

Key Findings for Youth Justice Services

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 youth justice 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 youth justice policy to help families experiencing APV.

The research findings presented in this briefing draw upon the preliminary findings from an ESRC-funded research project which represents the first large-scale study of adolescent to parent violence in the UK. They are based on the analysis of victim, offender and incident characteristics of 1892 cases reported to the Metropolitan Police in 2009–2010, and on interviews conducted with parents, adolescents, police, youth justice workers, and expert practitioners from outside the CJIS.

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



Dr Rachel Condry
(Principal Investigator)



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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 national figures** for adolescent to parent violence **on cases reported to the police and on the frequency** with which it appears in youth justice and other services.
- Consequent **lack of specialist knowledge** to support the problem and **lack of guidance and policy** for practitioners.

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.



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Key Findings

Of the 1,892 cases of adolescent to parent violence reported in London in one year (2009-10):

- 77% of all parent victims were female
- 87% of all perpetrators were male
- 66% of cases involved son to mother

What do Parents Experience?

- Fear of further violence, consequences for their child, and sense of guilt and shame often lead to reluctance to report.
- Difficulty in finding help or support from police, social services and schools.
- Fear of being blamed and held accountable for their children's behaviour.

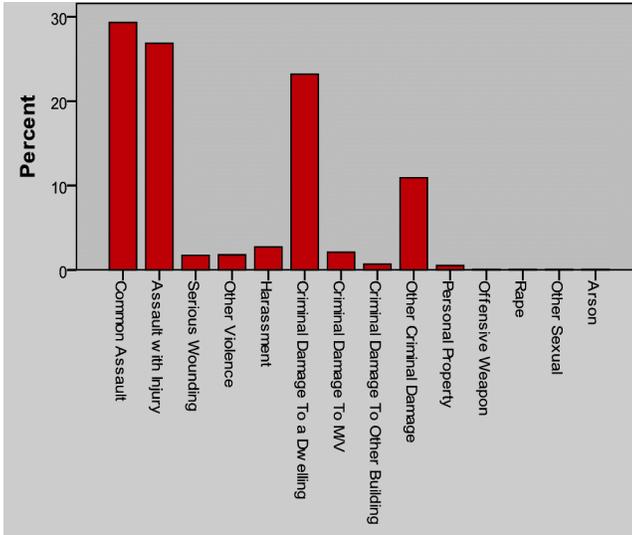


Figure 1. Breakdown of offence category by offence type (N = 1892)

What do Practitioners Experience?

- Difficulties in handling the many cases of APV because of its lack of official definition.
- Dissatisfaction with programmes which are not designed for the specific needs of families experiencing APV.
- Need for specifically tailored interventions taking into account the particular circumstances of these families.
- Challenges in adapting programmes designed for other uses to APV cases.
- Recognition of the existence of some excellent programs, albeit few in number and localised.

What do Practitioners Need?

- More information and understanding.
- A clear policy and guidance within the youth justice system on how they should respond to the problem.
- More dedicated support services such as training, referral processes, intervention programmes and resource/funding issues.
- Improved communication between services.
- Responses reflecting the complexity of the problem and of family dynamics—holistic, family-focused approaches.

What needs to be done?

- To respond to the problem in a coordinated manner and to build a thorough research base.
- To rethink traditional constructions of parental responsibility in youth justice. Parenting Orders are will not be appropriate for a parent experiencing violence from their child.
- To reflect on our responses to situations in which the boundaries between victim and offender categories are blurred.
- To rethink our conventional understandings of intergenerational dynamics of power and control.
- To respond to concerns about over criminalizing young people by designing responses with other services, with the potential for diversion, or even outside the Criminal Justice System.
- To build new services upon examples of good practice.

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However difficult, APV needs a coordinated Youth Justice Response.

www.apv.crim.ox.ac.uk

APV
 Adolescent to Parent Violence Project