with you. After these two weeks, the researcher will have combined the data, and your information will have been anonymised ready for analysing. It will not be possible to identify who you are from this data.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

Please feel free to contact the researcher, Lily Graham (LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk), or the Director of Studies, Dr Charlotte Barlow (CBarlow8@uclan.ac.uk). If you remain unhappy, or have a complaint that you feel you cannot raise directly with us, please contact the Research Governance Unit at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk.

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Lily Graham (the researcher) – LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 8: Information sheet for practitioner participants.

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study: Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences
Version Number: **Date:**

You are being invited to take part in study titled:
Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner, and victim-survivor experiences.

This study is part of a PhD research project by Lily Graham. This project is funded by the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) Scholarship Fund. The DTC refers to a partnership between universities and industry partners to support PhD students to conduct research. This research is supported by UCLan and two police forces in the Northwest. Your details will not be provided under any circumstances to these partners, and the research study is designed by the student identified above. For more information on DTC's, please visit: https://www.findaphd.com/guides/centres-for-doctoral-training. If you have any concerns, you are welcome to discuss this with the research student.

Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to ask for more information or for clarification at LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk.

Please only consent to take part if you wish to do so. I know how busy life can be, so sparing any of your valuable time to assist with this study would be very much appreciated.

Thank you for reading this!

Version Number and Date:

What is the purpose of the study?
Background: Identifying and responding to 'domestic abuse' is currently a popular topic in academic and policy environments within the UK. Due to the many people experiencing domestic abuse, there is a need for professional services (such as the police and other professionals) to respond consistently. As a result, there has been a lot of work on the development of risk assessment tools, often called the 'DASH' or 'DARA'. These tools require professionals to ask victim-survivors a series of questions to understand the level of 'risk'. However, research suggests that these questions are largely based on data relating to abusive relationships between intimate or romantic partners. Comparatively, little research is available on the experiences of those who have experienced abuse from other familial members as an adult.

Aims: This research aims to work with police officers, domestic abuse practitioners and those who have experienced abuse from family members in order to gain a better understanding of the risks associated to these experiences, what risk assessment feels like for victim-survivors, and what those with lived experiences consider helpful. The research aims to support professional practice.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part due to your professional experience and expertise on the topic. As someone who conducts risk assessments and works with victim-survivors, your

perspective is invaluable. The research hopes to conduct around 6-8 focus groups with similar people.

You may have been contacted by your employer to take part in this research or seen an advertisement for this research through your workplace. This is because DVSA organisations were contacted to assist with the study. Your decision to participate will not be shared with your employer and will not impact your employment.

As part of the research, we also aim to conduct focus groups with police officers and interviews with victim-survivors. This is to help us understand the topic from multiple perspectives.

Do I have to take part?
Participation in the study is **voluntary**; it is your choice whether to take part or not. Throughout the study, you will have the right to stop the focus group at any point.

Details of this research may have been passed to you via an employer or workplace. We will not share any details about your participation with these organisations. **Your employment is not impacted by your decision to participate**. Your employer will not be informed of your decision, and your contributions will not be identifiable.

Please feel free to email the researcher with any further questions you would like to raise before deciding whether to take part.

What will happen if I take part?
If you decide to take part, the researcher will contact you to arrange a date/time/location for the focus groups. Preferred locations are safe public spaces where confidential meeting rooms can be booked (e.g., University premises, public libraries), or organisational spaces. The researcher is also happy to discuss options further, to ensure any interview locations are accessible and comfortable for the group. It may be that the focus groups are conducted online via MS Teams, Zoom or Skype.

The focus group and/or interview is expected to last between 30 - 60 minutes; you are welcome to leave early if you require. Before data collection begins, you will be required to sign a consent form; this will be discussed verbally before signing. With your permission and consent, the focus group will be audio-recorded, and the researcher may take some handwritten notes in order to capture all of the information. Refreshments will be provided in the focus group, and you are welcome to take a break at any time.

The focus group will be conducted by Lily Graham (email above). You may also be asked about your job title and role. This will allow the research to understand who is making assessments of adult family violence. **You can decline to answer these questions.**

The focus group will consist of a series of questions regarding your experience working with victim-survivors and/or conducting risk assessment/s. You will be provided a copy of the question guide before the focus group starts. A copy will also be present on the day. Please note, this interview guide is *semi-structured*, and the researcher may ask you additional questions that they consider relevant. You are also welcome to discuss anything you feel important to you that may not already be captured within the guide. Following a group discussion, you will be asked to take part in a 'mapping activity'; this will involve you reflecting on how you may risk assess a case of adult family violence using risk assessment tools (e.g. DASH/DARA). To complete this activity, you will be provided with a case study of adult family violence.

Following the focus group, you will be provided with a participant debrief sheet with information about additional support.

Accessibility:
Prior to the interview, please let the researcher know if there is anything that they can do which would make you feel more comfortable and able to participate on the day (e.g., being seated near a bathroom; being in a quiet space; having materials or consent forms printed in blue paper or larger font etc.). This may also include COVID-19 safety measures (e.g., wearing a mask, social distancing, remote interviewing etc.).

How will my data be used?
The recordings will be saved under a number file, accessed only by the researcher. Following data collection, the recordings will be transcribed, and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym of your choice.

All data will be held anonymously; your name will not appear in any reports, publications, or other outputs. Your data will be stored securely, complying with personal data protection regulation (GDPR).

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. The University privacy notice for research participants can be found on the attached link https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data_protection/privacy-notice-research-participants.php

The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit". Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	Face to face focus groups and recorded if agreed. Online focus groups if agreed with the researcher. The researcher will use an audio recording device, which has encryption.
How will my data be stored?	All data will be stored according to UCLan Data Storage and Protection Policy and the latest GDPR guidelines.
How long will my data be stored for?	The data will be stored for 7 years after collection
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	Audio recordings and transcripts will be used only on UCLan secure, and password protected devices, and files will be password protected. Data will be anonymised from the beginning, ensuring the participant cannot be identified. Paper information will be stored in locked cabinets in Harris Building, only accessible to the researcher. Outputs from the interview (e.g., maps) will be copied by the researcher and included in PhD thesis. The hard copies will be destroyed as per below.
Will my data be anonymised?	Each set of data will receive a number file and will be anonymised, only by the researcher will have access to it. Following data collection, the recordings will be transcribed, and your name will be replaced with pseudonym.

How will my data be used?	The data collected will involve your name and job role. Your name will be anonymised in the research, and your employer will not be disclosed. This will help an understanding of who is interacting with victim-survivors. The data from the interviews will be transcribed and used to analyse what effective support looks like from the perspective of those working in the area.
Who will have access to my data?	The student researcher will have access to the raw data, and the research team will have access to transcripts. A summary report will be provided to participant and partner organisations that have consented. This will not include any identifiable information about yourself.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	Data collected will not be used for future research projects.
How will my data be destroyed?	Data will be destroyed after 7 years from collection. Paper documents will be disposed by using UCLan's confidential waste service. Electronic data will be destroyed using advice from UCLan ICT department.

Are there any risks in taking part?
The focus groups and/or interviews are not intended to cause you any harm or distress; however, we understand that, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, you may feel uncomfortable during the focus group. If at any point this happens, please let the researcher know and the focus group will be paused. If you wish to leave the group, you are welcome to do so at any time. You will not have to explain your decision.

Please note, you are not obliged to answer all questions on the day. If anything arises from the focus group guide that you feel you do not wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to inform the researcher, either in advance or on the day.

The study is designed to explore your experiences of risk assessment; you are welcome to share your professional experience/s as much or as little as you like. The information shared in the focus groups is confidential and there are ground rules for participation that will be shared with the group on the day. Should the researcher feel anyone is at risk of sharing personal or confidential information, they will stop recording.

Throughout the study, you are welcome to have a break at any point.

At the end of the focus group and/or interview, additional information around further and ongoing support will be made available via the debrief sheet.

The focus group and the information shared will be confidential; however, should any information with a potential to harm either yourself or others be disclosed, this will need to be shared with appropriate safeguarding parties. Safeguarding responsibilities will be stated on the consent form, and you will be informed of these verbally on the day. Should the researcher have a safeguarding concern, this will also be discussed with yourself.

Are there any benefits from taking part?
It is hoped that your experience and voice will help contribute to a better understanding of what works and what effective support looks like. It is also hoped that this will have direct benefits on practice and therefore support others with lived experience; and that your perspectives will help shape policy and promote a better public understanding of abusive familial relationships.

Expenses and / or payments
Refreshments will be provided by the researcher and University.

What will happen to the results of the study?
Following data analysis, the researcher intends to make a 'what works' briefing sheet to share with practitioners and police organisations. The briefing sheet will not contain any identifying information. You are entitled to receive a copy of the briefing sheet, and a consent form will be provided in your consent form pack which can be used to obtain a copy. You are then welcome to feedback to the researcher. Results from the research will be presented in the PhD thesis, shared in conference presentations, published in peer reviewed journals and presented to relevant organisations. Participants in the research will not be identifiable from the results.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

Throughout the study, you will have the right to stop the interview and withdraw your responses up to two weeks after the interview has taken place. You do not need to justify or explain your decision to the researcher. Additional information about this is included in the debriefing sheet that you can take home with you. After these two weeks, the researcher will have combined the data, and your information will have been anonymised ready for analysing. It will not be possible to identify who you are from this data.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

Please feel free to contact the researcher, Lily Graham (LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk), or the Director of Studies, Dr Charlotte Barlow (CBarlow8@uclan.ac.uk). If you remain unhappy, or have a complaint that you feel you cannot raise directly with us, please contact the Research Governance Unit at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk.

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Lily Graham (the researcher) – LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 9: Information sheet for victim-survivor participants.

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study: Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences

Version Number: **Date:**

You are being invited to take part in study titled:

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences.

This study is part of a PhD research project by Lily Graham. This project is funded by the Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) Scholarship Fund. The DTC refers to a partnership between universities and industry partners to support PhD students to conduct research. This research is supported by UCLan and two police forces in the Northwest. Your details will not be provided under any circumstances to these partners, and the research study is designed by the student identified above. For more information on DTC's, please visit: https://www.findaphd.com/guides/centres-for-doctoral-training. If you have any concerns, you are welcome to discuss this with the research student.

Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. You are welcome to ask for more information or for clarification at LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk. If you feel you would benefit from this, please feel free to discuss this invitation with your trusted support network for support (e.g., friends/family/professionals).

Please only consent to take part if you wish to do so. I know how busy life can be, so sparing any of your valuable time to assist with this study would be very much appreciated.

Thank you for reading this!

Version Number and Date:

What is the purpose of the study?
Background: Identifying and responding to 'domestic abuse' is currently a popular topic in academic and policy environments within the UK. Due to the many people experiencing domestic abuse, there is a need for professional services (such as the police and other professionals) to respond consistently. As a result, there has been a lot of work on the development of risk assessment tools, often called the 'DASH' or 'DARA'. These tools require professionals to ask victim-survivors a series of questions to understand the level of 'risk'. However, research suggests that these questions are largely based on data relating to abusive relationships between intimate or romantic partners. Comparatively, little research is available on the experiences of those who have experienced abuse from other familial members as an adult.

Aims: This research aims to work with police officers, domestic abuse practitioners and those who have experienced abuse from family members in order to gain a better understanding of the risks associated to these experiences, what risk assessment feels like for victim-survivors, and what those with lived experiences consider helpful. The research aims to support professional practice.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part in the study due to your experience and expertise on the topic. As someone with lived experience of 'abuse', your contribution is invaluable. The research hopes to conduct interviews with 10 participants with firsthand experience.

As part of the research, we also aim to conduct focus groups with police officers and domestic abuse practitioners to look at the issue from a multi-agency perspective.

Do I have to take part?
Participation in the study is **voluntary**; it is your choice whether to take part or not. Throughout the study, you will have the right to stop the interview and withdraw your responses up to two weeks after the interview has taken place. Additional information about this is included in the debriefing sheet.

Details of this research may have been passed to you via a professional who is currently supporting you, or you may have seen an advertisement for this research in a space where you are receiving support (e.g. drop-in services or group work). We will not share your decision to participate with these organisations.

Please feel free to email the researcher with any further questions you would like to raise before deciding whether to take part.

What will happen if I take part?
If you decide to take part, the researcher will contact you via safe contact details to arrange a date/time/location for an interview. Preferred locations are safe public spaces where confidential meeting rooms can be booked (e.g., University premises, public libraries), or organisational spaces. The researcher is also happy to discuss options further, to ensure any interview locations are accessible and comfortable to yourself (e.g., offering an online or over the phone interview). **If you would prefer, you are welcome to state that you wish your trusted professional or support worker who identified you for the study, to attend the interview with you.**

Your trusted professional, or the support worker who identified you for this study, is welcome to attend the interview with you.

The interview is expected to last between 60 to 90 minutes; Please be advised that you are welcome to end the interview at any point within this time. Before the interview begins, you will be required to sign a consent form; this will be discussed verbally before signing. With your permission and consent, the interview will be audio-recorded, and the researcher may take some handwritten notes in order to capture all of the information.

Refreshments will be provided throughout the interview, and you are welcome to take a break at any time.

The interview will be conducted by Lily Graham (email above). You will be asked to choose a pseudonym which the researcher will use in transcription of the data. You may also be asked about your age/gender/ethnicity/sexual orientation. **You can decline to answer these questions.**

The interview will consist of a series of questions regarding your experience working with professional services and/or conducting risk assessment/s. You will be provided a copy of the interview guide before the interview starts. A copy will also be present on the day. Please note, this interview guide is *semi-structured*, and the researcher may ask you additional questions that they consider relevant. You are also welcome to discuss anything you feel important to you that may not already be captured within the guide. Following a discussion, you will be

asked to take part in a 'mapping activity'; this will involve you reflecting on your journey through a risk assessment or interaction with a professional service using post it notes, drawings and/or creative materials provided by the researcher.

Following the interview, you will be provided with a participant debrief sheet with information about your rights to withdrawal and additional support.

Accessibility:
Prior to the interview, please let the researcher know if there is anything that they can do which would make you feel more comfortable and able to participate on the day (e.g., being seated near a bathroom; being in a quiet space; having materials or consent forms printed in blue paper or larger font etc.). This may also include COVID-19 safety measures (e.g., wearing a mask, social distancing, remote interviewing etc.).

How will my data be used?
The recordings will be saved under a number file, accessed only by the researcher. Following data collection, the recordings will be transcribed, and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym of your choice.

All data will be held anonymously; your name will not appear in any reports, publications, or other outputs. Your data will be stored securely, complying with personal data protection regulation (GDPR).

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University's research. The University privacy notice for research participants can be found on the attached link https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data_protection/privacy-notice-research-participants.php

The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of 'public task', and in accordance with the University's purpose of "advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit". Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	Face to face interview and recorded if agreed. Online or phone interviews if agreed with the researcher. The researcher will use an audio recording device, which has encryption.
How will my data be stored?	All data will be stored according to UCLan Data Storage and Protection Policy and the latest GDPR guidelines.
How long will my data be stored for?	The data will be stored for 7 years after collection
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	Audio recordings and transcripts will be used only on UCLan secure, and password protected devices, and files will be password protected. Data will be anonymised from the beginning, ensuring the participant cannot be identified. Paper information will be stored in locked cabinets in Harris Building, only accessible to the researcher.
Will my data be anonymised?	Each set of data will receive a number file and will be anonymised, only by the researcher will have access to it. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym which will be used when the recording is transcribed.

How will my data be used?	The data collected will involve your name and safe contact details, the researcher may also ask you to provide some information about yourself (e.g., age/gender/ethnicity/sexual orientation). You do not need to answer these. These will enhance the researchers understanding of familial abuse. Outputs from the interview (e.g., creative maps) will be copied by the researcher and included in PhD thesis. The hard copies will be destroyed as per below. The data from the interviews will be transcribed and used to analyse what effective support looks like from the perspective of those from lived experience.
Who will have access to my data?	The student researcher will have access to the raw data, and the research team will have access to transcripts. A summary report will be provided to participants, police forces and partner organisations that have consented. This will not include any identifiable information.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	Data collected will not be used for future research projects.
How will my data be destroyed?	Data will be destroyed after 7 years from collection. Paper documents will be disposed by using UCLan's confidential waste service. Electronic data will be destroyed using advice from UCLan ICT department.

Are there any risks in taking part?

The interviews are not intended to cause you any harm or distress; however, we understand that, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, you may feel uncomfortable during the interview. If at any point this happens, please let the interviewer know and the interview will be paused or terminated entirely.

Please note, you are not obliged to answer all questions on the day. If anything arises from the interview guide that you feel you do not wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to inform the researcher, either in advance or on the day.

The study is designed to explore your experiences of risk assessment; you are welcome to share your personal experience/s as much or as little as you like. The researcher is aware that not everyone's experience/s with professionals in the sector have been positive; as such, if at any point you need to take a break, please advise and the interviewer will pause the interview.

At the end of the interview, additional information around further and ongoing support will be made available via the debrief sheet.

The interview and the information shared will be confidential; however, should any information with a potential to harm either yourself or others be disclosed, this will need to be shared with appropriate safeguarding parties. Safeguarding responsibilities will be stated on the consent form, and you will be informed of these verbally on the day. Should the researcher have a safeguarding concern, this will also be discussed with yourself.

Are there any benefits from taking part?
It is hoped that your experience and voice will help contribute to a better understanding of what works and what effective victim-survivor support looks like. It is also hoped that this will have direct benefits on practice and therefore support others with lived experience; and that your perspectives will help shape policy and promote a better public understanding of abusive familial relationships.

Expenses and / or payments
Refreshments will be provided by the researcher and University.

What will happen to the results of the study?
Following data analysis, the researcher intends to make a 'what works' briefing sheet to share with practitioners and police organisations. The briefing sheet will not contain any identifying information. You are entitled to receive a copy of the briefing sheet, and a consent form will be provided in your consent form pack which can be used to obtain a copy. You are then welcome to feedback to the researcher. Results from the research will be presented in the PhD thesis, shared in conference presentations, published in peer reviewed journals and presented to relevant organisations. Participants in the research will not be identifiable from the results.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?
Throughout the study, you will have the right to stop the interview and withdraw your responses up to two weeks after the interview has taken place. You do not need to justify or explain your decision to the researcher. Additional information about this is included in the debriefing sheet that you can take home with you. After these two weeks, the researcher will have combined the data, and your information will have been anonymised ready for analysing. It will not be possible to identify who you are from this data.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

Please feel free to contact the researcher, Lily Graham (LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk), or the Director of Studies, Dr Charlotte Barlow (CBarlow8@uclan.ac.uk). If you remain unhappy, or have a complaint that you feel you cannot raise directly with us, please contact the Research Governance Unit at OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk.

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Lily Graham (the researcher) – LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 10: Consent form for professional participants

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences.

Participant Number: ……
Version number & date: ……
Research ethics approval number: ……
Title of the research project: Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences
Name of researcher(s): Lily Graham

Please read this consent form and the information sheet about the research study. Place a '**X**' in the boxes to indicate '**YES**' if you agree to the following statements:

	X
I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated …… for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves taking part in a small focus group with others and/or interview, where information will be audio recorded for the purpose of capturing the information and transcribing data. I consent to these recordings and understand they will be deleted following transcription.	
I am aware that I can stop taking part at any point if I feel uncomfortable with other members of the group. I am aware of the group ground rules and agree to stick to these.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to decline to answer questions. I understand that I am not required to discuss anything I do not wish to. I understand that I am free to leave the group/interview at any point and I am under no obligation to continue participating.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part at any time during the interview and I can withdraw my data up to two weeks after the interview took place without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. In addition, I understand that I am free to decline to answer questions.	
I understand that I can ask for access to the information I provide, and I can request the destruction of that information if I wish at any time prior to one month after data was collected. I understand that following one month after the interview took place, I will no longer be able to request access to or withdrawal of the information I provide.	
I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Central Lancashire.	

I understand that signed consent forms, transcriptions and recordings will be retained in secure and protected servers and locked cupboards at University of Central Lancashire and will be accessed only by the research student until September 2030, when under GDPR regulations personal data will be securely destroyed.	
I understand that personal information collected that can identify me, such as my name will not be shared.	
I understand that participation in this data will involve an activity. The outputs of this activity (drawings and post it notes) will be copied for research purposes. I understand that this data will not hold any identifying information about me and will be stored and destroyed securely.	
I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, and it will not be possible to identify me in any reports, presentations or publications arising from the research.	
I understand that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded and won't be released without my consent unless I disclose information which raises concerns about the safety of myself or others. In such cases the researcher may be required to disclose my confidential information to the relevant authorities.	
I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs such as a PhD thesis, journal articles, conference presentations, a summary of the findings.	
I understand and agree that what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications, and other research outputs under a pseudonym.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____ _____ _____

Participant name Date Signature

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting:

_____ _____ _____

Name of person taking consent Date Signature

Student Researcher:

Lily Graham

LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Director of Studies:

Dr Charlotte Barlow

CBarlow8@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 11: Consent form for victim-survivor participants.

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences.

Participant Number: ……
Version number & date: ……
Research ethics approval number: ……
Title of the research project: Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences
Name of researcher(s): Lily Graham – PhD Researcher

Please read this consent form and the information sheet about the research study. Place a '**X**' in the boxes to indicate '**YES**' if you agree to the following statements:

	X
I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated …… for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves taking part in an interview, where information will be audio recorded for the purpose of capturing the information and transcribing data. I consent to these recordings and understand they will be deleted following transcription.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part at any time during the interview and I can withdraw my data up to two weeks after the interview took place without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. In addition, I understand that I am free to decline to answer questions.	
I understand that I can ask for access to the information I provide, and I can request the destruction of that information if I wish at any time prior to one month after data was collected. I understand that following one month after the interview took place, I will no longer be able to request access to or withdrawal of the information I provide.	
I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Central Lancashire.	
I understand that signed consent forms, transcriptions and recordings will be retained in secure and protected servers and locked cupboards at University of Central Lancashire and will be accessed only by the research student until September 2030, when under GDPR regulations personal data will be securely destroyed.	
I understand that personal information collected that can identify me, such as my name will not be shared.	

I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any reports, presentations or publications arising from the research.	
I understand that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded and won't be released without my consent unless I disclose information which raises concerns about the safety of myself or others. In such cases the researcher may be required to disclose my confidential information to the relevant authorities.	
I understand that participation in this data will involve an activity. The outputs of this activity (drawings and post it notes) will be copied for research purposes. I understand that this data will not hold any identifying information about me and will be stored and destroyed securely.	
I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs such as a PhD thesis, journal articles, conference presentations, a summary of the findings.	
I understand and agree that what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications, and other research outputs under a pseudonym.	
If applicable: I give consent for my trusted professional to remain me with during the interview and listen to my contributions.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____ _____ _____ _____

Participant name Date Signature

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting:

_____ _____ _____

Name of person taking consent Date Signature

Student Researcher:

Lily Graham

LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Director of Studies:

Dr Charlotte Barlow

CBarlow8@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 12: Consent form for summary report

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner and victim-survivor experiences.

Participant Number: ……
Version number & date: ……
Research ethics approval number: ……
Title of the research project:
Name of researcher(s):

As part of the study, the researcher will be creating a summary report for all participants on 'what works'. This will be based on the themes collected from focus groups and interviews.

This will be shared with participants as well as police force and organisational partners. You are welcome to send the researcher feedback following being provided with this report.

. If you would like to receive a copy, please tell us where to send it:

Name: ……... Email ……

You are welcome to withdraw from being sent this summary report at any point, until January 2026, when the report will be created, by contacting the research team.

_____	_____	_____
Participant name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Student Researcher:

Lily Graham

LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk

Director of Studies:

Dr Charlotte Barlow

CBarlow8@uclan.ac.uk

Appendix 13: Interview guide for professional participants

Background / contextual information:

Please share:

- What is your current job title?
- What kind of contact do you have with victim-survivors of domestic abuse in your everyday job role?
- How long have you been working with victim-survivors of domestic abuse?
- What is your favourite aspect of your job?
- What are the challenges of your job?

Discussion on adult family violence:

We will briefly discuss your experiences and perspective on adult family violence; we will be considering the following questions:

- What do you consider as an incident of ‘’adult family violence’?
- Are incidents of adult family violence commonly referred to your service? **(Please use pseudonyms and do not disclose identifying details).**
- What kinds of relationships of adult family violence do you see in service?
- Are there any patterns of the types of abuse or characteristics of victim-perpetrators in the dynamics of adult family violence referred to your service?
- What kinds of support and referrals would you consider for adult family violence?
- Do you feel training and guidance in your organisation supports you with identifying adult family violence? Does this differ from national standards?

Discussion of the vignette or case study:

Please take some time to read the case study presented to you. As a group we will reflect on the following:

- What do you consider are the needs of this case?
- What do you consider are the risks associated with this case?
- How would you gather more information in this case?
- Are there any safeguarding concerns or high-risk concerns raised from this case?
- What kinds of support and safety planning would you discuss for this case?
- What kinds of services are available, and would these meet the needs of this case?
- How do you feel victim-survivors and/or perpetrators would respond and act in situations like these?
- Do you think there would be any challenges or obstacles in risk assessing this case?

- Do you have any practical experiences with risk assessing cases like this? **(Please use pseudonyms and do not disclose identifying details).**

Participatory mapping exercise:

As a group we will now use the case study to move through a risk assessment form or structured professional judgement tool. As you go through the questions, please use the post it notes provided to 'map' the following:

- How would you introduce the risk assessment and ask for consent?
- Would you reword or reframe this question? If so, how would you ask this and why?
- Are there any questions you wouldn't ask? Why?
- Are there any follow-up questions you would ask to gather more information?
- Are there additional questions you would ask for this case study?
- Is there any advice or safety planning you would discuss at any point during the questionnaire.

Using the post it-notes again, please reflect on how you present to victim-survivors during the risk assessment process. This could include reflections on:

- How would your tone of voice be?
- How would you use your body language to support victim-survivors?
- How would you make the risk assessment more accessible or comfortable?

Reflections:

Following the exercise, we will come back together to discuss the following:

- Do you feel the risk assessment adequately captures adult family violence?
- Were there any challenges in using the risk assessment form?
- What is your experience with victim-survivor reactions and the risk assessment? Do they often feel uncomfortable or are unwilling to complete this? How would you overcome this obstacle?
- Do the way your complete risk assessments change at all depending on the victim-survivor or the type of abuse?
- What do you think is important to consider in risk assessment of adult family violence?

Are there any other things you would like to share?

Thank you for your valuable time and willingness to participate!

Appendix 14: Interview guide for victim-survivor participants

Introduction:

The first part of the interview will involve a brief introduction where you will be asked to share your age, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. **This will not be discussed whilst we are recording, and you can decline to disclose these**. You do not need to discuss anything that makes you upset or uncomfortable. You can share as much or as little as you like. These are some prompt questions:

- Are you employed, training or doing any voluntary work? How are you finding this?
- Who is your support network at the moment? (Friends/family/professionals)

Strengths and Resources

- Can you tell me about your values?
- What do you think are your biggest strengths?
- Could you share any moments when you have felt strong or empowered?
- What gives you hope or inspiration?
- What are your aspirations for the future?

Interactions with professionals:

This part will involve some reflection on your interactions with professionals in regard to abuse. Please remember, you do not need to disclose or discuss anything that you do not wish to or that you find upsetting. Here are some things we may consider:

- Are you being supported by any professional services or police officers at the moment? How are you finding this?
- Have you ever been supported by professional services or the police in the past?
- Are you/have you been supported by any other services? How were you referred to these?
- What kinds of positive interactions have you had with professionals? What made these positive?
- Have you had any negative interactions with professional services? What made these negative?
- What expectations did you have from professional services? Were these met and how?

Experience of risk assessment:

This part will involve discussing ‘risk assessment’ of abuse. You may or may not have experienced this so please share what you can. A lot of the time, risk assessment for abuse involves services asking a number of questions about your experiences, the perpetrator and

the types of abuse. Sometimes, they may give you a risk score or refer you to services such as a ‘MARAC’. These are some questions we may consider:

- Have you ever experienced risk assessment?
- How did it make you feel?
- Did you understand why services undertook this assessment?
- Was the risk assessment clearly explained to you?
- Did you feel the risk assessment was relevant to your experiences?
- Have you ever been referred to as ‘high-risk’ or referred to a MARAC / IDVA? Was this explained to you? How did you feel?
- Have you ever been referred to safeguarding systems e.g., social services? Was the reason for social services explained to you? How did you feel?

Activity:

Following our discussion on risk assessment, we will complete a ‘journey mapping’ activity. This is to look at your experience of the risk assessment and/or interactions with services. You are welcome to express yourself in a way that you choose. This could be drawing the map or adding post its / key words of your thoughts and feelings.

The start of the map is when you were referred to service or risk assessors began their risk assessment. Consider:

- How were you feeling at this point?
- How did you perceive professional involvement?
- Did you feel supported?

As you go along the map, this could be your experience with a service or being ‘risk assessed’. Please reflect and consider the following:

- Did your feelings and/or thoughts change at all?
- What did services do that helped?
- Was there anything that didn’t help?
- Did you feel the risk assessment/service was relevant?
- How did the questions make you feel?
- How did professionals make you feel supported or uncomfortable? (e.g., providing tissues, tone of voice, body language, comfort breaks).
- Was there anything that made you feel listened to and respected?

At the end of the map, consider your perceptions at the end of service or the risk assessment:

- Did you feel supported?

- Did you understand what would happen next?
- Were your expectations met?
- Did you feel safer?
- Did you feel listened to?

Reflection:

After the activity, we will come together and reflect on your map. We may consider:

- What do you think services need to improve on?
- What did you want from service? Did professionals understand this?
- What are some examples of good practice from professionals?
- What made you feel safe/comfortable/supported?
- What made you feel listened to/comfortable/empowered?

Are there any things you would like to share, suggestions or any other aspects triggered by the interviewed?

Thank you for your valuable time and willingness to participate!

Appendix 15: Vignette for professional interviews

A victim has been referred to you due to concerns about their relationship with a family member.

The victim tells you they have a ‘rocky’ relationship with this family member, and it has been like this for a long time. The victim lives on their own, far away from town and gets lonely so doesn’t mind people staying sometimes. However, they feel like they are ‘walking on eggshells’ around the family member. They don’t stay all the time but sometimes use the sofa when they have been kicked out. When they stay, the victim stays in their bedroom as they feel the family member ‘takes over’. The victim is worried about saying they can’t stay as they are unsure how the family member would react.

The victim has called the police previously but are concerned that the family member might ‘kick off’ if they call them again. The family member has ‘had issues’ in the past and the victim feels like they have to support them as the family member doesn’t have anyone else and professionals ‘dip in and out’. The family member tells the victim this is ‘what families are for’. The victim states that the family member has ‘difficult’ relationships with other family members, friends and romantic partners.

The victim feels worried being alone with the family member, especially when they have both drank alcohol. They can have a good but sometimes, the family members personality changes. A few times, household objects have ended up smashed after an argument. The victim states that this happens a lot and is ‘just something they do’ in their family.

The victim reports that they feel like they have to give money to the family member as ‘it’s not worth saying no’. The victim reports things are getting on top of them. The victim cannot drive and struggles getting to their medical appointments. They depend on this family member to take them but sometimes the family member shouts at the victim when there’s a lot of appointments. The victim feels bad for relying on the family member and is worried if the family member knew they were getting help that they would not take them to their appointment tomorrow.

Appendix 16: Debrief sheet for professionals.

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner, and victim-survivor experiences.

Interview Debrief

Thank you for taking part in this research project. I will use your focus group along with other focus groups and interviews, to help deepen the knowledge on effective risk assessment with those who have experienced abusive familial relationships. We hope that the findings from the research will contribute to increasing identification and effective intervention.

Right to Withdraw: If you decide that you do not want your interview to be included in the final report, you have up to two weeks from the date of the interview to withdraw your responses. After this time, your responses will be included in the final report. Under no circumstances, data which could lead to your identification will be utilised in the report. If you gave consent to be provided with a copy of the summary report, you can withdraw at any point up until January 2026.

To withdraw your responses, **please email Lily Graham** (LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk) and **quote your participant number** written on the top of this sheet. If you withdraw from the research, **your responses will not be included in the final analysis**. You can do this without needing to explain your reasons.

Contact details:
If you would like more information about the research project, or have further questions, please contact either:

Lily Graham (LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk)
OR
Dr Charlotte Barlow – Director of studies – Cbarlow8@uclan.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, you can email the University Office for Ethics at EthicsInfo@uclan.ac.uk

If the interview created emotional distress or any disturbance, please do speak to those responsible for supervision and safeguarding at work as they may be able to offer support. If this is not comfortable for you, please see below for additional support that you may find useful:

Domestic abuse support services. Including self-referrals and general advice for practitioners	Mental health and well-being services, Including self-referrals and crisis support
National DV Helpline: 0808 2000 247	LGBT Foundation: 0345 330 3030
Womens Aid: helpline@womensaid.org.uk	SHOUT UK: Text SHOUT to 85258
Karma Nirvana: 0800 5999 247	NHS Talking Therapies: https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service/
Age UK: 0800 678 1602	Switchboard: 0800 0119 100
Mankind: 01823 334 244	Mind: 0300 123 3393 info@mind.org.uk
Galop: 0800 999 5428 help@galop.org.uk	Contacting your GP and requesting an appointment
Rights of Women: https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/	Samaritans: 116 123
Citizens Advice: 0800 144 8848	

Appendix 17: Debrief sheet for victim-survivors.

Risk assessment in the context of adult family violence: police, practitioner, and victim-survivor experiences.

Interview Debrief

Thank you for taking part in this research project. I will use your interview, and other interviews, to help deepen the knowledge on effective risk assessment with those who have experienced abusive familial relationships. We hope that the findings from the research will contribute to increasing identification and effective intervention.

Right to Withdraw: If you decide that you do not want your interview to be included in the final report, you have up to two weeks from the date of the interview to withdraw your responses. After this time, your responses will be included in the final report. Under no circumstances, data which could lead to your identification will be utilised in the report. If you gave consent to be provided with a copy of the summary report, you can withdraw at any point up until January 2026.

To withdraw your responses, **please email Lily Graham** (LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk) and **quote your participant number** written on the top of this sheet. If you withdraw from the research, **your responses will not be included in the final analysis**. You can do this without needing to explain your reasons.

Contact details:
If you would like more information about the research project, or have further questions, please contact either:

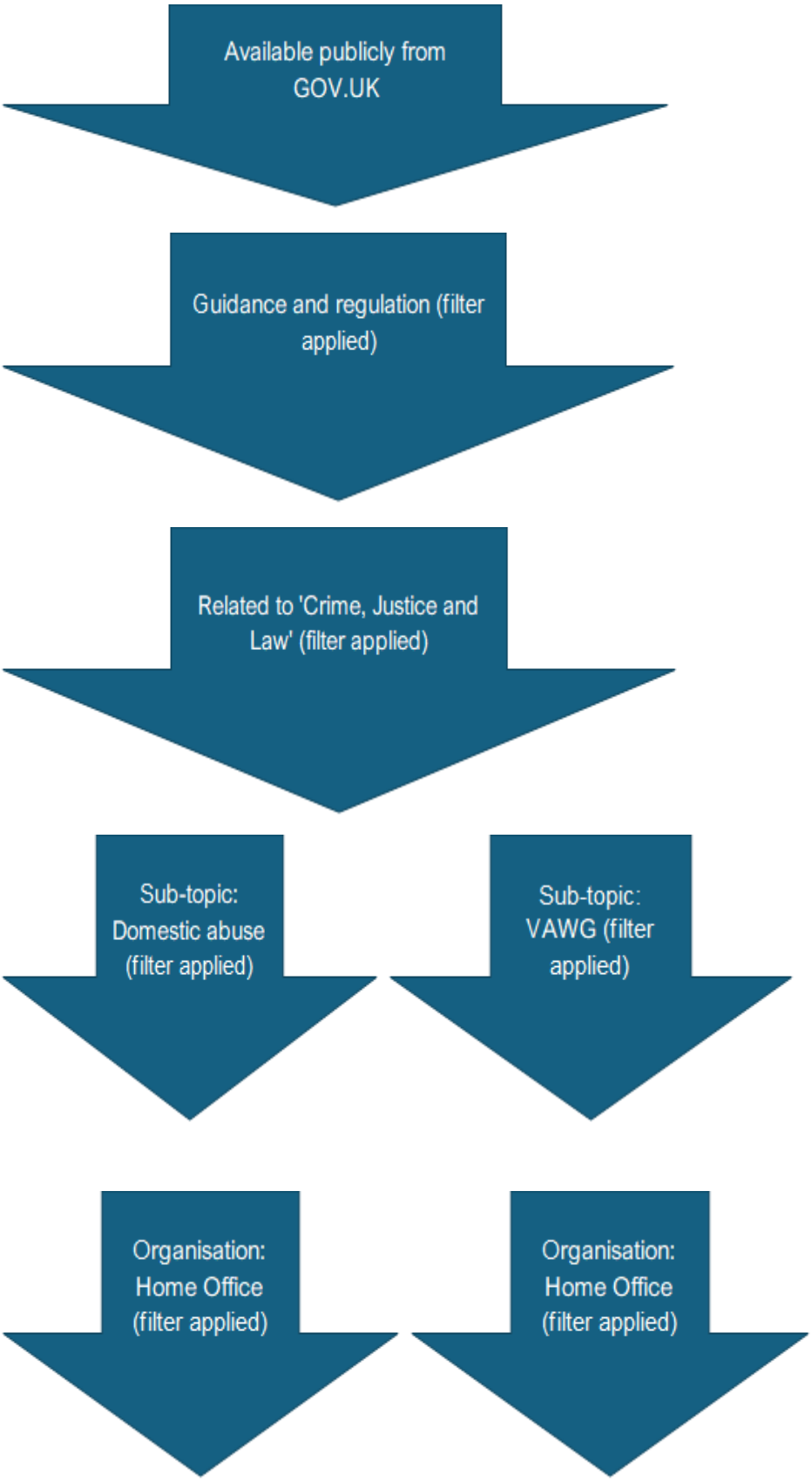
Lily Graham (LMGraham1@uclan.ac.uk) OR
Dr Charlotte Barlow – Director of studies – Cbarlow8@uclan.ac.uk

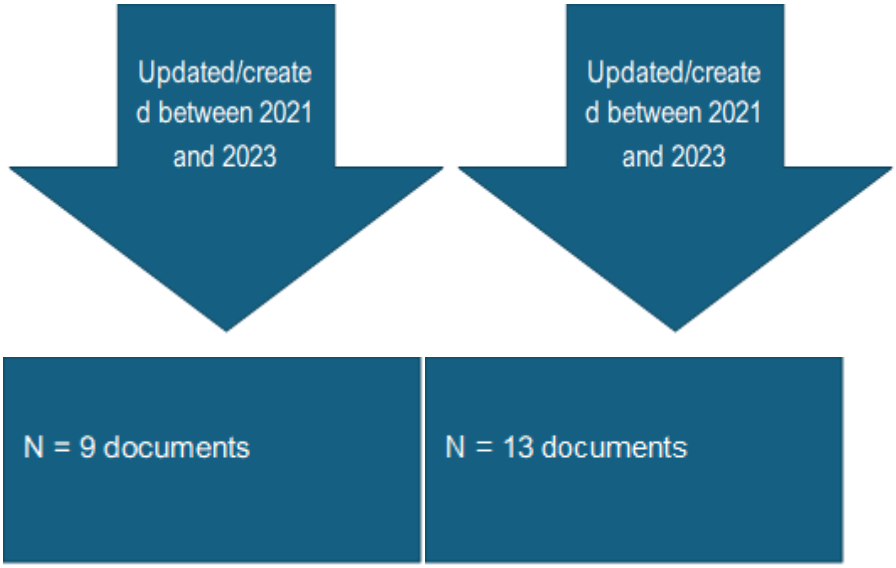
If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, you can email the University Office for Ethics at EthicsInfo@uclan.ac.uk

If you need further support or assistance, please see below for organisations which may be of benefit for you:

Domestic abuse support	Mental health and well-being	Crisis and emergency support	Housing, financial, and legal
National DV Helpline: 0808 2000 247	LGBT Foundation: 0345 330 3030	Emergency numbers: If you feel at risk, please contact 999.	Rights of Women UK: https://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/
Womens Aid: helpline@womensaid.org.uk	Contact your GP and book an appointment.	Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111	Surviving Economic Abuse: 0808 196 8845
Karma Nirvana: 0800 5999 247	NHS Talking Therapies: https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service/	Samaritans: 116 123	Citizens Advice: 0800 144 8848
Age UK: 0800 678 1602	Switchboard: 0800 0119 100	Social services: https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-health-services/local-authority-adult-social-care/	Shelter: 0808 800 4444
Mankind: 01823 334 244	Mind: 0300 123 3393 info@mind.org.uk	SHOUTUK: Text SHOUT to 85258	National Debt Line: 0808 808 4000
Galop: 0800 999 5428 help@galop.org.uk	NHS – 111 service		

Appendix 18: Policy sampling decisions





Criteria for selection

Inclusionary criteria	Exclusionary criteria
Focused specifically on 'domestic abuse' rather than other VAWG related offences	Guidance for the general public
Concerned with professional practice, guidance and support	Funding applications or management guidance
	Repeated or translated versions of documents
	Libraries or tools
	Consultations or reviews

Overview of sampling decisions

1. **Search/sample results under 'domestic abuse' filter.**

Document name	Accepted Y/N	Justification
Domestic abuse Act (2021) statutory guidance	Y	Provides guidance on legislation and supporting victims of domestic abuse for practitioners and police officers
Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance framework	Y	Provides guidance on legislation and supporting victims of domestic abuse for practitioners and police officers
Domestic homicide review library	N	Interactive tool
Domestic abuse: how to get help	N	General guidance for the public
Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory	N	Repeat/translated version

guidance framework: BSL resources		
Domestic abuse: get help for specific needs or situations	N	General guidance for the public
Domestic Abuse Act 2021 statutory guidance: British Sign Language resources	N	Repeat/translated version
Domestic Abuse Act 2021 statutory guidance consultation: BSL resources	N	Repeat/translated version.

2. **Search/sample results under 'VAWG' filter.**

Document name	Accepted Y/N	Justification
Domestic abuse Act (2021) statutory guidance	Y	Provides guidance on legislation and supporting victims of domestic abuse for practitioners and police officers
Child sex offender disclosure scheme guidance	N	Related to children and other VAWG offences
Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme	Y	Provides guidance on legislation and supporting victims of domestic abuse for practitioners and police officers.
Domestic violence protection orders	Y	Provides guidance on legislation and supporting victims of domestic abuse for practitioners and police officers
Female genital mutilation: resource pack	N	Related to other VAWG offences
Statement opposing female genital mutilation	N	Related to other VAWG offences
Domestic homicide review library	N	Interactive tool
Review of the controlling or coercive behaviour offence	N	Review/consultation
Commissioning services to tackle violence against women and girls	N	Funding

Support for families bereaved by domestic homicide	N	Related to wider VAWG offences
Creating an offence of public sexual harassment: BSL resources	N	Related to wider VAWG offences
Police officer dismissals review: terms of reference	N	Guidance for internal management
Safety of Women at Night Fund application process	N	Funding application

Selected documents

Name	Year of creation and/or update
Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance	2022
Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) guidance	2022
Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme Statutory Guidance	2023
Controlling and coercive behaviour statutory guidance	2023

Appendix 19: Quantitative data decision-making

- Police Force One provided male, female, and undefined data. Whereas Police Force Two provided an ‘other’ category. This related to a total of 14 victims and 5 perpetrators. Whilst consistency was aimed for, the data leaves in the ‘other’ category within data tables to avoid concealing, minimising or silencing LGBTQIA+ experiences. This was merged with ‘missing’ and ‘undefined’ variables to create ‘missing, other or undefined’.
- 19 cases were excluded from Police Force 2 due to either the suspect or victim being under 18 at the time of the incident. The original dataset provided was 12620 but the total analysed was 12601.
- Ethnicity variables used were self-defined ethnicity to reduce the potential for bias / inaccurate reporting. These were recoded to align with the Home Office guidelines on recording and reporting ethnicity groups. Other variables regarding ethnicity were excluded from the analysis.
- Victim and offender ages were grouped into bands for the ease of analysis.
- Victim and offender relationship was grouped into adult child-to-parent violence; sibling violence; parent to child violence and extended family members violence. Whilst Police Force Two provided in-depth information, Police Force One did not and there were inconsistencies in how this variable were used.
- Abuse to a grandparent was included in child-to-parent violence and abuse from a grandparent was included in parent-to-child abuse. This assumed that grandparents may act as carers, guardians or parental figures. This data did not wish to create categories of ‘elder abuse’ as there was insufficient information on whether victims or offenders were vulnerable or lacking capacity.
- Risk gradings were recoded into the following DASH outcomes: High Risk, Medium Risk, Standard Risk. Police Force One use a slightly different risk assessment model therefore used different terms, however, is still based on the DASH. Police Force Two included ‘no apparent risk’ (56 cases) which was recoded into standard risk.
- Outcomes were recoded and simplified to align with the Home Office guide on police records of outcomes.

Appendix 20: Case file overview

1. **Overview of case files received from Police Force One**

Case file number	Victim-perpetrator relationship	Crime/s recorded	Risk grading	Outcome
1	Sibling violence and abuse	Criminal damage/ stalking and harassment	Low	Outcome 16
2	Sibling violence and abuse	Assault/ possession of offensive weapon/Hate Public Order/Criminal Damage	Low	Outcome 1
3	Adult child to parent violence and abuse	Public Order	Low	Outcome 16
4	Adult child to parent violence and abuse	Stalking and harassment	Medium	Outcome 16
5	Extended family violence and abuse	Stalking and harassment/ public order/ Assault/ Criminal Damage	No risk assessment	Outcome 1
6	Sibling violence and abuse	Assault	Low	Outcome 16
7	Adult child-to-parent violence	Assault	Low	Outcome 1
8	Extended family violence and abuse	Possession of offensive weapon/assault/ possession of controlled drug/ criminal damage	Medium	Outcome 1
9	Sibling violence and abuse	Criminal Damage	Low	Outcome 16
10	Sibling violence and abuse	Stalking and harassment	Low	Outcome 16

2. **Overview of case files received from Police Force Two**

Case file number	Victim-perpetrator relationship	Crime recorded	Risk grading	Outcome
11	Extended family violence and abuse	Assault	Low	Outcome 16
12	Sibling violence and abuse	Not stated	Medium	Outcome 16
13	Sibling violence and abuse	Threats to kill	High	Outcome 1
14	Sibling violence and abuse	Assault	Low	Outcome 16
15	Adult child to parent violence and abuse	Theft; Breach of restraining order	High	Outcome 16
16	Adult child to parent violence and abuse	Assault	Low	Outcome 16
17	Adult child to parent violence and abuse	Assault	Medium	Outcome 2
18	Adult child to parent violence and abuse	Assault	High	Outcome 2
19	Extended family violence and abuse	Sexual assault; Assault	No risk assessment	Outcome 16
20	Sibling violence and abuse	Assault	Medium	Outcome 16

Appendix 21: Interview samples and overview

1. Interview locations

Location	Number
Online via MS Teams	17
Phone call	10
In-person	4

2. Interview lengths

Length	Number
Under 30 minutes	5
30-60 minutes	7
60-90 minutes	16
90-120 minutes	2
120 and above minutes	1

3. Police interview sample.

Geographic location	Northwest England (n = 10)
Participating police force	Police Force One (n = 8) Police Force Two (n = 2)
Job role	Police Constable (n = 8) Detective Inspector (n = 2)
Years experiences	10 or above years (n = 1) 5 to 10 years (n = 7) Under 5 years (n = 2)

4. Practitioner interview sample

Geographic location	Northwest England (n = 11) London (n = 1) East Midlands (n = 1) West Midlands (n = 1) Southeast England (n = 2) Scotland, Wales or Ireland (n = 1)
Job sector	Voluntary and Community services (n = 1) Domestic abuse and refuge services (n = 11) Specialist and by-and-for services (n = 2) Criminal Justice (n = 2) Health and social care (n = 1)
Job role	Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) (n = 3) Domestic abuse practitioner (n = 7) Domestic abuse trainer (n = 1) Victim Advocate (n = 2) CEO (n = 1) Project Manager (n = 1)

	Safeguarding Co-ordinator (n = 1) Adult nurse (n = 1)
Years experiences	10 or above years (n = 6) 5 to 10 years (n = 7) Under 5 years (n = 4)

5. Victim-survivor interview sample

Geographic location	Northwest England (n = 3) Scotland, Wales or Ireland (n = 1)
Ethnicity	Black British (n = 1) White British (n = 2) Declined (n = 1)
Gender	Female (n = 2) Male (n = 1) Declined (n = 1)
Age	45-55 years old (n = 1) 25-35 years old (n = 1) 18-25 years old (n = 1) Declined (n = 1)
Family relationship	Behaviours experienced from their parent (n = 3) Behaviours experienced from their child (n = 1)

Appendix 22: Policy coding and thematic tables (illustrative examples)

1. Parent codes

Construction of domestic violence and abuse
Construction of family violence and abuse
Risk and risk assessment
Response and support

2. Parent and child codes with examples from text

Parent code	Child code 1	Child code 2	Examples
Construction of DVA			
Construction of DVA	Causes of DVA		
Construction of DVA	Causes of DVA	A desire to exert power and control	Home Office (2022a) A desire to exert power and control is commonly recognised as the key motive for perpetrators. Home Office (2023a) The controlling or coercive behaviour offence does not relate to a single incident – it is an intentional pattern of behaviour which takes place over time, in order for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another
Construction of DVA			
Construction of DVA	Understanding the dynamics of DVA		
Construction of DVA	Understanding the dynamics of DVA	Consistent and ongoing contact	Home Office (2023a) It is an intentional pattern of behaviour that occurs on two or more occasions, or which takes place over time, in order for one individual to exert power, control or coercion over another. Home Office (2022a) The behaviour has had a serious effect on the victim, meaning that it has caused the victim to fear violence will be used against them on two or more occasions, or it has had a substantial adverse effect on the victim's usual day to day activities; and the behaviour takes place repeatedly or continuously.

Parent code	Child code 1	Child code 2	Examples
Construction of family violence and abuse			
Construction of family violence and abuse	Abuse by the wider family		
Construction of family violence and abuse	Abuse by the family	Vulnerability, age and care	Home Office (2022a) "Young people may be at an increased risk of abuse perpetrated by family members. Young people may be inherently more vulnerable because it is harder for them to distinguish between normal and abusive behaviours, and this may especially be the case where the perpetrator is a trusted family member. A young person may find it more difficult to report or disclose abuse by an adult. Home Office (2022a) "Disabled victims may be at increased risk in relation to particular examples of abusive behaviour, either from an intimate partner, family member, or carer"
Construction of family violence and abuse	Abuse by the wider family	HBV	Home Office (2022a) "Abuse within a family set up can encompass a number of different harmful behaviours. Abuse may be perpetrated as a perceived means to protect or defend the 'honour' of an individual, family or community" Home Office (2023a) "Using religion and faith systems to control and subjugate a victim can be a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is often characterised by a systematic pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour within a religious context, and can be perpetrated by a current or

			former partner, as well as family members”

Parent code	Child code 1	Child code 2	Examples
Risk and risk assessment			
Risk and risk assessment	Conceptualisation of risk		
Risk and risk assessment	Conceptualisation of risk	Risk as an escalation in behaviour	Home Office (2022b) “An arrest should be made at the first opportunity, as any delay may increase the risk to the victim and therefore undermine the purpose of the DAPN” Home Office (2022a) “Abuse can continue or intensify when a relationship has ended or is in the process of ending” Home Office (2022a) “For children of separated parents where domestic abuse is a factor, the impact of the abuse may intensify after separation”
Risk and risk assessment	Conceptualisation of risk	Risk as significant harm	Home Office (2023b) “initial checks will be completed as soon as possible and, in any case, within 24 hours9 to assess whether: there is an immediate or imminent risk of harm to A from B” Home Office (2023b) “The research also identified that a history of domestic abuse, non-fatal strangulation and attempts to separate are indicators of controlling or coercive behaviour, and risk factors for both intimate partner homicide and suspected victim suicide. This suggests that cases of high-risk domestic abuse, often characterised by control or coercion, might end in either a homicide or suspected victim suicide”

Risk and risk assessment	Risk factors		
Risk and risk assessment	Risk factors	Separation	Home Office (2022a) “Abuse can continue or intensify when a relationship has ended or is in the process of ending” Home Office (2022a) “For children of separated parents where domestic abuse is a factor, the impact of the abuse may intensify after separation”

Parent code	Child code 1	Child code 2	Examples
Response and support			
Response and support	Role of multi-agency professional services		
Response and support	Role of multi-agency professional services	Reducing risk	Home Office (2022b) “The ongoing management of a DAPO and the risk posed to the victim and their children requires a proactive multi-agency approach at all stages. In all cases, the police should consider referrals onto multi-agency forums such as referring the victim to a Multi- Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC” Home Office (2022a) “The DASH risk tool is not a definitive assessment of risk but provides for the identification and assessment of risk based on structured professional judgment. Professionals using this, or other risk assessment tools, should be alert to the risk to children as well as adults. It is essential to identify changes, such as escalation in severity and/or frequency of abuse.”
Response and support	Gathering evidence		

Response and support	Gathering evidence	Pattern of control	(Home Office, 2022b) "The senior police officer will need to consider other relevant information and evidence, such as any incident reports from previous call outs" (Home Office, 2023a) "Consideration of the cumulative impact of any behaviour, particularly where this includes control or coercion within the relationship, is crucial. This approach supports any prosecutor to effectively assess whether a pattern of behaviour exists"
Response and support	Responding to the victim		
Response and support	Responding to the victim	Being trauma-informed	(Home Office, 2023a) "Responding officers should focus on the welfare of the victim and their safety, including through de-escalation techniques, emotional awareness, active listening and both verbal and non-verbal communication, to help ease victims who may be traumatised." (Home Office, 2022a) "It is vital to work with victims in a trauma-informed way to support them through an investigation process and to prevent re-traumatisation"

3. Initial theme generation and derived codes.

Initial theme	Codes used
DVA presented as a problem between two intimate actors	• Construction of DVA > Understanding dynamics of DVA > Consistent and ongoing contact • Construction of DVA > Understanding dynamics of DVA > A pattern of power and control • Construction of DVA > Understanding dynamics of DVA > A pattern of power and control > An imbalance of power • Construction of DVA > Perpetrators of DVA > Intentional actions of control • Construction of DVA > Victims of DVA > Normalise or unaware of behaviours
DVA presented as a problem of intentional power and control	• Construction of DVA > Causes of DVA > A desire to exert power and control • Construction of DVA > Causes of DVA > Perpetrator desire to elicit fear

	• Construction of DVA > Perpetrators of DVA > Intentional actions of control • Construction of DVA > Victims of DVA > Normalise or unaware of behaviours • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > victim voice > understanding impact of control on victim • Response and support > gathering evidence > establishing a pattern of power and control
Family violence and abuse presented as related to victim vulnerability	• Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > vulnerability, care and age • Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > vulnerability, care and age > young LGBTQIA communities • Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > vulnerability, care and age > older people and care needs • Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > so-called honour-based violence and abuse • Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > child to parent violence • Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > vulnerability, care and age > safeguarding and welfare response • Construction of family violence and abuse > victims and their family > family can be used by the perpetrator to control the victim
Family violence and abuse presented as a racialised notion of HBV	• Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > so-called honour-based violence and abuse • Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > perpetrators family and associates > HBV and the community • Construction of DVA > Types of DVA > HBV > faith, community and gender
The family are either collateral victims or additional perpetrators to IPV	• Construction of family violence and abuse > abuse by the wider family > perpetrators family and associates • Construction of family violence and abuse > victims and their family > victims can retreat to the family for support • Construction of family violence and abuse > victims and their family > family can be used by the perpetrator to control the victim • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk > securing safety for children and vulnerable people
Risk is constructed as something which escalates into a significant crisis point	• Risk and risk assessment > conceptualisation of risk > risk as an escalation • Risk and risk assessment > conceptualisation of risk > risk as an escalation > crisis point or homicide • Construction of DVA > Impacts of DVA > Severe or significant harm on victims • Construction of DVA > Impacts of DVA > Severe or significant harm on society • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk • Response and support > gathering evidence > establishing a pattern of power and control
Risk is seen as physical violence and visible harm	• Risk and risk assessment > conceptualisation of risk > risk as significant harm • Construction of DVA > Impacts of DVA > Severe or significant harm on victims • Response and support > gathering evidence
Post-separation, child contact and	• Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > pregnancy • Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > post-separation

pregnancy are seen to be key risk factors	• Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > child contact arrangements • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk > securing safety for children and vulnerable people • Construction of DVA > Impact of DVA > Impact on children
Sexual violence and stalking are seen to be high-risk behaviours	• Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > stalking and harassment • Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > sexual violence • Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > non-fatal strangulation • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > early identification and prevention
Previous callouts and relationship history is key for risk assessment	• Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk > managing perpetrators • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > information sharing • Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > previous criminal behaviours • Risk and risk assessment > risk factors > previous domestic abuse behaviours • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > understanding context > looking at the relationship history
Context matters for risk assessment	• Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > understanding context > looking at the relationship history • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > victim voice > understanding impact of control on victim • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > understanding context • Construction of DVA > Victims of DVA > Normalise or unaware of behaviours
Victim needs and voice are important for risk assessment	• Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > understanding context > using professional curiosity • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > victim voice • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > victim voice > building rapport • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > victim voice > understanding impact of control on victim • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > reducing risk and preventing violence • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk > securing safety for children and vulnerable people
The role of the police and criminal justice agencies are important	• Response and support > role of multi-agency services • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > importance of a criminal justice response • Response and support > gathering evidence • Response and support > gathering evidence > conducting investigations • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk > managing perpetrators
Gathering evidence and pursuing perpetrators is important	• Response and support > gathering evidence • Response and support > gathering evidence > establishing pattern of power and control • Response and support > conducting investigations • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > importance of a criminal justice response

	• Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk > managing perpetrators
Being trained to use professional curiosity, consider context and trauma	• Response and support > gathering evidence • Response and support > gathering evidence > establishing a pattern of power and control • Response and support > responding to victims > being trauma informed • Response and support > responding to victims > listening to victim needs • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > understanding context • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > understanding context > trained professionals and officers • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > victim voice > building rapport • Risk and risk assessment > risk assessment > victim voice > understanding impact of control on victim
Reducing risk and preventing harm is important for the multi-agency team	• Response and support > role of multi-agency services • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > reducing risk • Response and support > role of multi-agency services > information sharing • Response and support > responding to victims > securing safety for children and vulnerable people

4. Organisation of initial themes into sub-themes.

Name of sub-theme	Initial themes
The binary story of coercive control	• DVA presented as a problem between two intimate actors • DVA presented as a problem of intentional power and control
The othering of adult family violence	• Family violence and abuse presented as related to victim vulnerability • Family violence and abuse presented as a racialised notion of HBV • The family are either collateral victims or additional perpetrators to IPV
Risk as an escalating harm or crisis point.	• Risk is constructed as something which escalates into a significant crisis point • Risk is seen as physical violence and visible harm
Risk as a heteronormative, intimate partner experience.	• Post-separation, child contact and pregnancy are seen to be key risk factors • Sexual violence and stalking are seen to be high-risk behaviours
Encouraging the gaze of risk assessment	• Previous call-outs and relationship history is key for risk assessment • Context matters for risk assessment

	• Victim needs and voice are important for risk assessment
Evidence, prosecution and the criminalisation thesis	• The role of the police and criminal justice agencies are important • Gathering evidence and pursuing perpetrators is important
Victim-survivor needs and multi-agency services: the lingering heteronormativity of risk.	• Being trained to use professional curiosity, consider context and trauma • Reducing risk and preventing harm is important for the multi-agency team

5. Organisation of sub-themes into overarching thematic tables.

Theme	**Sub-themes**
The policy story of AFV.	• The binary story of DVA and coercive control • The othering of adult family violence
The policy story of risk	• Risk as an escalating harm or crisis point. • Risk as a heteronormative, intimate partner experience. • Encouraging the gaze of risk assessment
The policy framing of DVA response.	• Evidence, prosecution and the criminalisation thesis • Victim-survivor needs and multi-agency services: the lingering heteronormativity of risk.

Appendix 23: Case file coding and thematic tables (illustrative examples)

1. Parent codes

Discussion of incident and those involved
Discussion of victim-perpetrator history and relationship
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment
Response, referrals, decision-making and support

2. Parent and child codes with examples from text

Parent code	Child code	Child code	Example from text
Discussion of incident and those involved			
Discussion of incident and those involved	Referred to as dispute or incident		Case file 6: "This incident has been two grown brothers arguing… It has degenerated into a physical altercation, and both have minor injuries." Case file 15: "Son turns up at father's address despite having a restraining order in place to prevent this and starts an argument"
Discussion of incident and those involved	Behaviours, types of abuse and crimes recorded		
Discussion of incident and those involved	Behaviours, types of abuse and crimes recorded	Threats to kill or harm	Case file 13: "My brother has threatened me with a friend and my other brother, threatened to come to the house and do us all in." Case file 10: "Has made comments… targeting the aggrieved, and making threats there will be 'hell to pay at'"
Discussion of incident and those involved	Behaviours, types of abuse and crimes recorded	Criminal damage and the use of household items to	Case file 18: "He threw a glass candle holder on the floor. Offender then picked up a shard

		harm, threaten or cause fear	of glass and threw it across the living room. Case file 17: “He has taken exception to this and started shouting and throwing things around his bedroom”
Discussion of incident and those involved	The presence of the wider family		
Discussion of incident and those involved	The presence of the wider family	Other family members are present and witness violence	Case file 20: “Police received a 999 call from father stating that both his sons are fighting and one has just headbutted the other. Case file 18: “The victim is mother. The suspect is her son. Mother's partner is a witness. Mother's brothers are also witnesses... They came as a group to mediate with victim and son as son can be aggressive”

Parent code	Child code	Child code	Example from text
Discussion of victim-perpetrator history and relationship			
Discussion of victim-perpetrator history and relationship	History of the relationship		
Discussion of victim-perpetrator history and relationship	History of the relationship	Relationship between victim and perpetrator is inconsistent	Case file 1: “victim and suspect are brothers, there has been a long dispute, resulted in unwanted contact on sporadic occasions”. Case file 9: “When asked why he would do this, she was unable to give any specific reason, simply stating that they do not get on and he has 'always been like this'.

			Case file 4: “the victim feels he is at the end of his tether with his daughter constantly harassing him”.
Discussion of victim-perpetrator history and relationship	Wider family network		
Discussion of victim-perpetrator history and relationship	Wider family network	Wider incidents or tensions across the family network	Case file 11: “Victim has reported that his uncle who is the suspect has turned up at his home address and assaulted him, his mum and his dad. The victim has not seen the suspect for around 6 years” Case file 9: “received a 999 call from staff at stating that they had received a call from— family over concerns for her… has denied this… stated she had been locked in a room at her aunties by family members and disturbance could be heard in the background.”

Parent code	Child code	Child code	Example from text
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment			
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment	Risk factors		
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment	Risk factors	Perpetrator complex needs	Case file 18: “He has threatened to kill himself before.” Case file 2: “has recently been release from prison and been stated to not be coping with outside world and stated he is constantly wanting his family to

			deal with his issues and is getting too much." Case file 20: "Known offender during hours of darkness has returned to the home address of his father and brother following an evening of drinking alcohol and taking cocaine has punched and headbutted the victim causing no injury and moments passing of pain".
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment	Presence of risk		
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment	Presence of risk	Escalating behaviour and harm	Case file 8: "Victims in this incident are elderly and suffering with their MH brought on by the behaviour of their grandson, who has MH issues and substance & alcohol problems, he resides at their home. It is reported his behaviour is escalating and he is becoming more aggressive." Case file 5: "Both extremely upset stating that they could not cope with anymore, that his drinking and drug taking is escalating as such his behaviour is becoming more threatening and they were both scared of him being in their home any longer."
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment	Risk gradings and assessments		
Risk, risk factors and risk assessment	Risk gradings and assessments.	Low threat, harm and risk	Case file 10: "There is tension between the 2 parties due to a bereavement. This has caused issues and the harassment against the victim. Support can

			be offered… There are no children involved and the parties do not reside together." Case file 11: "Due to the nature of the incident, the low level of injuries to both parties and the fact that emotions were obviously high at the time of the incident due to its nature, I do not believe it to be proportional to pursue this investigation any further. Words of advice will be issued to all parties, and they will be told to stay away from each other."

Parent code	Child code	Child code	Example from text
Response, referrals, decision-making and support			
Response, referrals, decision-making and support	Victim care and referrals		
Response, referrals, decision-making and support	Victim care and referrals	Referrals to DV services declined	Case file 6: "has decided he does not wish to pursue a complaint against at this time and just wanted the matter logging in the even something is to happen in the future" Case file 1: "No referral required. No children involved. Low level DV. Victim just wanted matter logging. No consent to share info."
Response, referrals, decision-making and support	Decisions to arrest or take action		

Response, referrals, decision-making and support	Decisions to arrest or take action	Victim withdrawal	Case file 16: "The victim does not support a prosecution because the suspects are her children and understood why they did what they did. Case file 19: "Victim has severed contact with the Police and there is insufficient supporting evidence to facilitate a prosecution. I consider the closing of this investigation to be previously covered by that and so I will close it accordingly." Case file 3: "does not Wish to make a formal complaint at this time as he does not wish to make the situation worse does not believe—will see out the threat however would like the matter recording in case anything happens in the future."

3. Initial theme generation and derived codes.

Initial theme	Codes used
Abuse is longstanding and there has been a wider history.	• Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > history of the relationship > relationship and contact is inconsistent • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > history of the relationship > previous incidents • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > history of the relationship > abuse has been ongoing • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > previous domestic abuse referrals
There are tensions and incidents which happen across the family.	• Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > wider family involvement • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > previous domestic abuse referrals • Discussion of incident and those involved > presence of wider family
Perpetrators and victim-survivors are often bonded by care and loyalty.	• Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > living together to in close proximity • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > care roles and obligations • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > care roles and obligations > family care

	• Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > care roles and obligations > victim obligation to perpetrator • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > perpetrator context > previous offending • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > perpetrator context > complex needs
Multiple people are involved in the abuse.	• Discussion of incident and those involved > presence of wider family • Discussion of incident and those involved > presence of wider family > multiple victims • Discussion of incident and those involved > presence of wider family > multiple perps • Discussion of incident and those involved > presence of wider family > witnesses
Victims and perpetrators are often overlapping.	• Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > wider family • Discussion of incident and those involved > presence of wider family • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > previous domestic abuse referrals • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > victim context > previous offending
Long standing relationships seen to be disputes or rivalries	• Discussion of incident and those involved > language used > referred to as dispute or incident • Discussion of incident and those involved > language used > Relationship seen as family conflict or rivalry
Abuse referred to as arguments or incidents	• Discussion of incident and those involved > language used > referred to as dispute or incident • Discussion of incident and those involved > language used > argument or fight • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, types of abuse and crimes recorded > behaviour described as dispute or incident
Incident not seen to warrant a criminal justice response	• Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of children involved • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of physical harm • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > risk assessment > low risk • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > victim care and action > advice given • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decisions to arrest or take action > lack of evidence • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decisions to arrest or take action > deemed as not domestic abuse
Risk, threat and harm are seen to be low or lacking in presence.	• Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of children involved • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of physical harm • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of escalation • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > victim care and action
There is a lack of risk factors associated with intimate partner violence.	• Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of children involved • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of physical harm • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > low risk > lack of escalation

Victims are worried and anxious	• Discussion of incident and those involved > victim demeanour and behaviour > described as fearful and anxious • Discussion of incident and those involved > victim demeanour and behaviour > described as vulnerable • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > criminal damage used to elicit harm and fear • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > fear or distress due to harassment • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > threats to kill and harm • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > threats to kill and harm > believes perpetrator will take action • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > behaviours > escalating behaviours and harm
Victims feel that things may get worse or things may happen again	• Discussion of incident and those involved > victim demeanour and behaviour > victims described as frustrated • Discussion of incident and those involved > victim demeanour and behaviour > described as vulnerable • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > history of the relationship > abuse has been ongoing • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > behaviours > escalating behaviours and harm • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > wanting to record behaviours in case of future events • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > lack of victim faith in the system
Perpetrators and so-called complex needs.	• Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > dynamics between victim and perpetrator > perpetrator mental health and complex needs • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > perpetrator context > previous offending • Discussion of victim-perpetrator relationship and history > perpetrator context > complex needs • Discussion of incident and who's involved > demeanour and behaviour of perpetrator > aggressive and hostile
High-harm and concerning behaviours.	• Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > behaviours > escalating behaviours and harm • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > damage control and intimidation • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > harassment, fear and distress • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > threats to kill and harm • Discussion of incident and those involved > behaviours, abuse and crimes recorded > threats to kill and harm > believes perpetrator will take action • Discussion of incident and who's involved > demeanour and behaviour of perpetrator > aggressive and hostile • Discussion of incident and who's involved > demeanour and behaviour of perpetrator > aggressive and hostile > aggression to police
Patterns of escalation.	• Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > behaviours > escalating behaviours and harm • Risk, risk factors and risk assessment > presence of risk > behaviours > victim scared of behaviours

	• Discussion of incident and who's involved > demeanour and behaviour of perpetrator > aggressive and hostile • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > wanting to record behaviours in case of future events • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > lack of victim faith in the system
Victims unlikely to pursue support due to fear of repercussion from wider family	• Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > wanting to record behaviours in case of future events • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > fear of repercussion from perpetrator or family • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > not wanting to upset family
Victims unlikely to pursue support due to concerns for perpetrator health and care	• Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > fear of repercussion from perpetrator or family • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > concerned for perpetrator health • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > victim care and referrals > wanting support with perpetrator
Victims not wanting prosecution but do want some help	• Discussion of incident and those involved > victim demeanour and behaviour > calm and cooperative • Discussion of incident and those involved > victim demeanour and behaviour > asking for help • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution > wanting to record behaviours in case of future events • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > victim care and referrals > referrals to domestic abuse services • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > victim care and referrals > asking about injunctions
Victim withdrawal or disengagement	• Response, referrals, decision-making and support > decision to arrest or take action > lack of victim support for prosecution • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > victim care and referrals > referrals to domestic abuse services > victim declines • Response, referrals, decision-making and support > victim care and referrals > lack of contact

4. Organisation of initial themes into sub-themes.

Name of sub-theme	Initial themes
The 'web' of familial violence: complexity and multiplicity in case files.	• Abuse is longstanding and there has been a wider history. • There are tensions and incidents which happen across the family. • Perpetrators and victim-survivors are often bonded by care and loyalty. • Multiple people are involved in the abuse. • Victims and perpetrators are often overlapping.

Arguments, disputes, and rivalry: minimisations of AFV in case files.	• Long standing relationships seen to be disputes or rivalries. • Abuse referred to as arguments or incidents
Escalation, fear and the troubling conflict of low risk in police case files.	• Risk, threat and harm are seen to be low or lacking in presence. • There is a lack of risk factors associated with intimate partner violence. • Victims are worried and anxious. • Victims feel that things may get worse or things may happen again. • Perpetrators and so-called complex needs. • High-harm and concerning behaviours. • Patterns of escalation.
Fear, family, and helplessness: case files outcomes.	• Victims unlikely to pursue support due to concerns for perpetrator health and care. • Victims unlikely to pursue support due to fear of repercussion from wider family • Incident not seen to warrant a criminal justice response. • Victims not wanting prosecution but do want some help. • Victim withdrawal or disengagement

5. Organisation of sub-themes into overarching theme tables.

Theme	Sub-themes
Understanding AFV in police data.	• The 'web' of familial violence: complexity and multiplicity in case files. • Arguments, disputes and rivalry: recording adult family violence in case files.
Police records of AFV and risk.	• Dangerous perps, fearful victims and low risk: risk discussions in case files.
Outcomes and trajectories for AFV relationships in police data.	• Fear, family and helplessness: recorded case files outcomes.

Appendix 24: Interview coding and thematic tables (illustrative examples)

1. Parent codes

Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse
Risk and risk assessment
Experiences of providing and receiving professional support
Other reflections

2. Parent and child codes with examples from text

Parent code	Child code	Child code	Example from text
Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse			
Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse	Dynamics of AFV		
Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse	Dynamics of AFV	Substance use and abuse	MO: So, yeah, they're both drunk they're having an argument and they're having a fight they're being drunk or in a longer like in the long term, they don't have them on going issues, whereas you've also got like um kids with um… mental health issues.... they're still living with parents, and they keep having an ongoing issues um and they keep… we keep having to go back on them and parents don't want to give up on their kids you know just because they know kids are struggling through some of their issues… struggling through drugs. Drugs is a big issue as well. BLUE: Something has just come to me regarding sort of child and parents... um… domestic violence is, I think I've got actually a

			prevalent one… like an issue I do see quite a bit is the child's normally…. well, the adult child or whatever... um is engaged in, sort of…. drug selling or things like drug dealing and… OCG related things.
Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse	Dynamics of AFV	HBV as particularly complex	ALI: it's so, so complex and I know at work now if we get a referral where there's concerns of honour-based abuse it automatically comes to an IDVA whether they're that person is going to MARAC or not just because of the complexities of it … is just so ... it's just massive… it's so hard to deal with and it's so hard to pick apart
Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse	Dynamics of AFV	Often involving the wider family	ARI: It is difficult to teach because you can't teach you how to deal with because when you get there … when it's familial, you don't know who's going to say what, you don't know how many people there's gonna be, you don't know who's gonna be involved so I guess it's harder in that sense BLUE: So, when we um attend a job or something like that, we've suddenly got lots of other family members turning up at… at the job as well… um all of a sudden out of nowhere…. So, um it… it means it becomes like a whole family issue rather than just like the two, the two siblings or something like that.

Parent code	Child code	Child code	Example from text

Risk and risk assessment			
Risk and risk assessment	Structured professional judgement tools		
Risk and risk assessment	Structured professional judgement tools	Questions are based on IPV	JAMIE: it's hard when its .... like family violence like have you tried to separate are there issues around child contact and obviously those kinds of questions are not relevant ALI: some of the questions they don't even relate to adult family violence, so you know when did you last separate and all that, so you know some... some of the questions are like… its…it's not made for ... for people who are going through adult family violence it's made for people who are going through a romantic relationship
Risk and risk assessment			
Risk and risk assessment	Dynamics of risk in AFV		
Risk and risk assessment	Dynamics of risk in AFV	Structural and contextual factors	PARIS: A lot of the time I think it's sort of like quite contextual. A lot of the ones we sort of deal with is…. adult children that live with parents, grandparents…. Or… whatever… you know for a protracted period of time through…. Because either they've lost homes you know have lost jobs… or they've had some issue that's meant they're back with parents. CHARLIE: Because obviously she felt that like a lot of the violence was actually coming from his mental health

			and the fact that mental health wasn't being supported … and it was um about him … like trying to get him into supported living and that was like a constant battle and I think actually that's like a common theme probably across the country in terms of like provision for like mental health RIVER: Yeah, it is yeah and it is really difficult because you don't get that ... so as I'm sure you know there's been 14 years of services that have been um … um mental health services have been not funded effectively and I think this is where you've got a lot of young people and you know for lack of a better employment and housing and then

Parent code	Child code	Child code	Example from text
Experiences of providing and receiving professional support			
Experiences of providing and receiving professional support	Barriers and challenges		
Experiences of providing and receiving professional support	Barriers and challenges	Lack of specialist services and training	ASPEN: I think it should… like from when I did train it was more based on partner relationships domestics until I started properly, I actually didn't realise that domestics include family members as well LEX: Although there are multiple domestic

			violence services out there you... there's little very little child to parent violence and abuse... service provision attached to those mainstream services… which um I find … quite puzzling actually… I think it comes in like…. Waves you know … like everyone starts going oh my gosh talking about it and then it will go quiet and then another couple of years will go by and its back being talked about and um I think it always relies on like... something ends up popping up in the media whether it's a son who kills his mother and it starts that like spark again… but then it always dies down
Experiences of providing and receiving professional support	Barriers and challenges	Wanting to protect the perpetrator	FLORIAN: I'd say a lot of time with family abuse um you know not many people want to engage with us to um… at the end of the day it's their family, their loved one's um which makes it a bit of a barrier for us… BAILEY: Mm I think it's the feeling of sort of responsibility of the victim JESSE: Um I think the safety um plan for the um ... for the um, um like the partner not your … um your kid … it's a bit tricky it's a bit different like it's still abuse ... it's not the same abuse… the ... the abuse from your partner is not your blood but the other one its … it's your blood
Experiences of providing and	Effective support		

receiving professional support			
Experiences of providing and receiving professional support	Effective support	Listening to strengths and needs	NOAH: And they've got to find some commonality with you as well if you ... that you get them and you're here to... care about their needs and their wants and if... if…if they want to live in isolation then that's okay too... um ... and what do they ... what is it they like about the perpetrator what is their connection... do they love them... that's okay… it's okay to love them YALE: I don't think... I think they threw services at us... but they never actually said how are you? They never actually said those words. How are you? How are you doing?

3. Initial theme generation and derived codes.

Initial theme	Codes used
Intersection with complex needs and vulnerability.	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > substance use and abuse • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > mental health and complex needs • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > HBV as particularly complex • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > CPV is very common • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > living together and living on top of each other
Wider familial dynamics and interconnections.	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > HBV as particularly complex • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > often involving the wider family • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > experiences of AFV > trauma and complexity in the family
Familial norms and gender roles	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > experiences of AFV > a generational issue • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > experiences of AFV > expectations and obligations in the family role

	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > experiences of AFV > expectations and obligations in the family role > gendered familial roles
Seen to be different than intimate partner violence	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > societal and public expectations > IPV typical • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > responses and awareness > AFV recorded and responded to differently • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > lack of coercive control • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > experiences of AFV > not as intentional
Adult family violence not seen in wider society to be domestic abuse	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > societal and public expectations > IPV typical • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > responses and awareness > AFV recorded and responded to differently
Adult family violence doesn't fit with the model of coercive control	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > lack of coercive control • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > experiences of AFV > not as intentional • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > mutual vulnerabilities and co-dependency
Adult family violence assumed to be a private or civil matter	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > societal and public expectations > IPV typical • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > responses and awareness > AFV recorded and responded to differently • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > responses and awareness > seen as a family or private matter
Victims unable to name their experiences as abuse	• Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > lack of training and awareness of AFV > AFV recorded and responded to differently • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > dynamics of AFV > lack of coercive control • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > lack of training and awareness of AFV > seen as a family or private matter
Risk assessment questions built around intimate partner violence relationships.	• Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > questions are based on IPV • Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > questions based on IPV > unsure if they can apply to AFV Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > looks different to IPV > less power and control
Risk assessment built around one victim and one perpetrator.	• Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > questions are based on IPV • Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > must be filled out for every perpetrator
Risk looks different for adult family violence	• Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > the lens is not intersectional • Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > there are additional questions that need to be asked for AFV • Risk and risk assessment > gathering an understanding of risk > adult family violence may take some unpicking

	• Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > structural and contextual factors > cost of living crisis • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > structural and contextual factors > crisis in care and services • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > structural and contextual factors > community and society • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > power and control > financial control and exploitation • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > responses and awareness > AFV is more challenging and complex to respond to
Adult family violence likely to score low or perceived as low risk	• Risk and risk assessment > gathering an understanding of risk > adult family violence may take some unpicking • Risk and risk assessment > professional judgement > can be hard to do • Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > inconsistent across agencies • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > power and control > financial control and exploitation • Understandings of adult family violence and domestic abuse > societal and public expectations > IPV typical • Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > scores low > lack of coercive control
Risk assessments could be adapted by adding or rewording questions.	• Risk and risk assessment > gathering an understanding of risk > adult family violence may take some unpicking • Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > inconsistent across agencies • Risk and risk assessment > important tools > not feasible to have lots of different tools • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV
Importance of context and family history	• Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > the lens of risk assessment • Risk and risk assessment > gathering context > understanding the wider family • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > structural and contextual factors • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > presence of so-called complex needs
Building rapport, taking your time and being trauma-informed	• Risk and risk assessment > gathering an understanding of risk > adult family violence may take some unpicking • Risk and risk assessment > gathering an understanding of risk > gathering context > understanding victim, needs, strengths and wishes during assessment • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > presence of so-called complex needs • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > trauma of repeating the story many times
Using discretion, resistance and professional curiosity	• Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > the lens of risk assessment • Risk and risk assessment > professional judgement > important when done correctly • Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > important tools > not feasible to have lots of different tools

	• Risk and risk assessment > structured professional judgement tools > important tools > rewording questions • Risk and risk assessment > dynamics of risk in AFV > different life events and triggers
Victim-survivors unable to get support due to fears of familial repercussions.	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > victim withdrawal or unwilling to go further • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > victim withdrawal or unwilling to go further • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > shame > fear of bringing shame on the family • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > wider family repercussions > fear of repercussions from the wider family • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > wider family repercussions > wanting to protect the perpetrator
Feelings of guilt, shame and failure.	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > shame > shame of being a victim • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > trauma of repeating the story many times • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > lacking the language to name experiences as abuse
Typical safeguarding and responses do not meet the needs of adult family violence.	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > support is usually based on IPV • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > support is usually based on IPV > safeguarding doesn't work for AFV • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > victim withdrawal or unwilling to go further • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > support focused on IPV > AFV seen as too complex
Lack of legal protections and provision for adult family violence.	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > a lack of specialist support and training > family support usually focused on family welfare and under 18's • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > civil orders and protections not relevant for adult family violence
Feeling unsure how to support or what referrals to make.	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > a lack of specialist support and training • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > support is usually based on IPV • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > a lack of specialist support and training > family support usually focused on family welfare and under 18's • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > a lack of multi-agency awareness • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > support focused on IPV > AFV seen as too complex
Adapting current systems of support to be more relevant.	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > barriers and challenges > support focused on IPV > AFV seen as too complex

	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > extra or additional sessions of support • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > safety planning > doing this in a way that is relevant and aware of challenges • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > increasing independence and empowerment •
Understanding the family dynamic	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > listening to experiences without judgement • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > identifying support networks • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > working with the multi-agency team > exploring support for perpetrators
Building rapport and being trauma-informed	• Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > supporting disclosure and acknowledgment • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > practical and well-being support • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > listening to strengths and needs • Experiences of providing and receiving professional support > effective support > listening to experiences without judgement

4. Organisation of initial themes into sub-themes.

Name of sub-theme	Initial themes
Tensions and conflicts: understanding the complexity of AFV.	• Intersection with complex needs and vulnerability. • Wider familial dynamics and interconnections. • Familial norms and gender roles. • Seen to be different than intimate partner violence
A lack of language and name for experiences of AFV.	• Adult family violence not seen in wider society to be domestic abuse. • Adult family violence doesn't fit with the model of coercive control. • Adult family violence assumed to be a private or civil matter. • Victims unable to name their experiences as abuse
Navigating incompatibility: using SPJ tools to risk assess adult family violence.	• Risk assessment questions built around intimate partner violence relationships. • Risk assessment built around one victim and one perpetrator.
Capturing the complexity of AFV in risk assessments.	• Risk looks different for adult family violence. • Adult family violence likely to score low or perceived as low risk
Follow-up questions, adaptations, context:	• Risk assessments could be adapted by adding or rewording questions.

equipping professional curiosity.	• Importance of context and family history. • Building rapport, taking your time and being trauma-informed • Using discretion, resistance and professional curiosity
Family, belonging and loyalty: barriers for victim-survivors.	• Victim-survivors unable to get support due to fears of familial repercussions. • Feelings of guilt, shame and failure.
A lack of training, systems and services: barriers for professionals.	• Typical safeguarding and responses do not meet the needs of adult family violence. • Lack of legal protections and provision for adult family violence. • Feeling unsure how to support or what referrals to make.
Centring context, relationships and the family in practice.	• Adapting current systems of support to be more relevant. • Understanding the family dynamic. • Building rapport and being trauma-informed

5. Organisation of sub-themes into overarching theme tables.

Theme	**Sub-themes**
Navigating AFV in professional practice.	• Tensions and conflicts: understanding the complexity of AFV. • A lack of language and name for experiences of AFV.
Conducting risk assessment for AFV on the frontline.	• Navigating incompatibility: using structured professional judgement tools to risk assess adult family violence. • Capturing the complexity of AFV in risk assessments • Follow-up questions, adaptations, context: equipping professional curiosity.
Supporting victim-survivors of AFV on the frontline	• Family, belonging and loyalty: barriers for victim-survivors. • A lack of training, systems and services: barriers for professionals. • Centring context, relationships and the family in practice.

Appendix 25: Data integration overview

1. **Overview of themes in each dataset**

Theme	Sub-themes
The policy story of AFV.	• The binary story of DVA and coercive control • The othering of adult family violence
The policy story of risk	• Risk as an escalating harm or crisis point. • Risk as a heteronormative, intimate partner experience. • Encouraging the gaze of risk assessment
The policy framing of DVA response.	• Evidence, prosecution and the criminalisation thesis • Victim-survivor needs and multi-agency services: the lingering heteronormativity of risk.

Quantitative data findings
Conflicts and consequences: reflections from the recoding process.
Victim-survivors, perpetrators and their relationships: demographic insights.
Risk gradings for AFV.
Low risk and high risk? Risk and crime in the context of AFV.
The dominance of Outcome 16.

Theme	Sub-themes
Understanding AFV in police data.	• The 'web' of familial violence: complexity and multiplicity in case files. • Arguments, disputes and rivalry: recording adult family violence in case files.
Police records of AFV and risk.	• Dangerous perps, fearful victims and low risk: risk discussions in case files.
Outcomes and trajectories for AFV relationships in police data.	• Fear, family and helplessness: recorded case files outcomes.

Interview theme	Sub-themes
Navigating AFV in professional practice.	• Tensions and conflicts: understanding the complexity of AFV.

	• A lack of language and name for experiences of AFV.
Conducting risk assessment for AFV on the frontline.	• Navigating incompatibility: using structured professional judgement tools to risk assess adult family violence. • Capturing the complexity of AFV in risk assessments • Follow-up questions, adaptations, context: equipping professional curiosity.
Supporting victim-survivors of AFV on the frontline	• Family, belonging and loyalty: barriers for victim-survivors. • A lack of training, systems and services: barriers for professionals. • Centring context, relationships and the family in practice.

2. Similarities between data sets

Name of similarities	What datasets are similar	Description of similarities.
The othering and lack of seriousness for AFV.	Policy, interviews, case files, police data.	Police data does not grade high or is often not risk assessed at all, case file discusses this in othering language, policy data others, interviews felt it was not treated seriously in the context of risk.
The lack of understanding / support of AFV due to the public story of IPV.	Policy, interviews, police data.	Policy data does not present a full understanding of AFV; this is filtered down to the inconsistent police data something further picked up by the interviews as they felt it was often misunderstood. Victim-survivors further did not wish to seek outcomes / matched by police data. Lack of specialist services reinforces this.
The misunderstanding of risk	Police data, policy and interviews.	Risk is presented as a problem of individual people; risk assessment is often not completed or not risk assessed accordingly to the high harm. Risk is seen as a complex dynamic in interviews. Victim survivors also not risk assessed
Complexity and the interconnected nature of abuse.	Police data, case file, interviews	Interviews stressed the complex web of family abuse, something which was strengthened by the case file analysis. Multiple people were common. Furthermore, police data presents a life course of abuse for many victim-survivors of AFV.
Trajectories of support	Interviews, case files, police data, policy data.	Interviews and case files suggested that withdrawing was likely due to lack of support / specialist services. Highlighted

		by police data and high rate of outcome 16.
Trauma-informed and context led approaches.	Interviews and policy data.	An awareness of trauma and being context led was discussed both in policy and in the interviews as cornerstones of effective support. Perhaps this shows the positive trickling down into practice?

3. Tensions or differences between datasets

Name of tension	Where did the tension occur.	Description of tension.
The framing of risk assessment.	Between policy data, police data and practitioner interviews.	Risk assessment in policy is holistic. Police data not completed. Practitioner interviews finding it not holistic enough.
Victim fear	Interviews and case files	Victims highly fearful in case files suggesting the presence of high risk. However, professionals stressed that victim survivors are unlikely to present as fearful in the interviews.
Recording the complex web of family violence.	Between policy data, case file data, practitioner interviews and police data.	"Complex needs" – not represented in police data. But discussed a lot in the case file analysis and the interviews. Web of family violence – issues with police data and binary framing of policy.
Capturing the high-risk of adult family violence.	Between practitioner interviews, policy narratives and police data.	Risk gradings in police data compared to what practitioners are saying. High risk indicators or crimes often score low despite this being stressed in policy as a high risk. Some practitioners saying high risk, but others see it as most likely scoring low.
The future of risk assessment.	Between practitioner interviews.	Some want to get rid of it, some want to re-use the DASH. Some want to add questions but some don't. Some questions are still important but some aren't relevant – lack of consistency.
The story of risk.	Between policy data, case files and interviews.	Policy presents risk as incredibly static; however, interviews and case files highlight the complex, overlapping and multiplicity involved in adult family violence.
Outcomes and support	Case files, police data, policy data, interviews.	Case files suggest that victims do want support sometimes or help with injunctions. However, Outcome 16 is highly common across the quantitative data suggesting that victims withdraw. Is this a lack of fit? Furthermore, policy stresses injunctions/DVDS but this not

		seen in interviews as appropriate for victim-survivors – difficulties and tensions for a criminal justice framing?

4. Overarching threads – presented by findings chapters.

Thread name
Construction and understanding AFV as DVA
Understanding, assessing and responding to risk in AFV
Supporting victim-survivors of AFV

5. Overarching themes – presented in discussion chapter.

Theme name	Sub-theme/s - implications	Sub-theme/s - Recommendations
Embedding complexity: Conceptualising AFV as a form of DVA.	• The discursive shadow of IPV. • The 'non ideal' status of AFV.	• Dismantling the umbrella of DVA and creating space for complexity.
Operationalising context and curiosity: risk assessing AFV.	• The legacy of the 'ideal DVA relationship' on perceptions of risk. • Understanding risk for AFV: context matters.	• Emphasising professional curiosity for non-ideal relationships.
Centralising care: supporting victim-survivors of AFV.	• Tensions between AFV and the 'criminalisation thesis'. • The 'hard and complex' work of responding to AFV.	• Embedding care, context and complexity into service design.

Appendix 26: Reflexive diary entries

Theme / dilemma / identity	Diary excerpts
The passive bystander	• 29/10/2024 I have been feeling somewhat guilty for the research on policy and police data. A part of the worry stems from whether I am 'doing' research which is feminist and feminist enough. Is engaging with the systems of power contradictory of the feminist core? Will it lead to backlash? • 12/02/2025 Whilst it is a rich source of data, anonymised for my own purpose I can't help but feel guilt and sadness and grief reading the cases. This is a moment of trauma, stress and fear for so many victim-survivors. Here I am reading through these cases when they are so disconnected, so vague, so disparate from the research project. They haven't given consent. They haven't had an active voice in what parts of their story are included and what are not. That has all been decided FOR them BY others, including myself. How can I treat these anonymous voices as people rather than passive data subjects? How can I give them voice? • 14/01/2025 Does my desire for participant participation reflect my selfish desire to get my doctorate? Have I forgot my ethics of care? Motivated my 'the juicy stuff'? • 01/03/2025 Re-reading the case files for analysis just feels so frustrating. There are so many missed opportunities. Why was this graded so low?
The guilty feminist	• 22/09/2024 Am I feminist enough? Will I be accepted? If I were to build rapport with a police officer in an interview, am I betraying my values? What happens if they mention something I disagree with? How will my novice identity counteract my feminist killjoy? • 14/11/2025 I already had a partnership with the perceived enemy of feminism – the police. Which again may have impacted the subsequent appeal of the research to feminist organisations and those who have cultural and generational and individual trauma of the police. It is additionally hard to invest time into partnerships when a PhD is predicated on time and financial pressures. Despite my best intentions to build a variety of partnerships and relationships to move beyond the label of 'police research' • 19/12/2024 I wonder if this is further impacted by my status as a woman. A young woman. Asking for data in a masculine environment. Am I credible enough? Am I serious enough? Do they care enough? Would a man feel like this? Would a man worry like this? • 30/12/2024 By recognising the symbolic power of policy also leads us to a conundrum where we must also recognise the symbolic violence of the state and state led approaches. Am I complicit in helping to build a state regime that will eventually be used to police minorities women? By holding a partnership with two police forces, am I colluding with the power of the state? Am I colluding with the very systems of power which constrict women's journeys to freedom? • 23/02/2025 Indeed, my co-option with the police and my close relationship with the state in my PhD partnership may have influenced some responses. Some may see me as colluding with

	the enemy or colluding with the elite, given the research on police as being ineffective or insensitive or victim-blaming. • 24/2/2025 I also wonder if my discomfort in interviewing the police stems from my critical feminist killjoy ready to spring out and pounce. Did I want them to slip up? Did I want a reason to criticise the police?
The junior researcher	• 14/06/2024 Research interview 1. Practitioner. She didn't really engage with 'risk factors' and this type of language. Is this a reflection of my status as an outsider? I felt a little taken aback by this, the participant stressed instead that stuff like mental health and substance use were more complex than simply being risk factors. We continued the discussion by talking about risk factors in air quotes, but I guess Microsoft teams does not really pick this up. I almost felt a bit embarrassed about the reaction and discussion here as it exposed my outsider status, perhaps my status as a novice researcher. Have I really been out of the game that long? • 10/07/2024 I think my outsider status, as an academic, a novice academic with the pressures of innovation and originality has caused me to create a concept with a certain desire and flog this dead horse. • 16/07/2024 The use of mixed methods is beneficial, but I sometimes worry if each data set is merely or nothing more than a brief snapshot insight – is it enough to generate reliable conclusions? Is one or two police forces enough? Are 10 case files enough? Are 15 practitioners enough? Am I doing research that is real enough? Is it rigorous enough? Am I doing it in a way that will promote change? • 05/09/2024 Cold calling in recruitment in victims and practitioners has proved really difficult. Having no prior or pre-existing relationships has led to 'unable to support'. I cannot help but feel to what extent is this a consequence of my status as a novice and unknown researcher? What impact does my label as 'PhD STUDENT' have upon these potential relationships? • 19/12/2024 No one discusses these frustrations and the impact of a partnership, or perhaps an imbalanced partnership, on researcher well-being. This is enhanced by my status as a novice. Not only does this status impact relationships but also impacts my sense of self. I constantly question, doubt and analyse every move and step I make. Asking myself, do I look like I know what I'm doing? Will they laugh at me? Will they brush me off? I scrutinise every email, every request, every dialogue in case I give off signs that I am a 'novice'. • 24/2/2025 In my own experience, I often tried to shoehorn in my own experiences and experiences as a professional. I wanted other professionals to take me seriously, to see me as someone who knew what they were talking about. It makes me cringe to think back to some of the transcripts, it was like I was shouting HEY I'm experienced too! Take me seriously!

Appendix 27: Quantitative data tables

Police Force One

- *Demographic and relationship data.*

	Frequency	Percent
Adult child to parent violence and abuse	7004	43.6%
Parent to adult child violence and abuse	2530	15.8%
Sibling violence and abuse	3815	23.8%
Violence and abuse from extended family***	2708	16.9%

Direction of victimisation/offending	Count	Percent
Male to Male perpetration	4015	25%
Female to female perpetration	3774	23.5%
Male to female perpetration	6772	42.2%
Female to Male perpetration	1474	9.2%
Gender of victim and/or offender is unclear or unstated	22	0.1%

	Victim gender/sex	Perpetrator gender/sex
Female	65.7% (n = 10552)	32.7% (n = 5253)
Male	34.2% (n = 5489)	67.2% (n = 10798)
Undefined or other	0.1% (n = 16)	0% (n = 6)
Total	100% (n = 16057)	100% (n = 16057)

	Victim/s	Perpetrator/s
Asian or Asian British	1% (n = 155)	0.9% (n = 152)
Black African, Caribbean or Black British	1.2% (n = 198)	1.4% (n = 221)
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.9% (n = 149)	1.6% (n = 249)
White	82.0% (n = 13174)	81.4% (n = 13073)
Other ethnic group	0.6% (n = 94)	0.8% (n = 134)
Not provided or declined	13.6% (n = 2184)	11.7% (1873)
Missing data	0.6% (n = 103)	2.2% (n = 355)

Age band	Victim/s	Perpetrators

18-25	14.7% (n = 2364)	25.6% (n = 4113)
26-35	15.4% (n = 2476)	26.8% (n = 4308)
36-45	17.2% (n = 2763)	21.6% (n = 3471)
46-55	21.4% (n = 3442)	14.4% (n = 2319)
56-65	18.1% (n = 2914)	7.9% (n = 1275)
66+	13.1% (n = 2098)	3.6% (n = 571).

- *Risk and crime data.*

	Frequency	Percent
Arson	14	0.1%
Burglary - Residential	66	0.4%
Criminal Damage excluding Arson	1125	7.0%
Homicide	6	0.0%
Other Sexual Offences	31	0.2%
Possession of Weapons	6	0.0%
Public Order	1175	7.3%
Rape	19	0.1%
Stalking and Harassment	3260	20.3%
Vehicle Interference	1	0.0%
Violence With Injury	2346	14.6%
Violence without injury	8008	49.9%

	Frequency	Percent
High risk	94	0.6%
Medium risk	1798	11.2%
Standard risk	6672	41.6%
Missing or blank	7493	46.7%

	High risk	Medium risk	Standard risk	No risk assessment completed
Arson	0.0%	21.4%	21.4%	57.1%
Burglary - Residential	6.1%	19.7%	48.5%	25.8%
Criminal Damage excluding Arson	0.7%	10.8%	39.2%	49.2%
Homicide	0.0%	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%
Other Sexual Offences	0.0%	6.5%	29.0%	64.5%
Possession of Weapons	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%
Public Order	0.5%	7.2%	47.2%	45.0%
Rape	0.0%	5.3%	31.6%	63.2%

Stalking and Harassment	0.4%	7.6%	33.6%	58.4%
Vehicle Interference	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Violence With Injury	1.1%	20.8%	33.5%	44.6%
Violence without injury	0.5%	10.4%	46.8%	42.4%
Total count within offence recorded group	46.7%	41.6%	0.6%	11.2%

- *Outcome data.*

	Frequency	Percent
Outcome 1: Charge/summons	996	6.2%
Outcome 3: Caution - adults	27	0.2%
Outcome 5: Offender died	3	0.0%
Outcome 8: Community resolution	37	0.2%
Outcome 9: Not in the public interest (CPS)	9	0.1%
Outcome 10: Not in the public interest (police)	49	0.3%
Outcome 12: Prosecution prevented (suspect too ill)	24	0.1%
Outcome 13: Prosecution prevented (victim/key witness dead/too ill)	7	0.0%
Outcome 14: Evidential difficulties: suspect not identified: victim does not support further action	63	0.4%
Outcome 15: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim supports action	2440	15.2%
Outcome 16: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim does not support further action	12151	75.7%
Outcome 20: Action undertaken by another body/agency	27	0.2%
Outcome 21: Not in the public interest - suspect identified	138	0.9%
Outcome 22: Diversionary, educational or intervention activity	86	0.5%

	Blank or missing	Standard risk	High risk	Medium
Outcome 1: Charge/summons	6.2%	3.5%	29.8%	15.2%
Outcome 3: Caution - adults	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%

Outcome 5: Offender died	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Outcome 8: Community resolution	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Outcome 9: Not in the public interest (CPS)	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Outcome 10: Not in the public interest (police)	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
Outcome 12: Prosecution prevented (suspect too ill)	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Outcome 13: Prosecution prevented (victim/key witness dead/too ill)	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Outcome 14: Evidential difficulties: suspect not identified: victim does not support further action	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Outcome 15: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim supports action	17.5%	10.7%	33.0%	21.2%
Outcome 16: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim does not support further action	72.8%	83.7%	30.9%	60.1%
Outcome 20: Action undertaken by another body/agency	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Outcome 21: Not in the public interest - suspect identified	1.2%	0.6%	1.1%	0.5%

Outcome 22: Diversionary, educational or intervention activity	0.4%	0.4%	5.3%	1.7%

Police Force Two

- *Demographic and relationship data.*

	Frequency	Percent
Adult child to parent violence and abuse	5551	44.1%
Parent to adult child violence and abuse	2109	16.7%
Sibling violence and abuse	3307	26.2%
Violence and abuse from extended family***	1634	13.0%

Direction of victimisation/offending	Count	Percent
Male to Male perpetration	3555	28.2%
Female to female perpetration	2493	19.8%
Male to female perpetration	4790	38.0%
Female to Male perpetration	999	7.9%
Gender of victim and/or offender is unclear or unstated	764	6.1%

	Victim gender/sex	Perpetrator gender/sex
Female	60.4% (n = 7612)	28.3% (n = 3564)
Male	37.4% (n = 4717)	67.6% (n = 8513)
Other	0.1% (n = 14)	0% (n = 5)
Unknown	2.0% (n = 258)	4.1% (n = 519)
Total	100% (n = 12620)	100% (n = 12620)

	Victim/s	Perpetrator/s
Asian or Asian British	8.8% (n = 1104)	8.8% (n = 1109)
Black African, Caribbean or Black British	0.5% (n = 61)	0.5% (n = 63)
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.4% (n = 56)	0.8% (n = 101)
White	76.0% (n = 9579)	74.0% (n = 9330)

Other ethnic group	0.3% (n = 36)	0.3% (n = 40)
Not provided or declined	10.9% (n = 1376)	9.6% (1206)
Missing data	3.1% (n = 389)	6.0% (n = 752)

Age band	Victim/s	Perpetrators
18-25	18.2% (n = 2295)	28.3% (n = 3563)
26-35	17.3% (n = 2186)	29.6% (n = 3726)
36-45	18.2% (n = 2298)	18.5% (n = 2328)
46-55	20.4% (n = 2571)	13.3% (n = 1675)
56-65	15.6% (n = 1961)	7.0% (n = 884)
66+	10.2% (n = 1290)	3.4% (n = 425)

- *Risk and crime data.*

	Frequency	Percent
Aggravated vehicle taking	32	0.3%
Arson	18	0.1%
Bicycle theft	6	0.0%
Burglary – Business and Community	2	0.0%
Burglary - Residential	116	0.9%
Burglary – Non-Dwelling	1	0.0%
Criminal Damage excluding Arson	1229	9.8%
Homicide	3	0.0%
Interfering with a motor vehicle	2	0.0%
Misc Crimes Against Society	236	1.9%
Other Offences – Public Order	7	0.1%
Other Sexual Offences	44	0.3%
Other Theft	534	4.2%
Possession of Weapons	88	0.7%
Public fear, alarm or distress	399	3.2%
Race or Religious Aggravated Public Fear	2	0.0%
Rape	26	0.2%
Robbery of Business Property	1	0.0%
Robbery of Personal Property	27	0.2%
Stalking and Harassment	2329	18.5%
Theft from a vehicle	4	0.0%
Theft from the person	38	0.3%

Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle	73	0.6%
Violence With Injury	2627	20.8%
Violence without injury	4758	37.8%

	Frequency	Percent
High risk	875	6.9%
Medium risk	5285	41.9%
Standard risk	6426	51.0%
Missing or blank data	15	0.1%

- *Outcome data.*

	Frequency	Percent
Outcome 1: Charge/summons	806	6.4%
Outcome 3: Caution - adults	323	2.6%
Outcome 5: Offender died	7	0.1%
Penalty notice for disorder	3	0%
Outcome 8: Community resolution	367	2.9%
Outcome 9: Not in the public interest (CPS)	10	0.1%
Outcome 10: Not in the public interest (police)	13	0.1%
Outcome 12: Prosecution prevented (suspect too ill)	113	0.9%
Outcome 13: Prosecution prevented (victim/key witness dead/too ill)	30	0.2%
Outcome 14: Evidential difficulties: suspect not identified: victim does not support further action	43	0.3%
Outcome 15: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim supports action	1593	12.6%
Outcome 16: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim does not support further action	8834	70.1%
Prosecution time limit expired	47	0.4%
Investigation complete – no suspect identified. Crime investigated as far as reasonably possible – case closed pending further investigative opportunities becoming available	22	0.2%
Outcome 20: Action undertaken by another body/agency	35	0.3%
Outcome 21: Not in the public interest - suspect identified	349	2.8%
Outcome 22: Diversionary, educational or intervention activity	3	0%
Missing	3	0%

	High risk	Medium risk	Standard risk	Missing
Outcome 1: Charge/summons	29.7%	7.9%	2.0%	0%
Outcome 3: Caution - adults	2.5%	4.3%	1.1%	13.3%
Outcome 5: Offender died	0.2%	0.1%	0	0
Penalty notice for disorder	0	0.1%	0	0%
Outcome 8: Community resolution	0.6%	2.5%	3.6%	0
Outcome 9: Not in the public interest (CPS)	0.2%	0.1%	0	0
Outcome 10: Not in the public interest (police)	0	0.1%	0.1%	0
Outcome 12: Prosecution prevented (suspect too ill)	2.1%	1.1%	0.6%	0
Outcome 13: Prosecution prevented (victim/key witness dead/too ill)	0.7%	0.2%	0.2%	0
Outcome 14: Evidential difficulties: suspect not identified: victim does not support further action	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0
Outcome 15: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim supports action	18.8%	12.8%	11.6%	40%
Outcome 16: Evidential difficulties: suspect identified: victim does not support further action	42.0%	67.2%	76.5%	40%
Prosecution time limit expired	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	0
Investigation complete – no suspect identified. Crime investigated as far as reasonably possible – case closed pending further investigative opportunities becoming available	0	0.1%	0.3%	0
Outcome 20: Action undertaken by another body/agency	0.8%	0.3%	0.2%	0
Outcome 21: Not in the public interest - suspect identified	1.7%	2.7%	2.9%	6.7%

Outcome 22: Diversionary, educational or intervention activity	0	0.1%	0	0