

Centre for Criminology - University of Oxford

Introduction

Adolescent to parent violence poses significant challenges to parents as it inverts traditional familial relationships of power and control. In addition to living in fear of assault, parents who are abused by their children report feelings of shame and blame and are reluctant to report the problem out of a fear of the consequences for their child. APV is a problem which remains largely unarticulated within policy literature and academic discourse in England and Wales. Current responses are inadequate and there is a lack of appropriate support for parent victims.

This project aims to raise awareness of the issue, and develop recommendations for effective police policies to support practitioners and help families experiencing APV.

*The **research findings** presented in this briefing draw upon an ESRC-funded research project which represents the first large-scale study of adolescent to parent violence in the UK. They are based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of 100 police case files for reported incidents of APV and 20 in-depth interviews with police officers across two English police forces. The findings highlight the different contexts surrounding the incidents reported to the police, the ways in which they are responded to, police perceptions of APV and of the families reporting it, and the main challenges the police encounter in dealing with APV cases.*

Our definition of APV:

“Physical violence, threats of violence and criminal damage towards parents/carers by their adolescent children (aged 13-19 years)”.

Aims of the APV Project

- To investigate **how violence is experienced** and negotiated by parents and adolescents.
- To explore **how APV cases** are currently processed and **managed** within the **criminal justice system**.
- To develop **practical policy recommendations** for families experiencing APV, police, youth justice, and others who work with these families.

The People



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(Principal Investigator)



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(Research Officer)

Legal issues and practical implications

- **Lack of an official recognition of the problem** of adolescent to parent offending. **Not officially defined as domestic violence** if the adolescent was under the age of 18 at the time of offending until 2013, and of 16 from now on. **Children of a younger age still lack an official definition.**
- Consequent **lack of police policy** specifically guiding police forces on how reported incidents should be responded to.
- Consequent **lack of specialist knowledge and training** to respond to the problem.

For further information please see:
Condry R. and Miles C. (2013), 'Adolescent to parent violence: Framing and mapping a hidden problem', *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 0(0) 1-19, DOI: 10.1177/1748895813500155.



Key Findings

Of the 100 police case files were analysed:

- 49% of the APV were cases were **son to mother** and 63% involved a **history of violent conduct**.
- 94.6% led to the **arrest of the perpetrator** but in 41.8% of the arrest cases the perpetrator was either **not charged** or the **charges were dropped**.
- 72% of **perpetrators** were **males**, while 72% of **victims** were **females**.
- 47% of perpetrators and 58% of victims were from a White ethnic background. The **apparent over-representation** of **non White** individuals is due to only one London metropolitan borough where this category is over-represented.

Potential contexts of violence

- Where the perpetrator and/or the victim have heavily abused of **alcohol** and **drugs**.
- Where the perpetrator has **mental**

health or **learning problems**, most commonly Asperger’s Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

- Where the **perpetrator** has **previously** been the **victim** of physical and sexual **abuse** or has witnessed domestic violence as a child.
- Where the perpetrator has a history of previous offending, even outside the home.

How do police officers perceive APV and the families involved?

- **General perceptions of APV** vary depending on assignments, rank and longevity of service: some officers see it as a parenting problem, others as a form of domestic violence which should be addressed by specially trained domestic violence officers.
- With regard to the **families involved**, a high number of officers **perceive** APV as a result of “poor parenting” often associated with teenage pregnancy, “broken families”, economic deprivation

and a previous history of domestic violence.

What issues arise in police responses to reported incidents?

- **Discretionary powers.** Due to the lack of official recognition and policy surrounding adolescent to parent violence, there are high levels of police discretion in responding to reported incidents.
- **Tensions.** Positive intervention policies often clash with youth diversionary policies and with the aim to respect the wishes of victims.
- **Alternative options.** To deal with cases informally, work in partnership with social services or use “Youth Restorative Disposals” to deal with juveniles responsible for minor offences.

What are Police forces’ main challenges?

- **Practical issues.** Necessity to remove perpetrators from the home to protect victims in high risk cases clashes with parents’ responsibility for providing a home to their children. Often no alternative but returning the adolescent to their home address.
- **Obstacles to prosecution.** Parents’ reluctance to report and potentially criminalize their child, parents reporting and later refusing to make a statement or making a statement and later withdrawing it. Difficulties in pursuing an unsupported prosecution and to go against the parents’ wishes.

It is crucial that APV is formally recognised, allowing the police to deal with it in a more consistent and appropriate manner and to facilitate training, policy and practice in this complex and sensitive form of family violence.

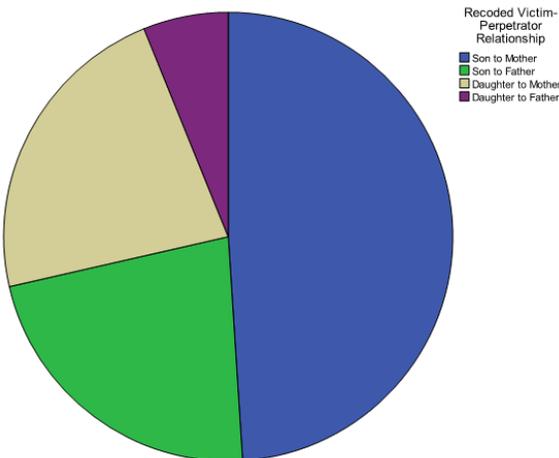


Figure 1. Recoded Victim– Perpetrator Relationship Variable

www.apv.crim.ox.ac.uk

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