

FAMILY ABUSE PERPETRATION

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1. Introduction

This research provides an original contribution to understanding the motives and perpetration patterns of family abuse affecting a range of minoritised communities, such as those minoritised on the basis of race, sexuality or gender (including transgendered people). No form of violence and abuse against people from minoritised and lesbian, gay, bisexual, Trans, queer+ (LGBTQ+)¹ communities occurs within a vacuum: negative and discriminatory societal attitudes, norms and behaviours towards these groups ultimately influence and, to some degree, justify and condone family abuse. This keeps the issue invisible in the public domain. Compounding these risk factors are that Black and minoritised people who also identify as LGBQ and/or T+ face a range of specific barriers to safety that are often the product of multiple and intersecting challenges relating to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, culture, mental health issues, citizenship, age, economic status, geographical isolation and other identity-based and situational factors. Understanding the effects of these intersections is critical to undertaking risk assessment and managing safety. In practice, this means understanding the compounding affects that multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage have on adult and child survivors. Importantly, no matter which group or community they belong to, each survivor's experience of violence and abuse is unique, requiring risk to be carefully assessed on an individual basis. In this project, we use the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act statutory definition of domestic abuse, which includes family abuse of family members as well as intimate partner abuse where the victim/survivors are over the age of 16 years.²

1.1 Current state of knowledge

Understanding and preventing family abuse is a complex issue. Evidence from around the globe strongly indicates that this form of abuse is predominately perpetrated by men against women and/or children (WHO, LSHTM, SAMRC, 2013). However, what we know about family abuse has been shaped, informed and influenced by Western discourse, changing societal values, the subjective differences of individual interpretation, and inconsistency in terms and definitions used in research and data collection (Gangoli, 2007). Western concepts of family abuse, have been informed by a feminist analysis of intimate partner abuse and views male violence against women as a perpetuating force in women's oppression (VAWG strategy). However, such concepts fail to recognise the interconnections between individuals, extended families and wider communities and that family abuse can result from "a range of family and community factors, rather than one individual's problematic behaviour within an intimate partnership" (Olsen and Lovett, 2016: 1). In the UK, family abuse occurs across all ages and socioeconomic and demographic groups. Much of what we know about family abuse in the UK, specifically, is in the context of racially minoritised communities, the victimisation of women and girls (Hester, Gangoli & Gill, 2015; Gill, Cox, Weir, 2018) and, more rarely, male victims (Idriss, 2019). More recently, research has examined family abuse that targets family members' sexual and gender identities (Bragal et al. 2021; Donovan and Barnes, 2020; Donovan et al., 2021; Taylor and Neppil, 2021; Galop and Yougov, 2022). Some emerging

¹ We use this umbrella term when we speak about communities but we use LGBQ and/or T+ when referring to individuals. This is to emphasise that identities of sexuality and identities of gender can result in different discriminatory experiences and/or issues for individuals being victimised by family abuse; that Trans and non-binary people might identify as heterosexual rather than as lesbian, gay or bisexual; and as a way of reminding us not to homogenise members of these groups.

² [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

literature is exploring the intersections between gender, sexuality and racialisation in cases of family abuse—for example, ideas of ‘honour’ and ‘shame’ for racially minoritised LGBT young people (Khan et al. 2017) and conceptual frameworks of ‘honour’ originating from work in racially minoritised communities and applied in the context of victimised white, transgendered family members (Rogers, 2017).

While statistics provide some indication of the level of family abuse in minoritised communities and against LGBQ and/or T+ people who are also part of those communities, it is difficult to determine the full extent of this abuse due to underreporting and unreliable recording. Gill et al. 2018 have argued that the majority of complex, intersecting forms of family abuse are not reported. Reasons for non-disclosure are numerous and complex, including shame, fear of reprisals from the perpetrator and others in the community, fear of the ramifications of involving the criminal justice system and other government services, a perception that abuse is normal and something that has to be endured, the difficulty of keeping something private in a close-knit communities, poverty and isolation, and a lack of culturally appropriate services.

Gender has been explored within perpetration of honour-based abuse in racially minoritised communities, with some research focusing on the role of women in perpetration (Bates, 2018; Gangoli et al. 2019). There is evidence of complex patterns of abuse involved in family abuse which is often perpetrated by multiple family members in racially minoritised communities. For instance, Bates (2018) argues that in many cases of forced marriage and ‘honour’-based abuse (HBA), female perpetrators act as secondary perpetrators in collusion with, or due to fear of, primary (male) perpetrators. In other types of familial abuse, the primary perpetrators are often women, as with dowry-related abuse (Gangoli and Rew, 2011).

While the definitions of “honour” and HBA are contested (Chantler and Gangoli, 2011), we adopt the definition provided by the UK Crown Prosecution Service: a collection of practices used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/ or honour (CPS, n.d.). The research explains how when ‘honour’ is activated in such a way, multiple actors (family members, community members, faith group members) feel justified in their actions that lead to family abuse. Actions might include spreading rumours (substantiated or not) about the behaviour of women in the family (e.g., their sexual “impropriety”) to various forms of domestic and family abuse, forced marriage and “honour killings” (Korteweg, 2014). When considering interventions for family abuse perpetrators it is immediately clear that interventions are needed at both community/group level as well as at the level of individual perpetrators. For example, HBA operates within a gendered hierarchy of seniority: both male and female elders can be involved in planning the process of restoring a family’s honour, although it is usually a younger male who is charged with the duty of performing this violence (Korteweg, 2014). Those who plan as well as those who enact abuse at the behest of those planners are all perpetrators. But HBA, like all forms of violence and abuse, is culturally informed and for perpetrator interventions to be effective such cultural norms must be understood and addressed according to their historical, social and cultural contexts. As Korteweg (2014: 187) states, “Culture gives meaning to practices, including practices of violence”; violence experienced by the dominant groups in society thus becomes the normative practice to which laws and policies are designed to respond.

In other contexts, those who have perpetrated family abuse, such as ‘honour’ killings or transphobic abuse might be treated as ‘heroic’ or, at least, sympathetically by their family and community for defending the whole group’s (Gill and Kaplanian, 2020) or family’s (Rogers,

2017; 2021) ‘honour’. Again, understanding the wider family and community context in which family abuse takes place is crucial to being able to develop effective perpetrator interventions. The recent survey commissioned by Galop indicates that mothers were more likely than fathers to perpetrate family abuse against, as they say, LGBT+ people, however the research does not explore why this might be the case (Galop and Yougov, 2022).

To date most of the research into ‘honour’ abuse has concentrated on the impacts for women and girls of their family’s attempts to exact conformity to cultural and/or faith norms of gender, intimate relationships, marriage. There remain real gaps in research on perpetrators of family abuse aimed at LGBQ and/or T+ people, especially in cases involving relationships of material and/or economic dependency. In this research we were especially interested to explore the family abuse of LGBQ and/or T+ people including in racially minoritised communities in order to begin to address the gap in knowledge and best practice that exists in relation to perpetrator interventions.

Responses to family abuse have typically been criminal justice-oriented, with no parallel development, as has happened with perpetrators of intimate partner abuse, in mandatory or voluntary perpetrator programmes. The specific role of faith-based and community organisations in perpetuating and preventing some specific forms of abuse have been addressed (Gangoli et al. 2018), but these need more research especially because much of this work to date focuses on intimate partner domestic abuse (Catholic Diocese of Arundel & Brighton, nd.; Methodist Church, 2010; Aghtaie et. al. 2020), and not on family abuse.

What is also emerging in the current public discourse is the need to ensure that services, prevention programs and policy frameworks that address family abuse are designed and delivered in ways that are inclusive of community diversity. A number of racially minoritised and LGBTQ+ communities argue that their rights and needs in relation to criminal justice and specialist support services are not being sufficiently met or, worse, are being denied completely. Thus, while the progress made so far in bringing the issue of family abuse from the margins to the centre is significant, much more work is required to ensure that the different manifestations of this abuse within different communities are understood and addressed. This requires an intersectional approach across the continuum, from tertiary intervention through to primary prevention efforts.

2. Aims and Objectives

Our study therefore seeks to significantly enhance the existing knowledge base to create practice- and policy-focused recommendations for improving preventive and intervention efforts. We are aware from other research on domestic abuse and sexual abuse that perpetration arises from multiple and intersecting factors at different levels, including macro (economic/policy level), meso (social norms and practices that regulate daily life: social level); micro (community or relationship level) and ontogenetic (individual level) (EVAW, 2020; Hagemann-White, 2010). This model has not been explored in the context of family abuse perpetration, and this research explores some of these aspects in more detail. We are aware that this research is among the first of its kind in England and Wales, and while it was time-limited and necessarily exploratory, our recommendations include the need for further and more in-depth research. In order to achieve the aims set out above, we undertook the following activities:

1. Interviewing existing experts in the domestic abuse field about their perceptions about family abuse perpetrators, their motives, and what might be done to intervene and prevent family abuse
2. Drawing on case studies of family abuse perpetration to analyse them with key questions about motivations, patterns of behaviours, and interventions framing the analysis
3. Reanalysing existing qualitative research on family abuse through focusing on the perpetrators' motivations, patterns of behaviours, and interventions
4. Co-producing a toolkit with recommendations for practice and policy to address perpetrators of family abuse.

3. Methodology

Due to the well-documented issues of working with victims/survivors of gender-based abuse (Hester et al., 2008; Skinner et al., 2004), we worked in collaboration with specialist non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and major stakeholders to access participants. We also identified a small number of (supported) participants through recommendation: this is an approach to building (or adding to) a sample of research participants known as “snowball sampling” and is commonly used where potential participants are hard to reach. Those who agreed to participate then signed a consent form that stipulated their right to withdraw from the research within seven days (which none exercised). The research project was granted ethical approval by the University of Durham.

3.1 Methods

The research teams used a mixed-methods approach, including a range of qualitative and quantitative data sources, that allowed us to interrogate both existing and new quantitative and qualitative data from a range of stakeholders and sources to identify common factors (societal, community and individual) in family abuse. The methods used included:

1. A literature review: to provide insights from the field of family abuse nationally and internationally; to add depth and scholarship to data collection and analysis; to underpin toolkit development.
2. Quantitative data: third-sector agency helpline data. Analysis focused on how perpetration is reported in terms of seriousness; patterns in perpetration (gender, age, repeat perpetration, numbers of perpetrators, the role of family witnesses—e.g., colluding/ intervening—and help-seeking and agency responses.
3. Qualitative data:
 - 19 case studies to consider patterns in perpetration of family abuse and how perpetration is reported (e.g., seriousness) and to determine contextual details regarding family (economic, social) stability, perpetrator rationale/defence, family witness statements and levels of support for the perpetrator(s), and agency responses identifying areas for improvement and good practice. Case studies came from two sources: third-sector agencies and secondary analysis of an existing datasets from the ESRC-funded Qualidata archive (dataset SN853338).
 - 30 interviews (with police officers, representatives from community/faith organisations, and domestic abuse practitioners) to explore their institutional/professional understanding and experiences of family abuse and their perspectives on interventions for family abuse perpetrators. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to 1.5 hours and were digitally recorded and

transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company. Interviews explored practitioners' perspectives (based on their expertise and experience in the field) on the nature of family abuse, victims/survivors' referral routes into their organisations, the help-seeking behaviours of those victimised by family abuse, their perceptions/experiences of what happens to perpetrators of family abuse, and their recommendations for change, interventions and prevention. Interviews took place remotely via Zoom or Teams, depending on the interviewee's preference. Interviewees were also asked how they would like their job title and area of work to be referred to within this and any future reports in order to protect their anonymity.

- Data from practitioner workshop: collected using Jamboard, an online programme that allowed participants to give anonymous feedback on draft findings, analysis and the toolkit.

3.2 Analysis

The multi-method approach adopted for this research interrogated both existing and new quantitative and qualitative data from a range of stakeholders and sources to achieve the research aims. Our qualitative data analysis was guided by the process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019; Braun, Clarke & Hayfield, 2019). All six research team members began by reading and highlighting significant phrases on one transcript, which helped us create a coding framework. This framework was then developed further to align with the project aims. Three researchers then read the remaining transcripts in relation to the coding framework, highlighted key words and phrases, and grouped them together thematically. The same process was followed for analysis of the case studies. Quantitative data were analyzed to determine patterns (demographics, nature of abuse, interventions). The quantitative and qualitative findings were triangulated with the literature to finesse the arguments and discussions. The analysis was guided by our conceptual ecological framework with three sets of factors:

- broader societal context:
 - cultural, norms and expectations about family life and relationships
 - policy impacts on perceptions of and expectations about economic, educational and citizenship achievements
- community-level identity factors pertaining to perceived and expected norms with respect to race, social class, sexuality, gender/identity, religion, disability and citizenship status
- Individual-level triggering factors pertaining to motivations for initiating and sustaining family abuse.

3.3 Ethics

The research team are experienced in working with racially or sexually minoritised communities to the highest ethical standards, and ethical approval was secured from Durham University. No personal data were obtained from practitioners other than their role title and the number of years they have worked in the field of domestic abuse and family abuse. We negotiated with professionals to determine the level of identification they are happy with—that is, whether we can identify them with a particular type of professional work and/or whether we can use location data. The quantitative and qualitative data provided to us by partner organisations were anonymised at source and did not feature any identifying information.

For the purpose of the report, we have not used any excerpts from the data that may describe any particular experience that risks identifying the people involved.

3.4 Reflections on the methods

The agreed methods were very successful. We surpassed our original targets for interviews (30 rather than 25) and case studies (19 rather than 15) and interviewed a range of practitioners from our target stakeholder list: police, domestic abuse services, specialist services for racially minoritised survivors, specialist services for LGBTQ and/or T+ survivors, and community and faith leaders. Participants were generous with their time and with sharing their expertise and experiences of working in the field.

We conducted the practitioners' workshop on schedule, using it to co-produce the toolkit and recommendations and to seek their input on the findings.

There were some professional areas we were not able to cover in the interviews—for example, due to our timescale (three months), we could not access interviews from those in probation and health because of the lengthy institutional governance processes for these two areas. We had also hoped for more extensive quantitative data from the police and third sector organisations, but this was again not possible due to timescales; we did obtain some quantitative data from one organisation.

We successfully surpassed our targets because of our previous links in and experience of working in this area. In addition, the enthusiasm from our partners and the fact that we had a team of researchers meant that we were able to make and meet appointments at short notice.

4. Key findings and discussion

4.1 Findings

1. Who are the perpetrators?

Most perpetrators are male family, community and/or faith members. Female family members are also perpetrators in some contexts:

- Some anecdotal evidence suggests that men are most likely to exert physical violence, threaten such violence or threaten to kill and that women are most likely to exert coercive control, manipulation and/or emotional abuse.
- Multiple perpetrators are common, of mixed genders and mixed roles in their family/community/faith. Perpetrators could include any family members including: adult child; parents; cousins; sibling(s); male cousins; grandparents, parents and other relatives-in-law; uncles; aunts; extended family and community members not related in law but still referred to as 'aunty' and 'uncle', 'mother' and 'father', 'sister' and 'brother'.

2. Who are the most victimised?

Most of those victimised are female, and based on this research, trans and/or non-binary family members.

3. Types of Family Abuse

Types of family abuse were: forced marriage, HBA, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, dowry-related abuse, including threats to kill, surveillance, conversion therapy, coercive control.

4. Communities effected by family abuse

Family abuse is not restricted to any ethnic community or faith and takes place across white, South Asian, Gypsy and Roma, East European various African communities. Representatives from the Catholic, Methodist, Church of England, Muslim and Hindu communities testified that family abuse took place in their faith communities.

5. Impacts

- physical and emotional harm
- short, medium and long-term poor mental health and wellbeing, trauma
- low self-esteem, poor sense of self, low confidence,
- social isolation from family, wider family and community
- social isolation from faith community
- sense of betrayal when help providers do not deliver, do not respect, break promises and/or lack understanding
- Sense of betrayal and sense of being alone when civil and criminal legal processes are slow, convoluted, hostile and/or do not deliver.

4.2 Discussion

This next section is divided into three parts that should be considered in relation to developing interventions for perpetrators of family abuse:

- Identifying the motivating factors
- Identifying how family is understood by the victimised family member
- Addressing the gaps that exist in practice, policy and procedures that result in perpetrators not being called to account

Making family abuse more visible: what can be done

- The crucial role of prevention
- Perpetrator interventions

In a case study, even though the husband and stepson were the same ethnicity as the victim, the stepson was racist to her because of her immigration status.
(Case study: child-to-parent abuse)

4.2.1. *Identifying the motivating factors*

In order to work with perpetrators of family abuse, research participants emphasise the importance of understanding the motivations for their abusive behaviours. This report identifies three sets of motivating triggers: societal, community and individual. While these are explained separately here to elucidate their distinctions, they often overlap in reality.

1. Societal level: Belief systems that inform motivations to perpetrate family abuse

These belief systems are supported, underpinned and reinforced by religious/faith beliefs and loyalty to family/community/culture/traditions. These beliefs are as follows:

- a) The family's interests take priority over, and are more important than, any individual family member's interests.
- b) The family has ownership of family members as resources for the family to use: to project the family's status, to provide evidence of their conformity to traditional/cultural/community/faith-based behaviour norms; to barter with other

- families (with promised marriages of young children) for status and/or spousal visas.
- c) Family members should be obedient to parents/family/community/faith elders.
 - d) There should be conformity to gender/sexuality norms prior to and during intimate relationships and marriage (including gender roles, where a married couple lives, who makes decisions about a marriage, a married life, etc.).
 - e) Marriage is permanent.

In this case the perpetrator used alcohol and gambling to extract money from the victim and also used his immigration status to his advantage. In a community where divorce is frowned upon, the victim was scared that she would be ostracised not just by her in-laws but also by the community as a whole. (Case Study 2)

2. Community-Level Factors: Perpetrators' entitlement to abuse family members to elicit conformity to family beliefs

Perpetrators of family abuse have belief systems that reinforce and are reinforced by a sense of entitlement—moral, faith-based, generational, cultural—to behave in the way that they do. Such strongly held beliefs lead families and communities (including faith-based communities) to develop and adhere to expectations about behaviour in ways that elicit conformity from all family members to norms of gender, sexuality, intimate relationships, marriage, divorce, family and community hierarchy.

Entitlements are understood to be inherent in:

- a) parents/extended family, in-laws and community/faith elders in terms of making decisions about family member(s)' intimate lives, marriage partner and married life.
- b) parents/in-laws' expectations of family member(s)' obedience in matters of social norms / gender roles / sexuality / intimate relationships marriage (including where and with whom newly married family members live and whether they are allowed to divorce/leave an abusive partner).

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

'I mean prevention [pause], you know when we talk about prevention you know, just [the] general narrative around LGBT people in the UK is so negative at the moment, especially around trans and non-binary folk. And of course that informs conversation, of course it will give parents and siblings wings to do, to make them think ... if they don't necessarily agree or necessarily have [an] affirmative stance towards LGBT identities it will give them that additional validation that what they are doing, what they are thinking or what they are planning to do is actually correct ..' (ID049, independent consultant)

'And there probably are people in those communities that know that what they're doing isn't okay, you know, they may well have realised. They might be quite, you know, self-aware I guess, that this isn't okay. But they ... might be getting pressure from their parents, you know, this is how you treat your wife.' (ID097, Strategic Lead, Housing Association)

STAKEHOLDERS' VOICES

'Because a lot of people will probably say you know 'I was raised where I've been harmed and abused, you know, but I don't see it as abuse'. So there's again, you know, these messages that people hold about a certain level of violence and abuse is acceptable, or some people may even have views that it's OK to be violent and abusive towards children 'cause that's the way that they're disciplined as long as it doesn't lead to serious injury and it never harms anybody.' (ID005, head of services, charity)

'Many people have spoken about spiritual abuse, where they use scripture to correct a woman and keep her in line. And so yes, it is very, very gendered, especially the more traditional West African and Caribbean churches.' (ID37, member, faith-based organisation)

- c) Parents/ in-laws expecting support from other children/family members in attempting to/actually controlling family member(s) and/or punishing them if they do not conform.
- d) Faith/community leaders and wider community leaders/elders putting individual families under surveillance and those families accepting such surveillance as 'right'.
- e. families having a 'natural' right to protect family member(s) from sin/non-conformity/possession and controlling/coercing/punishing them in order to secure conformity

The perpetrator's parents would blame the victim for everything. They didn't think she was a good [country name] daughter-in-law and made the victim ask for forgiveness during their family meetings. Primary perpetrator's family members threatened the victim by saying she will be alone if she did not obey her husband and her own community will disown her as they would have no respect for her if he abandoned her. (Case Study 5)

'They can sometimes be primary perpetrators, they can sometimes be kind of complicit in there, it can sometimes be sisters as well as brothers ... because often they are, they are kind of, they're if you like safeguarding, you know, the honour of the family and all those sorts of things or, or just, they, they have that, that kind of role and they may feel that they're ... so it might look different, but they are still perpetrators' (ID106, manager, 'by and for' LGBT+ organisation)

'We have seen, certainly seen cases where children and young people have been taken to religious leaders, and there have been accusations of witchcraft and spirit possession. But we see that within families as well, and so I don't—I think that in in the other work that I've done, not so much around witchcraft and spirit possession, but generally around coercive control in religious communities, I think sometimes there can be leaders who are hugely powerful, but I think there can also be hugely powerful members of communities' (ID36, academic researcher, associated with survivor groups)

'But the big point ... this is where we come up with corrective practice the big points it comes up to is if there's a belief system. So, if somebody comes back and says you know in my religious text it says, you know somebody goes, Leviticus whatever, whatever in the Bible. Actually, you can show how that was a mistranslation and it's wrong but that doesn't really ... you know people, if something is very core to their belief system, really, ultimately the only thing you can do is remove the child from that situation if it's going to be so damaging for that child and risk the potentially their life as well as their mental well-being etcetera.' (ID105, manager, LGBT+ organisation)

This sense of entitlement held by perpetrators of family abuse has led many to resist the idea that their behaviours are illegal, abusive and wrong:

'I mean the amount of times that people have said to me, perpetrators as such, being caught, "your law doesn't apply to me. I answer to a different law".' (ID01, solicitor, specialist in international family law)

'As I understand it from we talked to our priests, is that perpetrators, who obviously don't think often that they are doing something wrong, they think it's necessary correction, and they go to the priest expecting to be [validated] in what they're doing, is that the right word? I think it is, you know it's okay what they are doing, you know they are doing it for the victim's good.' (ID50, board member, Catholic/faith organisation)

3. Individual-Level Motivating Factors for Family Abuse

Practitioners identified four core individual-level motives for family abuse. Individual perpetrators might be motivated by one or more of these:

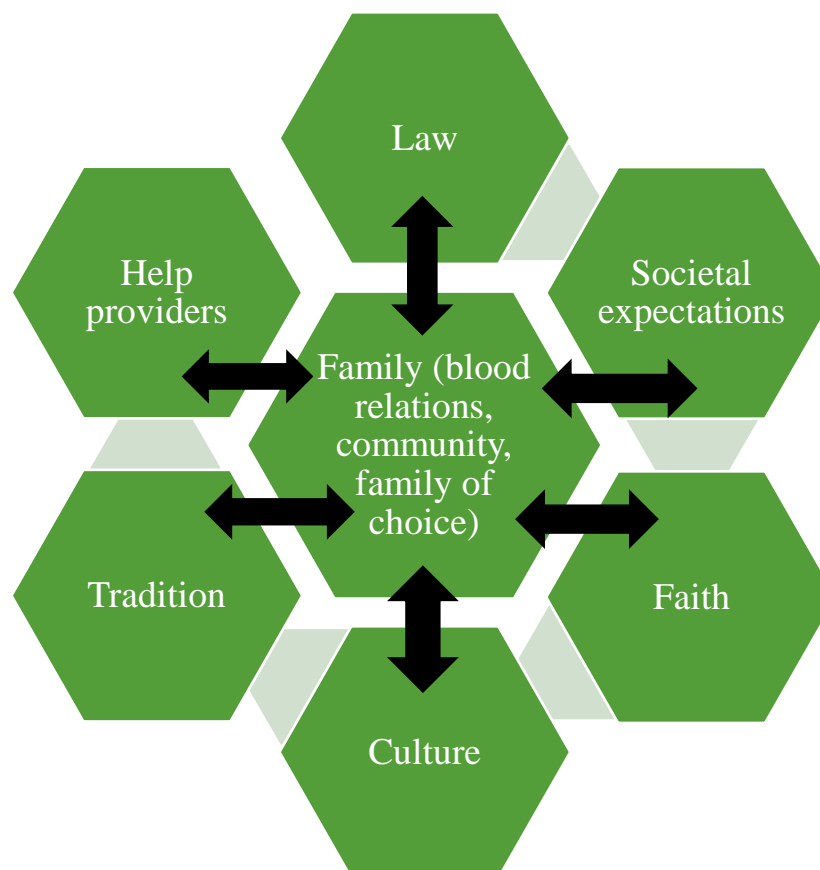
- To secure conformity to norms of gender and sexuality, intimate relationships and marriage.
- to secure conformity to interpretations of faith/religious texts in relation to norms of gender, sexuality, intimate relationships and marriage
- To 'save' family member(s) from 'sin', shame and isolation from wider family/community faith.
- To protect the family from shame/dishonour/loss of status in their own community, the faith where they currently live and their countries of origin because of the behaviours of the victimised family member(s).

Such beliefs and sense of entitlement will lead many perpetrators to dismiss claims of family abuse, minimise impacts, and normalise their behaviours as traditional, 'God-fearing' and/or cultural. Several participants were unconvinced that such beliefs, so fiercely held, might be

changed and/or successfully challenged—especially given the short-term nature of any perpetration intervention and the pervasiveness of the beliefs and entitlements with which the perpetrator will be faced in between and/or at the end of the interventions. We return to this in the section on interventions.

Not all of these beliefs will operate consistently or permanently across all family members—there are push–pull factors that include these beliefs and their sources of support (extended family, community, faith) as well as alternative beliefs espoused elsewhere in society (the law; help providers; societal expectations in education, employment, broader discourses about gender, sexuality, intimate relationships, marriage and divorce). Figure 1 shows the factors, with double-headed arrows indicating that they can push or pull family members away from or towards family abuse.

Figure 1 Push-Pull Factors That Influence Decisions to Perpetrate Family Abuse



4.2.2 Identifying how family is understood by the victimised family member

Participants emphasised the importance of identifying and understanding how family is understood by the victimised family member. This includes understanding who counts as family, who has influence over family decisions/behaviours, and who is involved with supporting, colluding with and enacting family abuse. It also involves identifying those who are perpetrators, allies and other victimised family members—and keeping in mind that the identities of these individuals might change depending on the circumstances.

'Readjusting [the perpetrator programme] as a model I think would be really—it would be really beneficial. But again, you know, you've got these perpetrators that have got real, deep-rooted views. How do you even start to unpick them? You know, you—you'll do a bit of work. Say if you do an hour session only for that perpetrator to go back into. this really heavy patriarchal structure where the uncles, the male cousins, the sons, they all kind of reinforce that everything's okay. So, your one hour in a classroom is definitely then gonna be very watered down when they go back into that structure.' (ID065, HBA and FM subject matter expert, police)

It is important that practitioners working with family abuse understand the family holistically, including how perpetrators define their family and their relationships to their wider community faith and/or racialised community. This is key to understanding the push/pull factors (see Figure 1) that need to be addressed when working with family abuse perpetrators.

In family abuse, perpetrators often do not act alone. Other family members as well as other members of their community and/or faith group might also facilitate and/or directly perpetrate family abuse themselves. In the example below, members of the faith community, including the faith leader, might take part in the abuse if conversion therapy is agreed on as the way a family member is to be 'saved' from and/or 'cured' of their sin.

Example: a family member might be victimised because of their non-conformity to expected norms of (hetero) sexuality. The family might be aware that the British Government intends to criminalise conversion therapy. However, their local faith leader has made clear their expectations about how families are expected to do all in their power to 'save' a family member(s) from their 'sin' of 'homosexuality'. The pull factor here is the intention to criminalise conversion therapy, pulling the family away from wanting to break the law. The push factors here are their faith leader's interpretation of sacred texts, both in terms of homosexuality being a 'sin' and a family's duty to 'save' their family members from 'sin' as well as the family's sense of faith and loyalty to their faith leader being stronger than their sense of loyalty to secular law.

It is also important that practitioners assess other family members who have colluded with, facilitated and/or enacted family abuse in order to determine whether any of those who abuse are or have been in the past themselves victims of family abuse and are being coerced into being abusive. In the example above, all members of the family might be expected to and/or coerced into placing the victimised family member under surveillance, restricting their movements, keeping them in isolation from friends, enforcing obedience and ensuring that they attend conversion therapy.

4.2.3 Addressing the gaps that exist in practice, policy and procedures that result in perpetrators not being called to account

There are several reasons why our study found evidence of very few family abuse perpetrator interventions. The following emerged as the most important:

1. Non-recognition, normalisation, acceptance of family abuse by victimised family members, by families and communities, and by practitioners across a range of provisions, including education, youth work, social services, housing, police, health services and the domestic abuse sector.

Within their own communities, this is normalised behaviour, this is acceptable behaviour.’ (ID91, local council coordinator)

2. Perpetrators of family abuse currently only face criminal justice system responses. However, these criminal justice responses are relatively rare because of the difficulties of evidence gathering, family members’ reluctance to report family abuse perpetrators, and the general lack of trust that many members of racialised communities and LGBTQ and/or T+ people feel.

‘Where you have a whole community of people that are unwilling to speak to the police to give any evidence, who will also support the—the family in, you know, perpetrating those crimes and then making it impossible to investigate and to find out what really happened.’ (ID004, service lead, charity)

‘I think there’s a lot of push towards, as you say, a kind of criminal justice intervention model, a risk reduction model, so currently, you know. There’s a lot of funding or more funding, you know, even for LGBT stuff where it’s been non-existent. So, you know, more potential for “by and for” services but it’s very much focused, I think, on ID, IDVAs and ISVAs, you know, so, so that kind of high risk going through courts and actually what we find is, so first of all I think you know, absolutely criminal justice isn’t necessarily going to be the outcome. People do not want to report their families, it’s going to make matters worse, and it doesn’t necessarily reduce the risk.’ (ID106, manager, ‘by and for’ LGBT+ organisation)

GAPS

‘I think more community hubs should be open to educate not only the perpetrators, the victims of it.’ (ID99, IDVA, victim/survivor frontline organisation)

‘I can talk about the Afro Caribbean perspective. [W]hat’s funny is that there’s this idea that ... Jamaicans are so chill, but we are quite conservative, very conservative. A lot of us coming from a faith background and again we see it with domestic abuse for research we’re doing. So in terms of LGBTQ+ communities it’s exceptionally hard it is so hard, it is getting better, I think. What surprises me today is you will still hear derogatory offensive terms being used around people and their sexuality.’ (ID37, member, faith-based organisation)

GAPS

'I mean for a start they [parents] shouldn't necessarily be in the same meeting but ... in social services you're perhaps using a sort of almost a different model around troubled families and ... I can understand, but if you think about in terms of this being abuse, domestic abuse, you wouldn't see the perpetrator in the same, meeting as the victim survivor, you'd say "no, we're not going to do that" ... but often it's ... social services, for example, who are acting as intermediaries and I know that's kind of their job [b]ut, you know, they are often not empowered or knowledgeable enough about trans or LGBT+ issues and I think that the danger of that is that, you can ... misrepresent or misunderstand the risks to that child or young person by doing that.' (ID106, manager, 'by and for' LGBT+ organisation).

'People need to trust the police though as well cause there is a lot of things around trust and confidence in the police and the whole CPS process to get people into court. The sanctions that are given out. And it needs to be quick and speedy.' (ID007, senior services manager, domestic abuse support agency)

'I found as well there's a real shift ... with the younger generations more likely to report, whereas older generations will not report. They just will not engage with police because they've tended to have emigrated from different countries. And ... policing for them is completely different. Do you know that in different cultures and different communities abroad it's not the same? Human rights isn't a thing ... So yeah, the Polish community, policing there is completely different, they will beat you. ... I think that can be really seen and with the whole Black Lives Matter in London, about how people feel towards policing and how it was dealt with. Because there are massive barriers and, a reluctance to report.' (ID108, officer representing LGBT community, police)

3. A skills and knowledge gap was identified by practitioners that is mirrored in the perceived lack of national or local guidance on how to respond to family abuse for both victims/survivors and perpetrators. The impact of austerity and resulting scarce resources needed to engage in community development, building capacity in services, training and best practice development, was also named as contributing to this gap of skills and knowledge. This gap results in family abuse not being recognised, being minimised in terms of severity of risk to the victimised family member(s) and/or being responded to inappropriately, which might inadvertently increase the risk for those being victimised.

'Pathways are really important, but there just seems to be a complete lack of guidance within, you know, safeguarding boards, and also locally, local authorities. The processes are outdated, they're not informed by local information. So there really needs to be local, and regional, because something, what surprises me with safeguarding boards and partnerships, they're not consistently structured. So there really needs to be a better join up of, you know, kind of like an integrated approach? And there doesn't seem to be any ... to be honest with you, not in my experience.' (ID11, specialist practitioner, 'by and for' organisation).

'So a couple of years ago, we—have you heard of the HARM report? It was the Ministry of Justice inquiry into domestic abuse in family courts. That was, I mean, we thought at the time, it came out in June 2020, we thought that was ground-breaking. It just gets called the Harm report now. And then it was a group of women lawyers, activists and some really good Labour MPs actually, who forced that enquiry to happen. And I don't think any of us had any real hopes for it, but the findings were just so far reaching and so devastating, to every single service to read because the findings were, well I guess what we'd all been shouting about for ages. But because of all the cuts to legal aid, to police, to social services, to refuge services, to, you name it, it's being cut.'

(ID01, solicitor, specialist in international family law)

'So in terms of accountability, both in terms of domestic abuse perpetrators, but also when it comes to 'honour'-based violence, multiple perpetrators, there isn't that accountability. So, I've worked with many cases where they've had an honour-based risk assessment and they've identified multiple perpetrators, but in terms of actions, it's almost tokenistic. We've done this risk assessment but there is no follow up or actions. So, they've gone on to report multiple incidents, but do you know, that document is stored somewhere, like I said—why does the situation have to escalate until there is a serious event, for people to be held accountable?'

(ID60, practitioner, specialist service working with perpetrators of DVA)

'It's, well, you've climbed that mountain to ask for help but then, you know, professionals aren't, let's face it, adapting their approach to be able to speak to BAME [Black and minority ethnic] victims. And we—you know, we know that they aren't fully equipped. Time and time again I've seen—and not just within my constabulary—professionals will—will use family members as interpreters. And this is just one—one frustration of mine that, you know, you don't know who that family member is. That could actually be a perpetrator. So, you know, why can't we get things right for BAME victims?'

(ID065, HBA and FM subject matter expert, police)

'I think there's something about equipping people to be able to like ask the right questions and have the confidence to do that. Much as if you think about work that was done on FGM, when that started, people did not feel equipped. But many people do now feel more equipped to, and I think this area (family abuse using witchcraft or accusations of possession) is an area that there's far less work on and far less funding for etc. And that's why there's less being, you know, there's, there's less understanding and knowledge.'

(ID36, academic researcher, associated with survivor groups)

4.2.4 Making family abuse more visible: what can be done

Participants had a range of suggestions about how to make family abuse more visible to evidence the need for stronger support and create opportunities for better and more appropriate responses, knowledge and skills development. These suggestions included:

1. Making better use of the existing law

While many participants were critical of relying on the criminal justice system as the best way to respond to family abuse, they also called for the law to be used better and more effectively. This includes the need for resources to improve the criminal justice system's efficiency in processing family abuse cases. There was also a call for there to be an increased willingness to use the law to hold family abuse perpetrators to account; to send a message about consequences for those who perpetrate abuse; to increase conviction rates and use of sentencing to deter perpetrators; and to better inform families, communities and the general public about how the law operates, what constitutes a criminal offence and what will lead to statutory intervention through safeguarding and/or criminal justice frameworks.

'Criminal justice processes I think do work. They are useful. You wouldn't want to get rid of criminal justice processes. DVPNs and DVPOs work. We know that this buys victims time and can be really helpful and orders are helpful, you know, non-molestation orders and things like that. They are helpful because they will work for certain perpetrators. Not everyone. You know, you will always get the extreme when a perpetrator will not care that there's a piece of paper to say they can't have contact with somebody but they do work for others. So we do have some useful tools I would say.' (ID002, honour-based abuse lead, police)

'More and more sentencing ... the police need to have more training, more powers, and more resources. People need to trust the police though as well cos there is a lot of things around trust and confidence in the police and the whole CPS process to get people into court. The sanctions that are given out. And it needs to be quick and speedy.' (ID007, senior services manager, domestic abuse support agency)

'I think that for many families or many homophobic people, I don't think that they understand the far-reaching pain that their actions are causing on people. So [tuts] I think we also need to bring ... we need to highlight the Children's Act, because the laws in this country protects minority, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. You know, you cannot put a 13-year-old out, you cannot subject a 16-year-old to homelessness.' (ID026, Black minister, Christian faith-based organisation)

'I think women need to know their rights first, and they need to know what support is available for them—for them to make informed choices. We have British girls that come to us, because we've got this community hub now and we're supporting any woman, we have British girls that come to us that didn't know their rights. Didn't know where to get the help, and that's really, really sad in this day and age, you know, being born in this country and being educated in this country. But it's the honour and shame that—that baggage that they're carrying that prevents them seeking or finding out what help they there is for them, and I guess being believed.' (ID44, practitioner, 'by and for' organisation)

2. Training

This was the most frequently mentioned intervention needed to better equip practitioners to identify and respond appropriately to both family abuse victims/survivors and perpetrators:

'But in health, what is somebody in health's understanding about honour-based abuse for example? It's very poor. They won't have had any training, it won't be something that they really understand. So if a victim comes to see them and discloses in a GP appointment, "This is what is happening to me", would they understand what it is? Would they identify, would they recognise it? Would they do the right thing and get the right support into [sic] that person at that time?' (ID002, honour-based abuse lead, police)

'So I think it's really, really important to be culturally sensitive. There needs to be training. Is there maybe there is? I don't know [it] is a question mark. Is there adequate training with these kinds of cultural sensitivities? What could we do to deal with making [things] more accessible to make it easier and better?' (ID18, staff, higher education)

'I know those family intervention frameworks are kind of being developed in academic settings, educational settings and so on. It might be interesting to look at those frameworks and look at how they work around abuse but making sure the LGBT plus perspective is in that. ... You know, to just to really kind of improve practice around that because sometimes we feel like we're talking a different language. We got the same young person in the middle and how we're seeing their life and how another agency is seeing their life is completely different. And I, I think that's also about talking to young people themselves. But yeah it's about ... there's a big piece to do about risk assessment, what are the risk assessment protocols ... that are being used in children's services and schools and education and so on' (ID105, manager, LGBT+ organisation)

Several participants discussed the training their organisations already undertake and made the case for that training to be underpinned by minoritised communities' members being involved in their design and delivery:

'I mean, we do, do it. We do training. We offer a lot of training to professionals ... I think for me, it would be better if it comes from that minority ... someone who knows about all that culture, knows about the history ... we have a lot of training on forced marriages and—and things like that. So, we've done all that. We're up to speed with that. But I think for me it's about the survivor speaking to someone who recognises their history, you know, and what it—you know, what it's all about in their culture.' (ID099, IDVA, victim/survivor frontline organisation)

Linked to training and building skills and knowledge about family abuse is the issue of rapport between practitioners and perpetrators and between practitioners and victims/survivors. For example, one participant with experience of working with male perpetrators of domestic abuse referred to the need to cultivate professional curiosity in order to ask the right questions and not only accept initial responses but to explore and ‘unpick’ what is happening:

‘The other thing in terms of things we already know, professional curiosity from services that support victim survivors is incredibly important. We can’t always get it right. But we need to kind of demonstrate it to understand it and to kind of unpick it and to learn it. And I just find that services can kind of shy away from that ... like I said, political kind of correctness, almost kind of a little bit cautious to ask, but if we don’t ask, if we don’t display that curiosity, then that learning doesn’t kind of continue. We’re all learning and that’s incredibly important to kind of recognise. No one situation is ever the same.’
(ID60, practitioner, specialist service working with perpetrators of DVA)

3. Employment practices and representation more generally

Several participants talked about the importance of creating working relationships of trust in addressing family abuse at the societal, community or individual levels. ‘By and for’ organisations provide the model approach to securing trust by employing practitioners from the minoritised communities they serve. Participants also described employing practitioners with lived experience of family abuse as an important element of gaining trust. Intersectional identities were shown to be underserved — LGBTQ+ organisations identified a lack of practitioners from racially minoritised groups, and organisations serving racially minoritised communities identified their lack of practitioners from LGBQ and/or T+ backgrounds.

‘I think we need to acknowledge that LGBT organisations as it is at the moment are not necessarily particularly inclusive of minority, racially minoritised communities, and the BAMER groups, and those groups are not always particularly LGBT inclusive so it’s like you’ve got to pick which aspect of your identity and go “am I more Black or more gay?” [laughs]. And which, which organisation is for me.’ **(ID043, CEO, LGBT+ youth organisation)**

‘We offer them the option of the different approaches or different people they can meet with and connect with. But somebody who looks and has similar experiences opens a lot of doors for people and you are able to support them in a much more appropriate way. But I think it is having a combination of both ... I think lived experience, like we do employ people with lived experience and we ask them to be boundaried about it but I think in a perpetrator approach that lived experience of how someone has moved on and changed and refocused themselves would really work.’ (ID007, senior services manager, domestic abuse support agency)

‘Another strand of work that we’ve kind of been doing, is looking at increasing the representation from racialised communities in the perpetrator sector, because again, we’re hugely—yes, lacking people of colour within that sector.’ (ID60, practitioner, specialist service working with perpetrators of DVA)

[re: West African and African Caribbean communities] *‘One of the things was about representation. I think when I look at, and it’s not better, but I think we need to hear more voices, we need to see more women from minoritised communities speaking about that. So in order for that to happen we have to empower those women to speak. But we also have to educate women about sexual violence.’ (ID37, member, faith-based organisation)*

‘We also get, you know, referrals from statutory agencies saying, you know “we’ve got this situation, we’ve got this, I feel, I don’t feel very knowledgeable”, you know, and that’s what we will do, you know, I mean, we are supporting professionals.’ (ID106, manager, ‘by and for’ LGBT+ organisation)

4. Improved partnership working

Practitioners wanted to see better information sharing and liaising between agencies and better collaborating with shared goals in relation to family abuse. Practitioners in ‘by and for’ organisations working with racially minoritised service users and/or LGBQ and/or T+ service users were especially interested in continuing the work to improve partnership working with those victimised by family abuse.

There was some discussion about how children’s services’ safeguarding frameworks are not applicable for young people older than 16 years, which is hugely problematic—those in this group who are not yet financially or materially independent of their families and who are subject to family abuse may fall through the cracks of help providers. While some saw safeguarding practices that exist for children under 16 years of age as providing a template suitable for other age groups being victimised by family abuse, there were also those who asked critical questions about the role of social workers and their institutional approach, which favours keeping families together:

'But then local adult safeguarding boards don't have that understanding, so they can't escalate. Did you, do you know what I mean? It's that missing link between, you know, these issues have come to the knowledge of the safeguarding boards where they get together. In some cases, it's really aggressive violence. So they go to MARAC cases, but the MARAC processes aren't there. So they don't escalate them, you know? And then offenders walk away, offenders don't, aren't accountable for their behaviour. And that challenge isn't there. Just to send the right kind of message, to the wider community?' **(ID11, specialist practitioner, 'by and for' organisation)**

'This work needs a combined approach from third-sector organisations such as ourselves and professionals such as the police or healthcare. This is about more than just policy, and a united approach is the best offence to really drive home the message that these practices are not acceptable.' **(ID81, medical doctor and charity worker)**

'I think it should be a partnership approach, hence why I tried to sit on every board and every meeting that's going [laughs] ... so the traveller, the [group promoting needs of travellers] that I sit on is run by traveller girls, so it's a good start, you know?... but I think it's important to involve those communities and as you say, I think again, you've got, it's, it's about peer, peer-led initiatives.' **(ID097, strategic lead, housing association)**

5. The role of faith and community leaders in partnership working

Many participants identified creating partnerships with faith and community leaders as crucial to being able to prevent and/or intervene early in family abuse. Some participants were involved in this work as faith leaders themselves; others pointed to examples they knew where local faith leaders were known to have an influential impact on family abuse for better or for worse. This underscored the general argument made by many practitioners regarding the importance of working to engage faith leaders in the work to prevent family abuse:

'I think, you know, sometimes possibly faith leaders, people like that, you know, people that are in high esteem in the communities are the sort of people that you might want to get, go to, to kind of start that process. But I think it definitely needs to be a partnership approach ... I think there's a strength in partnerships, you know, going in.' **(ID097, strategic lead, housing association)**

'I do think it's more about educating people ... but also encouraging people to be support networks, and from that the priest will then get involved and I bet the nuns, the religious nuns get more involved than the male priest.' **(ID50, board member, Catholic /faith organisation)**

‘But I wonder if we could, you know, look at creative approaches, working with those pillars in the community to really break down those attitudes and beliefs and get to the bottom of them, and then look up a new way of people being, that’s more harmonious and more respectful.’ (ID005, head of services, charity)

‘The challenge is also the fact that we need to work with religious leaders, you know, with religious communities where there are at, and then bring them up to speed, where they need to be.’ (ID026, Black minister, Christian faith-based organisation)

‘Interventions need to occur in our communities. In order for this to work I think a key step is to target the education of religious and cultural leaders, whose voice is more widely heard and abided by in these communities. Educating youngsters who may become potential victims is never going to be enough if we don’t tackle the figureheads of these families who hold the power to instigate violence. I think this remains the case for all victims regardless of age.’ (ID81, medical doctor instigate violence. I think this remains the case for all victims regardless of age.’ (ID81, medical doctor, charity worker)

4.2.5 The Crucial Role of Prevention

Most participants believe that tackling family abuse is a long game with a range of interventions at the societal, community and individual levels. These preventative interventions all have the common goals of raising awareness about family abuse, enabling early identification and intervention, facilitating prevention and, where necessary, enforcing accountability for perpetrators. Prevention interventions can be based in education or community settings:

1. Education

Raising awareness about the laws on family abuse, HBA, forced marriage, in schools and youth work settings was seen as crucial in empowering young people to understand their rights and the law and to educate them about seeking early help and support.

Participants also felt that schools—as with other sectors of service provision—should be supported to provide clear messages about family abuse, for example the risk factors and options for support and not be silenced by fears about so-called cultural sensitivity.

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'I want to be able to see better education ... from a young age ... in schools. So, I think this is where we need to be talking to all boys ... no matter where they're from ... every single type of background having this education about how to treat women, and then really to be able to talk to them about sanctions at a young age, and the being able to deliver the sanctions ... when we're talking about the kind of response that you'll get as a perpetrator, you know, if you're talking to a teenager, maybe that's when their views might be able to change a little bit. Kind of, a bit more working together if we're talking about the Toxic Triangle, which I hate that term, but men's health for the perpetrators, substance misuse for perpetrators. You know, I'm not saying that that's, kind of, the excuse why abuse happens, but very often it's all mixed in.' (ID065, HBA and FM subject matter expert, police)

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'I think it's positive where we're talking about violence against women and girls, but a lot of that stuff can be so hetero and gender normative, yeah, ... it will say well, you know, we need to talk about boys' behaviour, [and] we do, you know, and all those things ... but it doesn't speak to minoritised, children, young people from minoritised [groups] and so we need to recognise that in, in schools and, and places, you know, where children and young people go as well, you know, and have that, that whole health kind of approach to reducing, you know, violence and abuse.' (ID106, manager, 'by and for' LGBT+ organisation)

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'I do think that education of young people is by far the most important thing. Its educational options. And it infuriated me, when forced marriage became illegal, that the schools wouldn't put up posters saying, are you at risk of this? Do you need help? Because they were frightened of alienating community members or governors ... I think kids need to know that there's a safe space somewhere, where, they can say this is happening and that I need help with it. ... I think things are probably getting better slowly, but I think there's been an awful lot of looking the other way because people have been scared. And I think particularly professionals are scared of being called racist, whatever and, and that that could happen as well. I've seen it happen too.' (ID01, solicitor, specialist in international family law).




'I think schools is a good place to start, because ... you've got mainstream education for children and you can, as I said, we are doing some work in schools ... Well, we're not currently doing the secondary work, but we're trying to ... I had a meeting this morning about that, so, children on board to understand what a healthy relationship looks like. ... You've really got to tackle it from, from an early age.' (ID097, strategic lead, housing association)

2. Community engagement

Several participants talked about the need for awareness-raising activities in communities that would involve bringing people together to talk about their beliefs, their interpretations of sacred texts and their fears about non-conforming family members. Some participants discussed work in which they were already engaged at a community level, including group work activities, community hubs, female perpetrator work and the incremental changes that it was possible to achieve in these non-threatening, peer and/or community-led activities.

'Our coffee morning is predominantly for older women, isolated women, and working with them because as you may know, women that we support in refuge have multiple perpetrators, and mother-in-laws and sister-in-laws, you know, women of the family, are sometimes perpetrators. So although we don't work with male perpetrators, we can work with females in a way that they understand and reflect on their behaviours. And just the dynamics of relationships and healthy relationships.' (ID44, practitioner, 'by and for' organisation)

'I think more education ... I think more, like, community hubs could be open as well, you know, to educate not only the perpetrators, the victims of it. Because I think a lot are just frightened and don't know where to turn. And I think for the perpetrators, sometimes for me, I feel it comes from, you know, extended family and history, you know, behind that. Because when you do speak to a lot of Asian survivors, they do say its normal behaviour, do you know what I mean? He's always been like that, or his mum and dad were like that. But, you know, we try and explain that it's not acceptable and it—you know, it shouldn't be happening. So, I think, like, there could be more community hubs where women can drop into.' (ID99, IDVA, victim/survivor frontline organisation)

'There has been community kind of groups and initiatives that have kind of been set up through—I think there was kind of a craft session with one of the cases that I worked with and it was the mother-in-law that had attended the craft sessions, and through kind of discussions, some of them incredibly challenging, there was awareness and there was learning, and there was that—I can't even say—saying culture shift is such a strong word, but there was a change of opinions.' (ID60, practitioner, specialist service working with perpetrators of DVA)

'We can begin to target campaigns, you know, at those [perpetrators]. We need to create a pattern of who are the gatekeepers within those communities and where can we find them? To be quite honest ... we can look at areas like religious communities and definitely religious spaces. You know, the barbers shop ... the market stalls ... those places where people can have conversations with people. You know, creating a holistic list of, you know, leaders within communities, this is very important.' (ID026, Black minister, Christian faith-based organisation)


'So you really need a group that offers support and offers advice. I do think though that you do have to separate them. Those that help victims and those that help perpetrators, because if you are a victim you won't trust a group, I don't think, from my experience of the people I have come across, if they thought they were helping the other side ... If you had a group of males, professional people who were respected in church, and they met as a support group they could then break up into one or two to be able to be a hearing voice, first of all they have to be a listening voice and so first of all they have to offer a service where they will listen to people who are having relational problems difficulties, which result in violence.' (ID50, board member, Catholic/faith organisation)

4.2.6 Perpetrator Interventions


Most participants were aware that there is little group work specifically devised for family abuse and little evidence of 'what works' for perpetrators in this context.

1. Group work interventions: The existing model for working with perpetrators of intimate partner abuse is a group work model. Most participants did not think this would be an appropriate intervention model for perpetrators of family abuse. Reasons included:
 - Perpetrators of family abuse are, typically, not lone perpetrators. Other family and community members, including faith leaders, can also be involved. Multiple perpetrators are extremely difficult to address through the criminal justice system, which is how convicted intimate partner abuse perpetrators are referred to mandatory group work interventions. Participants queried how and whether multiple perpetrators should be together in the same group work programme and considered the risk of collusion between the perpetrators both inside and outside the group to maintain belief systems that supported their

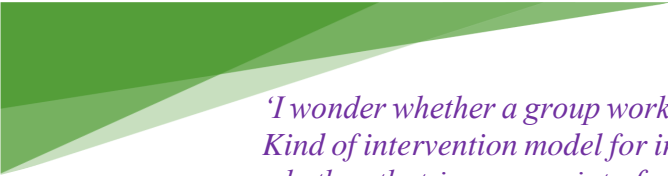
family abuse.



'I think, yeah, it's interesting because we do a lot of work with children services and adult services. Particularly with children services. It's framework for children's services is to do family-based work. And ... in the way we risk assess because mostly they'll come in and say, oh it's just Mum or Dad hasn't quite got their head around this young person being LGBT plus, and whereas we go in and say, actually the same person's being hit, they're being told they're going to be married or you know they're being prayed over. It's like really damaging. So, there's a mismatch in how risk is understood, I think.' **(ID105, manager, LGBT+ organisation)**



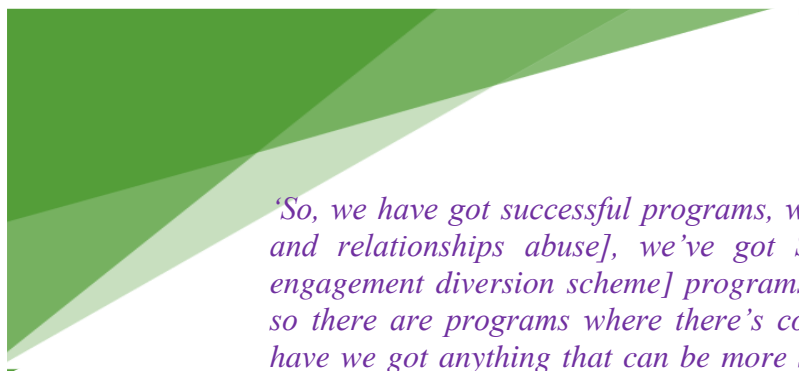
'It's easier in a group to be, be kind of, if you're in a group setting it might be easier to sit back and just kind of let it wash over you, if that makes sense? Whereas if you're in a one-to-one setting, you've got no choice but to integrate and to work with that, with the worker. I think if you're in a group, you could potentially sit back and check your phone and not really pay attention.' **(ID097, strategic lead, housing association)**



'I wonder whether a group work approach 'cause that is the traditional kind of intervention model for intimate partner violence. And I wonder whether that is appropriate for familial violence and abuse. I'm just wondering how you know that community supports certain behaviours or the kind of ideologies that they're trying to reinforce and uphold through their behaviour. If you had a room full of 15 people doing that, you know different dynamics are going to play out.' **(ID005, head of services, charity).**

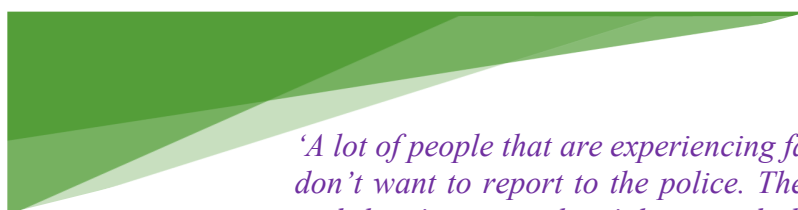
“ ”

- Some participants considered whether family group work interventions might be appropriate for families in which family abuse had taken place. To avoid the long-term impacts of ruptured families and the subsequent social isolation of those victimised by family abuse, participants reflected on whether working with families with the ultimate aim of keeping them together might be beneficial for both victims/survivors and the perpetrators. Others were concerned that appropriate risk assessments would be necessary in these situations and, speaking from experience of social service–run family meetings, were not positive about the outcomes of cases in which practitioners did not risk assess appropriately.
2. Existing Risk Assessment frameworks were also considered for adaptation with family abuse perpetrators: for example, Cautions and Relationships Abuse (CARA), Multi-



‘So, we have got successful programs, we’ve got CARA [cautions and relationships abuse], we’ve got SHE [support, help and engagement diversion scheme] programs for female perpetrators, so there are programs where there’s conditional cautions ... So, have we got anything that can be more specific around where we can, it might not be a large enough perpetrator population of [those who abuse LGBT people] that we can use, but how do we bespoke those programs to take that into account? I don’t know, can we? Can we have elements that we can drop in for different minority communities to try and bespoke it a bit more, that might meet their offending patterns?’ (ID003, DA lead, police)

“ ”



‘A lot of people that are experiencing familial violence and abuse don’t want to report to the police. They’re not wanting to leave and they just want the violence and abuse to stop. They want to remain with their family unit ... I think it if it all comes from the perspective of like we want to help people to keep their relationships, to keep their family units together you know, because there is so much value to gain from people belonging where they want to belong, erm, that could be really good motivation for people to engage in work.’ (ID005, head of services, charity)

“ ”

Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) frameworks.

5. Recommendations

Underpinning our recommendations are four areas of concern that centre victim/survivors and require resolution before the work needed to develop family abuse perpetrator interventions can begin.

FOUR CORE Areas of Concern:

Knowledge and Skills Gap:

- More research is needed to address the following questions:
 - Should family abuse be separated from intimate partner abuse in practice settings?
 - Should the existing IPA sector be developed to include family abuse?
 - Should perpetrator programmes be modelled on existing ones for heterosexual, cisgender male perpetrators of intimate partner abuse?
 - Should family abuse perpetrator interventions be group, family or individual

Trust:

- Between individual victims/ survivors and help providers that result in lack of reporting and/or delayed reporting (and resulting escalation in risk)
- Between families, communities – including faith communities – and the police/other help providers

Recognition:

- Victims/Survivors, families, communities can fail to recognise, minimise and/or normalise abusive behaviours
- Help providers miss opportunities for early intervention and/or give poor first responses with consequences for survivors.

The following table shows what needs to be done and by which sector.

Interventions:

- What methods of interventions other than criminal justice could be suitable and/or effective?

What needs to be done?	Which sector?	By who?
Make better use of existing law	Criminal Justice System	CJS practitioners: police, Crown Prosecution Service
Training about family abuse	Statutory and the domestic abuse sectors	Capacity building needed to design and deliver training
Employment: to increase representation from minoritised groups	Statutory and the domestic abuse sectors	Each organisation in each sector
Representation more generally: to raise profile of family abuse and minoritised groups impacted	Statutory and the domestic abuse sectors	Each organisation in each sector
Improved partnership working: to share information and expertise	Statutory and domestic abuse sectors, especially 'by and for' services for racially minoritised communities and LGBQ and/or T+ people	Local Authority Coordinators facilitating Family Abuse Forums

Prevention aimed at:		
○ Children and young people	Primary, secondary, further and higher education sectors	Capacity building needed to design and deliver prevention materials
○ Communities	Across each local authority area to provide opportunities for community engagement, early intervention, information about the law	Capacity building needed – especially within ‘by and for’ services to engage with communities

Suggested content of family abuse perpetrator interventions can be seen in the toolkit in *Appendix A*.

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