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Understanding Agency & Resistance Strategies:
Children in situations of domestic violence & abuse

UNDERSTANDING AGENCY AND RESISTANCE STRATEGIES (UNARS): Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence

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Author's Note:

This report summarises a very large set of complex qualitative data. To provide an overview of the project, this is necessarily a descriptive report. Many sections of the report are more fully elaborated in journal articles and book chapters that are either in press or in production. Please contact Jane.Callaghan@northampton.ac.uk if you would like copies of these papers, or if you would like to be on the mailing list to receive notifications about future published work.

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Executive summary

Background to the UNARS project

- This report focuses on children's experiences of domestic violence, in families affected by domestic violence. Our report is concerned with children's experiences in situations where the main perpetrator and victim of violence would be legally defined as two adults in an intimate relationship (not where the child is involved in 'dating violence').

- Research and professional practice that focuses on children as damaged witnesses to domestic violence tends to describe children as passive and helpless. Our study, based on interviews with more than a hundred children across four European countries, recognises the significant suffering caused to children who experience domestic violence. However, it also tells a parallel story, about the capacity of children who experience domestic violence to cope, to maintain a sense of agency, to be resilient, and to find ways of resisting violence, and build a positive sense of who they are.

- Our project highlights the implications of policy and professional discourses that position children as 'damaged' and as 'witnesses', but that do not recognise children's capacity to experience domestic violence, make sense of it, and respond to it in ways that are agentic, resilient and resistant. Describing children as 'witnesses', 'exposed to domestic violence' and 'damaged by it' erodes children's capacity to represent their experiences, and to articulate the ways that they cope with and resist such experiences. By focusing on children's capacity for conscious meaning making and agency in relation to their experiences of domestic violence, we highlight the importance of recognising its impact on children, and their right to representation as victims in the context of domestic violence.

- The project addresses several major questions:

  1. How do children experience domestic violence and what evidence is there in their accounts of capacity for agency, resistance and resilience?

  2. How might we devise an intervention focused on agency, resistance and resilience for children who experience domestic violence, rather than the usual interventions focused on behaviour change and perceptions of damage? How do children experience such an intervention?

  3. How do those who work with children affected by domestic violence see them, and what implications do these representations have for children's ability to cope with and recover from domestic violence? What does the policy and service landscape look like for these children?

4. How do practitioners who work with domestic violence experience training that enables them to consider children's agency, resistance and resilience

Method

- The UNARS project adopted an action research approach, organised in two phases.
- The first phase of the project involved establishing an understanding of children's experiences of domestic violence, and the resources available to them to support them in that experience. This was achieved through the use of individual interviews, photo elicitation, and creative methods, with children.
- In addition, we developed an understanding of the service landscape and policy context for children in each partner country, to understand both how children who experienced domestic violence were seen in each country, and what interventions and support were available to them.
- Our learning in this phase of the project informed the second phase, in which a group based therapeutic intervention was devised, implemented and evaluated.
- In addition, a training intervention for professionals and volunteers working with children who experience domestic violence was developed and implemented.
- Four countries participated in the UNARS projects – Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain. All partner countries participated in all phases of the project.
- UNARS is the largest qualitative study to explore children's experiences of domestic violence. It involved:
    - interviews and photo elicitation work with 110 young people
    - focus groups with 74 professionals and 39 parents/ carers
    - a policy analysis across four European countries
    - an intervention with 60 children and young people who had experienced domestic violence, and follow up interviews about the experience of the interviews with 21 children
    - a training intervention with 233 professionals

The "Voices" of the Children: Experiences of agency, resistance and paradoxical resilience

Using creative methods, like photo elicitation, drawing, family maps and spatial mapping, as well as individual interviewing, the research team was able to support children in articulating experiences that might be difficult to articulate, by providing them with a range of possible forms of expression. From the Individual interviews and photo elicitation activities, several key themes emerged. These included

- **Managing Disclosure** -– disclosing experiences of violence, or concerns about family life was seen as risky, and children learned to manage what they did and did not say, how they said it, and to whom, as a way of keeping themselves and their families safe.

- **Redefining and managing Relationships**– children made complex and situated decisions about who they kept close, and who they kept distant; they re-defined their notion of family to enable them to include and exclude those who were or were not supportive for them; and they had complex strategies for forming and maintaining friendships.

- A general pattern in our interviews suggested that caring gives children a considerable sense of validation, empowerment and competence. Understood from the point of view of the professional, this kind of caregiving is problematic, representing children taking on premature adult roles. However, this kind of interpretation is firmly located in normative understandings of childhood; it is an adultist interpretation, which does not take into sufficient account how children understand the experience of caring themselves.

- Children who experience domestic violence are often described in domestic violence literature as having poor social skills (Wood & Sommers, 2011). Detailed interviews with children suggest that this is only a partial story of children's experiences, and that children's relational experiences and relational coping is subtle and complex when living with domestic violence and its aftermath.

- **Use of Space and Material Objects**– children made use of the space around them, and of their embodied experiences to create safe spaces for themselves and their siblings, and to enable them to feel a sense of escape.

- The experience of being embodied subjects, moving in physical spaces emerged as an important feature of both children's experiences of domestic violence, and of their resistance to it. Even when children were not directly physically hurt themselves, their bodies were still experienced as both a target of control and as a site of resistance to that control. Children were acutely aware of the spaces of the home, and the ways those spaces were used by the family at different times of the day. They were aware, for instance, that shared spaces – living rooms / lounges, dining rooms, kitchens – were more dangerous spaces, and that these spaces were often highly regulated and controlled by the perpetrator. Children used a range of strategies to create alternative safe spaces for themselves.

- **Creative and embodied coping** – children used a range of creative and expressive strategies, including drawing, music, sport, and play – in ways that were cathartic, and in ways that helped them feel safer or more in control of themselves and their environment.

- Photo elicitation and other creative techniques offered children an additional strategy to communicate their experiences, and this enabled an articulation of their non-verbal forms of coping

and resisting in situations of domestic violence. Children are able to communicate clearly how their use of space, of relationships and of creativity and sport enabled them to cope more effectively with the experience of violence and its aftermath.

- **Experiences of Services -** Children's experiences of services were varied, but generally not particularly positive. Most reported a sense of not being heard, not being listened to, by those who were supposed to be there to help them.

- **Normative childhood and paradoxical resilience** - In understanding how children are able to resist and have agency in situations of domestic violence and abuse, we suggest that what characterises children's experiences of violence is a kind of paradoxical resilience. When children live in conflict laden environments, they have to find complex ways of coping and managing themselves and their relationships. What may appear as 'dysfunctional' and difficult in the eyes of clinically trained adults, is often the way that children have found to cope in highly located, creative and agentic ways. These strategies need to be understood in context, and from the perspective of the child, to see their function in children's lives.

In our account of children's agency in their experiences of domestic violence, we have highlighted the often complex, contradictory nature of the way that children cope. We do not wish to understate or underestimate how much pain domestic violence causes to children: its negative impact is very significant. However, our argument is that in focusing just on damage and on a very limited and often acontextual understanding of resilience that tends to position resilience as an outcome or a set of character traits or skills, the domestic violence literature effectively functions to limit our reading of children's lives just to damage. It underestimates the points of strength that children are able to build, it underestimates their creativity, their capacity to find ways to cope with even the most difficult situations. It underestimates their capacity for resistance and for agency.

Building an Intervention to Support Children's Capacity for Agency, Resistance and Resilience

- The intervention focused on providing support for children by building on their existing strengths, and by developing (rather than trying to remove) the resilient, resistant and agentic strategies and sense of self that children have already built. In this sense it is very different from behaviourally focused intervention programmes for children who experience domestic violence, that tend to view children's responses to domestic violence as a set of behavioural problems to be removed. Rather this approach focuses on understanding the function of children's responses to violence, and the way that they make meaning of those responses.

- The group therapy intervention was built using insights from the interviews completed with children and young people. Our intention in the intervention was to build on the strengths and strategies that children told us had helped them to cope, be resilient and find ways to resist. We resisted the tendency in work with children affected by domestic violence to attempt to restore 'normative childhood', instead respecting children's capacity for agency, and the paradoxical nature of their coping and resistance. We were interested in supporting children from the point of view of their own coping, rather than trying to dismantle their strategies to build ones that were consistent with idea of what 'good' or 'normal' childhood is.

- Building on our research findings in the first phase of the project, the main objective of our intervention is to empower children by helping them: build safety and trust; develop trust in themselves and others; explore, share and develop coping strategies; build positive self-identity and envisage a positive potential future; challenge myths and self-fulfilling prophecies about domestic violence; foster caring relationships and social support; and deal with endings and loss.

- To this purpose we integrated creative, narrative, systemic and Gestalt therapeutic techniques. We developed a range of group activities children could choose from, that involved materials like photos, collages, puppets and other creative media (e.g. music, drawing, poetry..), together with embodied and somatic exploration. The creative and embodied techniques helped to engage children and adults in a shared process, by blending verbal with non-verbal communication.

- The intervention was piloted in the UK, and then rolled out through the four countries of the partnership for a total of 10 groups and 60 young people.

- Across all four partner locations, children and young people were extremely positive about the intervention. The most common comments in the interviews were that they wanted the intervention to be longer, and that it offered a positive context in which they felt able to articulate their experiences – sometimes for the first time.

- Children reported that they experienced the group as a trusting environment in which they could express themselves, build self-confidence, and test out and strengthen their capacity to trust others.

- Through the intervention, children had shifted their perspective on the inevitability of intergenerational transmission, and had been able to forge a more positive vision of their future selves.

- Understanding that other children had experienced similar difficulties promoted a sense of social connectedness to others and reduced participants' feelings of isolation and 'differentness'.

- Children's scores on the wellbeing measures at the beginning and end of the intervention did show an improvement in subjective wellbeing in all 4 areas ('Me', 'Family', 'School', 'Everything'), as

children moved through this programme, and the difference between pre and post measures was statistically significant.

Policy and Practice in work with children who experience domestic violence

- Our project highlights the implications of policy frameworks that do not include children as victims who experience domestic violence, but that instead represent them as passive witnesses. Such frameworks erode children's representation and voice in professional and policy discourses.
- The policy documents on domestic violence in all four participating countries generally omit children altogether, entrenching a view that children are not victims of domestic violence, but rather are 'collateral damage' or 'witnesses' to it. We argue that this produces a service landscape in which the needs of children are portrayed as additional in domestic violence support, and that consequently children's needs are often overlooked.
- We argue that policy frameworks must shift to recognise children's experiences of domestic violence, and to recognise children as victims of domestic violence, not as witnesses or as additional to adult experiences.

Focus groups with professions

- Focus groups were carried out with groups of professionals in each country. Our aim was to provide an understanding of the practice landscape children must navigate to secure support when they experience domestic violence
- In focus groups, professionals expressed concerns about the lack of continuity between services and an insufficient range of supportive and specialist services needed to support victims of domestic abuse. In each partner country, particular concerns were raised about service gaps, and professionals suggested that a better equipped system would be more functional and effective. Gaps in the system include the lack of availability of specialist local organisations (in Greece and Spain), different sheltering solutions for victims, and shelters that could include children over 18, larger families, and teenage boys.
- Professionals often describe the child as 'unprotected' and the parent as 'failing to protect'. In this sense the child victim comes to embody and reflect the parents' failure to meet the principal requirements of parenthood such as providing a safe environment.
- Professional stakeholders are placed in positions of control (and educators/schools are given prime responsibility for identifying CYP, raising awareness of DVA and channeling appropriate support to CYP). However, the role of professional stakeholders is perceived to be hampered by cutbacks and

restricted financial resources. Positive policy directives designed to support CYP were reported, by professionals in focus groups, to be delivered in a way which resembled a mechanical tick box exercise where children themselves are made invisible and outcome measures are prioritised.

Focus groups with parents / carers

- In focus groups with carers, the child-victim was described as affected by violence in dramatic ways. The child-victim is described in relation to the consequences the DVA has on his/her personality and mental health. The consequences appear to be serious and are demonstrated mainly in the child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. This was a remarkably consistent construction of the child who has experienced domestic violence, across all the parent focus groups.

Training Professionals Who Work with Domestic Violence

A range of professionals were trained, including social services staff, psychologists, teachers, police officers, GPs, nurses, domestic violence support workers and family support workers. Training was well received, and there was a strong perception of a need for more training in all regions Quantitative and qualitative course evaluation questionnaire data supports the conclusion that the training was very successful.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The key argument of the UNARS project is that it is important to explore how children give voice to their own experiences, if we are to avoid the risk of oversimplifying their responses, and of reducing their experience to pathology and damage. By facilitating children's articulation of their experiences, we are able to see how the damaging impact of domestic violence intertwines with complex coping and resistance strategies, which children are able to use to build their own sense of resilience.
- The project highlights how children understand, make sense of and experience domestic violence, as conscious, meaning making beings whose capacity to resist, have agency and be resilient is intricately linked to the context in which such resistance is made necessary.
- The analysis of interviews with children who experience domestic violence suggests that the 'victim' in domestic violence is not just the adult in the intimate dyad; victims are also any children within the household who are affected by the violence, either directly or indirectly. We have argued that it is important that children's capacity to make meaning of their experiences of domestic violence, to be harmed by it, and to have a sense of agency and resistance to it underscores the importance of a shift in legal definitions and policy around domestic violence.

- Facilitating children's articulation of their experience and of their lived experiences enabled us to develop a creative and relationally oriented group based intervention that built on children's existing strengths to further develop their capacity for resistance and resilience. Children experienced this intervention as a positive context in which they could talk about their experiences, and work them through, in a manner that enabled them to feel that they were growing in strength and capacity.

- Professionals also reported that training to explore the meaning of domestic violence for children, and to consider children's contextual capacity for resilience and resistance, was useful and would help them to work more responsively with children in the future.

Based on the findings of the project, the following recommendations are made:

- **Legal Status and Protection:** The Istanbul Convention refers to 'all victims' of domestic violence, however children are not explicitly defined as victims either in the Istanbul convention, or the national and regional legal and policy frameworks that implement it. In this sense, children are absent from legal definitions (except as victims of dating violence). Children who 'witness' domestic violence do not have a legal status as 'victim'. (This is changing in Spain, where the distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' victims is being removed from Spanish statutes). Children are therefore constructed in law and policy as an absence, as 'collateral damage' to adult domestic violence, and this has consequences for how they are understood and treated in criminal justice, social services and voluntary sector organisations. The UNARS project has highlighted that children experience domestic violence, and cope with domestic violence, in much the same way that adult victims do, and that the distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' victim, or between 'adult victim' and 'child witness' is not sustainable. When policy frameworks do not include children as victims, this contributes to the erosion of children's representation and voice in professional and policy discourses. By focusing on children's capacity for conscious meaning making and agency in relation to their experiences of domestic violence, we highlight the importance of recognising the impact domestic violence has on children, and their right to representation as victims in the context of domestic violence.

- **Representation and Voice**: The UNARS project has demonstrated the importance and value of listening to children's voice. This facilitates children's recognition of their own strengths, and should be a key element of therapeutic work with children and young people who experience domestic violence. In addition, fostering a context in which children feel empowered to speak about their experiences creates space for professionals to better understand children's experiences, and to respond more appropriately to their needs. It also creates opportunities for the co-production of more relevant policy and service provisions. In policy and legislative frameworks, we need to extend

and strengthen the requirement to listen to the child's voice. Children who experience domestic violence are often framed by professionals as 'vulnerable' and unable to cope with talking about their experiences. This kind of gatekeeping effectively blocks children from access to representation, and prevents them from articulating their experiences of domestic violence, perpetuating the view of them as 'silent witnesses', and occluding their experiences as victims, and their capacity to cope.

- **Language:** There needs to be a concerted attempt to change the language in national and regional policy to one which more actively advocates the recognition of CYP experiences and strengths such that interventions more closely align with their needs and place them in more privileged positions as experts on their own situations. In addition, the development of a common language across professionals (create a glossary of terms) should be encouraged so that jargon does not get in the way of helping children and young people.

- **Training:** Many professionals reflected that they lacked the skills to support them in talking to children about their experiences of domestic violence. To create a service and criminal justice culture in which children are able to voice their experiences and seek the help and support they need, professionals need to be skilled in responding to children. This requires further training to empower those who work with children and families who experience domestic violence to hear what children have to say. In addition, there is a clear need to support criminal justice and policing professionals to provide more effective responses to children who experience domestic violence.

- **Services:** In all partner countries, there were concerns about the availability of services for children who experience domestic violence. Parents, professionals and children all noted that there are very few (or no) services available for children that enable children to talk about their experiences. Where services are available, they are often difficult to access, and not provided 'on time' for children, in a manner that is responsive to children's needs. Most support for children affected by domestic violence are offered within domestic violence shelters and services, which typically only work with families at the point of fleeing. Many of the children and parents we talked to noted that they only started to process their experiences some time after the violence had ended, once they were in an environment that seemed 'safe'. Services for children are often centred on those in need of 'protection' (i.e. those in immediate risk). But this is not the ideal space in which supportive and particularly therapeutic services should be provided. Services need to be more accessible (e.g. in community contexts, in school, in youth centres) and to be offered in a more flexible way, to enable children to use them when *they need to,* not when the service feels that they should. Working 'with' not 'for' children and young people: Regional statutory organisations should develop their policies to emphasize "working with" and not "working for" CYP. In this way, DVA can be conceptualised within policy as a shared and preventable social issue between the child and professionals. In this way, CYP

are likelier to develop a sense of control and build on existing personal, relational family and community resilience.

- **Collaborative and partnership working**: It is important to recognise the impact of austerity and recession on the European service landscape. Collaborative working has been undermined by service cuts, and by competitive commissioning arrangements. There is an urgent need to strengthen partnership and multi agency working in the domestic violence field, to enable families to receive an appropriate range of support in fleeing and in recovery from domestic violence. In addition, there is a need to address directly the impact of budgetary constraints on the potential support available for children and families who experience domestic violence: there remains an urgent need for an influx of f**inance and resource.** We suggest that the need to develop and ring fence dedicated social funding to ensure the sustainability and adequate funding for the provision of child-oriented services in community settings.

- **Awareness raising campaigns**: Dedicated efforts are required to raise awareness of the needs and impacts on quality of life for children living in situations of domestic violence. While effective campaigns have been constructed in the past and continue to run successfully, there is a need to target campaigns in places such as community venues, such as sports venues and shopping centres. Campaigning in places which parents and children access freely could broaden to audiences of such campaigns. Such campaigns have typically dwelt on the negative aspects of damage and victimization where children are featured. More positive images of empowered children and young people are called for, alongside more nuanced aspects of the impact of gender and culture. Aside from the specific focus on DV and children and young people within DV, campaigns should aim to improve the image of women in society and the citizenship rights of children.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

To work effectively with children who have experienced domestic violence and abuse, it is important to see them not as 'exposed to' or 'witnesses to' violence, but as human beings who live with, experience and make sense of domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2003; Carolina Øverlien, 2011a). Research on children who experience domestic violence and abuse has tended to focus primarily on the negative impact, documenting the many ways that children are *damaged* by the violence that they witness. Research and professional practice that focuses on children as damaged witnesses to domestic violence tends to describe children as passive and helpless. Our study, based on interviews with more than a hundred children across four European countries, recognises the significant suffering caused to children who experience domestic violence. However, it also tells a parallel story, about the capacity of children who experience domestic violence to cope, to maintain a sense of agency, to be resilient, and to find ways of resisting violence, and build a positive sense of who they are.

> Research on children who experience domestic violence has tended to focus primarily on the negative impact, documenting the many ways that children are *damaged* by the violence that they witness

This report focuses on children's experiences of domestic violence, in families affected by domestic violence. Our report is concerned with children's experiences in situations where the main perpetrator and victim of violence would be legally defined as two adults in an intimate relationship (not where the child is involved in 'dating violence'). We are concerned with circumstances where violence occurs in the intimate adult dyad, but typically pervades the rest of the family, through acts of violence, psychological abuse and control. We choose not to use the terms 'witness' to violence, or describe children as 'exposed' to domestic violence, because we intend throughout this report to disrupt this passive construction of childhood.

This project locates itself within a critique of European social policy, considering the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, national and regional policy, and its implications for children who experience domestic violence. UNICEF (2006) estimates that at least 5 million children across Europe are affected by DV. Consistent with the principle of European-wide social protection, this project drew together a 4 country European partnership, focused on informing a consistent, effective welfare response that is sensitive to young people's agency, and their capacity to determine their own future, not to be 'doomed' to a future damaged by a history of DV.

> Policy often represents domestic violence as occurring within the adult dyad only. Children are occluded from policy, and the term 'victim' tends to be reserved for women only

The Istanbul convention focuses explicitly on violence against women, and expresses a commitment to "prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence", "design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence", "promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence"; and "provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence".

While the convention does refer to 'all victims' of domestic violence, children are not explicitly defined as victims in either the Istanbul convention, or the national and regional legal and policy frameworks that implement it. In this sense, children are absent from such legal definitions, except as victims of dating violence. Children who 'witness' domestic violence do not have a legal status as 'victim'. (This is changing in Spain, where the distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' victims is being removed from Spanish statutes). Children are therefore constructed in law and policy as an absence, as 'collateral damage' to adult domestic violence, and this has consequences for how they are understood and treated in criminal justice, social services and voluntary sector organisations.

Our project highlights the implications of this policy, in terms of the way that it erodes children's representation and voice in professional and policy discourses. By focusing on children's capacity for conscious meaning making and agency in relation to their experiences of domestic violence, we highlight the importance of recognising its impact on children, and their right to representation as victims in the context of domestic violence.

This report is structured into four chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction and literature review, setting the context of the project. This chapter reviews mainstream domestic violence literature that focuses on children, and outlines the main argument of the project. Here we argue that it is important to challenge the dominant construction of children who experience domestic violence as passive 'witnesses', as 'exposed to violence' or as helpless innocents who are 'damaged' by violence. In Chapter Two, we outline the methods used in the project. In Chapter Three, we explore children's experiences of domestic violence, presenting an analysis of interviews and photo elicitation activities with 110 children and young people. This chapter particularly explores some of the strategies children use to construct an agentic sense of self, considering the ways that they manage relationships, how they use space and how they manage disclosure

and articulate their experiences of domestic violence. In each of these themes, we explore how children resist violence and control, and how they build a resilient sense of self, in a manner that is highly contextualized and relational.

1.2 Literature Review

There is limited prevalence data to indicate how many children in Europe are affected by domestic violence. However, the data that is available suggests that the problem is widespread, and that a significant number of children experience violence in the home. The World Health Organization (2013) estimate that 30% of women worldwide, and 25% of women in Europe will experience physical or sexual violence in the context of an intimate relationship.[1] It is

> A UK prevalence study estimates that 29.5% of children under 18 have been exposed to domestic violence during their lifetime (Radford et al., 2013)

well established that risk of exposure to domestic violence and psychological abuse increases in pregnancy (James, Brody, & Hamilton, 2013; Jasinski, 2004) and continues beyond pregnancy, with the likelihood therefore that children from these relationships will experience intimate partner violence at home (Levendosky, Leahy, Bogat, Davidson, & von Eye, 2006).   A UK prevalence study estimates that 29.5% of children under 18 have been exposed to domestic violence during their lifetime (12% of children under 11, and 17.5% aged 11-18) and approximately 5.7% of children and young people, will experience domestic violence each year (Radford, Corral, Bradley, & Fisher, 2013). These statistics suggest that domestic violence and abuse are issues that affect a large percentage of children in Europe.

The balance of research evidence also suggests that childhood experiences of domestic violence can have lifelong negative psychosocial impact. Children who grow up in families affected by domestic violence and abuse are more at risk of mental health difficulties across the lifespan (e.g. Bogat, DeJonghe, Levendosky, Davidson, & von Eye, 2006; Fergusson, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005; Meltzer, Doos, Vostanis, Ford, & Goodman, 2009; Mezey, Bacchus, Bewley, & White, 2005; Peltonen, Ellonen, Larsen, & Helweg-Larsen, 2010), and physical health problems (Bair-Merritt, Blackstone, & Feudtner, 2006). They are more likely to experience educational challenges, including a higher risk of dropping out of school, experiencing learning difficulties and educational disengagement, (Byrne & Taylor, 2007; Koenen, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, & Purcell, 2003; Willis et al., 2010), and a higher risk of bullying (both as bully and bullied) (Baldry, 2003; Lepistö, Luukkaala, & Paavilainen, 2011). They are at greater risk for involvement in criminal behaviour (R. Gilbert et

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[1] Most literature and policy on domestic violence presumes an adult male perpetrator, and an adult female victim. Critiquing these assumptions is not a focus of this study. The participants in our research predominantly came from households where the main identified perpetrator of domestic violence was a man, and his main identified victim was a woman. We recognise that there are, in fact, a range of other circumstances in which domestic violence occurs, including situations where partners are both violent, where women are violent to men, as well as in LGBTQ relationships.

al., 2009; T. Gilbert, Farrand, & Lankshear, 2012; Kwong, Bartholomew, Henderson, & Trinke, 2003). They more likely to experience a range of social difficulties, including challenges with social skills problems, greater difficulty in making and maintaining friendships, and are more likely to experience violence and abuse in their own romantic and intimate relationships (Black, Sussman, & Unger, 2010;

We analysed 177 articles relating to domestic violence and abuse in a review designed to identify discursive and linguistic patterns

Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Siegel, 2013). Research also suggests that they are more vulnerable to exploitation and various forms of sexual abuse (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007a; Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2010). Some research suggests that children's developmental challenges are linked to the lasting neurological impact of exposure to the stress of violence, that can have far-reaching implications for children's lifelong development and wellbeing (Anda et al., 2006; Choi, Jeong, Polcari, Rohan, & Teicher, 2012; Koenen et al., 2003). It has been suggested that 'witnessing' domestic violence is at least as impactful, and possibly has even worse consequences, than being directly physically abused (Moylan et al., 2010; Sousa et al., 2011). Domestic violence and coercive behaviours pervade family life, impacting negatively on patterns of relating throughout the household (Cooper & Vetere, 2008). In addition, children who experience domestic violence between their parents are also at greater risk of direct harm, including risk of domestic homicide (CAADA, 2014a; Hester, 2000; Humphreys, 2007a; Jaffe, Campbell, Hamilton, & Juodis, 2012; Radford et al., 2013).

Researchers and activists have, for some time, highlighted the importance of taking children's experiences of domestic violence seriously, particularly in enabling better access to services, and the delivery of more appropriate services, for children affected by domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2003; Øverlien & Hydén, 2009; Øverlien, 2011b; Peled, 1998; Swanston, Bowyer, & Vetere, 2014). For instance, Peled (1996, 1998) suggested that children should not be regarded as 'secondary victims' in domestic violence, given the impact of violence on them, while Mullender et al. (2003) noted the importance of children's 'active participation' in domestic violence services, suggesting that this meant children "being listened to and taken seriously as participants in the domestic violence situation; and being able to be actively involved in finding solutions and helping make decisions." (p.121). However, despite these calls to hear children's experiences, and to involve children in service planning (Moore & Seu, 2011; New Economics Foundation, 2013), nonetheless services for children remain largely additional to existing domestic violence services, with many children not receiving any specialist support after experiencing domestic violence and abuse. For example, in the UK, only 9% of children who have experienced domestic violence in the UK have access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for mid to long term support (CAADA, 2014b), despite children reporting significant

psychological distress in the aftermath of living with domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2003; C. Øverlien, 2009; Swanston et al., 2014a).

In preparation for the UNARS project, a literature review was completed, focused on children, domestic violence, mental health, wellbeing and resilience. We surveyed all published, peer reviewed literature in press between January 2002 and January 2015. The period 2002-2015 covers all literature published in the decade before the project began, and through the duration of the project. This time frame enabled us to consider academic and professional knowledge and discourses in circulation that might influence and shape how children's experiences of domestic violence are understood, and framed in policy and practice. Our aim in the literature review was to understand the dominant discourses of children who experience domestic violence and abuse, exploring how children and family life are constituted in professional and academic talk.

Services for children remain largely additional to existing domestic violence services, with many children not receiving any specialist support after experiencing domestic violence and abuse

Relevant peer reviewed literature was identified through a targeted search of the data bases 'google scholar', 'ingenta' and 'ovid'. Search terms used were "child*"; and "domestic violence" OR "domestic abuse" OR "interpersonal violence". We further refined our search by combining these search terms with "mental health", "wellbeing", "resilience", "resistance" and "agency". The abstracts of the articles identified in this way were then read, to ensure that the articles were specifically focused on children or young people, and were concerned with domestic violence and abuse. From this process, 177 articles were identified for inclusion in the review. These articles were converted to text and subject to a corpus analysis (wmatrix, Rayson, 2008), to identify patterns of talk in the articles. Wmatrix enables a quantitative analysis of large linguistic data sets, to explore both the frequency of certain terms and phrases, and their concurrence with other terms in the data set.

Figure 1: A wmatrix word cloud, showing the relative frequency of terms and phrases in literature on children's experiences of domestic violence
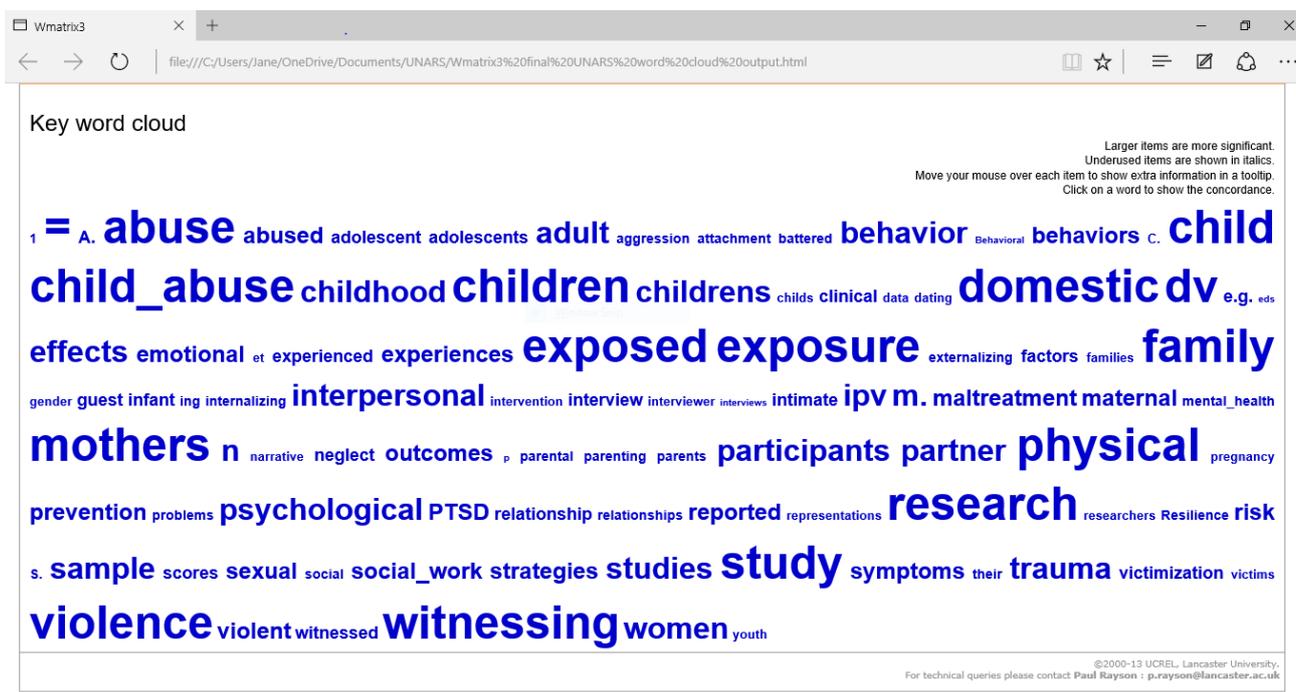
The word cloud illustrates clearly how frequently terms like 'exposed', 'exposure', witnessed' and 'witnessing' are in articles about children's experiences of domestic violence. These terms function to produce a very passive construction of children who experience domestic violence – terms like 'exposure' and 'witnessing' imply that they are simply watching the violence, that they are present, impacted, but have no agency in their experience of the violence.

The term 'exposure' seems particularly problematic, since its connotations (exposure to disease, to toxins, etc) position children who experience domestic violence as vulnerable and passive, but also as contaminated, and potentially contaminating. This is particularly strongly illustrated by the title of one article in the data set *"Externalities in the Classroom: How Children Exposed to Domestic Violence Affect Everyone's Kids"* (Carrell & Hoekstra, 2010). The image produced by this kind of title positions children who experience domestic violence as a kind of ticking bomb or a viral contaminant, who, having been 'exposed' to violence represent a threat to all children. This construction is linked to the focus in the literature reviewed on children affected by domestic violence as almost inevitably damaged by that violence. The literature in this field is overwhelmingly focused on the psychopathological and negative psychosocial impact of 'exposure' to violence. An emerging and influential construct in literature around children's experiences of violence is Finkelhor's concept of polyvictimisation (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2009; Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005; Turner et al., 2010) which suggests that once exposed to violence at home, children are vulnerable to multiple forms of victimisation. He says: "*A general problem with this literature, however, is*

that most such studies on individual types of victimization have failed to obtain complete victimization profiles…. Children who experience one kind of victimization are at greater risk of experiencing other forms of victimization." (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007b, p. 7), and goes on to describe such children as "*poly-victims*" (p.19). Whilst recognising the importance of understanding the cumulative effect of repeated and

Research often fails to consider children's capacity to cope in situations of domestic violence

multiple forms of victimisation, to describe children in terms of 'complete victimisation profiles' and as 'poly-victims' seems to rather limit them to one-dimensional understandings of the impact of violence in their lives. It further risks the reduction of children to passive objects to which things are done, rather than seeing them as creative agents, who are capable of coping in a range of complex and situated ways, to the difficulties they experience in their homes. While we acknowledge the negative impact that DVA has on children's lives, we also question the way these childhoods are represented as almost inevitably damaged.

A major approach to understanding the impact of DVA on children's relational lives is the intergenerational cycle of violence, or the intergenerational transmission model of violence (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Kalmuss, 1984). Drawing on social learning theory, this model assumes that children exposed to DVA learn violence as a strategy for resolving relational challenges, and are at increased risk of repeating violent and abusive patterns of relating they observe, in subsequent relationships. The following quotes typify this construct of intergenerational transmission, suggesting that children who grow up with DVA

> "*are more likely to gravitate to an aggressive, deviant peer group. As adolescents and emerging adults, they select their romantic partners from these groups of peers who are deficient in terms of interpersonal skills … and experience conflictual romantic relationships ... Maltreatment may therefore be one pathway to involvement in conflictual, abusive romantic relationships.*"
>
> *Ehrensaft et al 2009, pp 741*

The language in this extract is particularly interesting. The article suggests young people 'gravitate' to 'deviant peers' – phrasing that assumes that this process occurs choicelessly, unreflexively, as they are thoughtlessly pulled towards 'deviant others', so that their subsequent romantic choices are rendered almost non-choices, through the apparent predictability of the pattern of intergenerational transmission. The young person is 'on a pathway', effectively doomed to repeat the abuse they have witnessed. This model of relationships represents young people as passive recipients of abuse, almost robotically repeating experiences they have seen in their families of origin. This literature lacks a gendered analysis, and frames the young person as caught in a behavioural arc, rather than as agents making sense of their experiences in a

social context.   The complexity of their relational worlds, and their meaning making within those relational worlds, is neglected in this research, and young people's understanding of their relationships (including 'romantic relationships') is barely considered. The gendered nature of social and relational trajectories is not theorised, an unfortunate oversight given that relationships in families experiencing DVA are shot through with gendered patterns of behaviour and relating (Johnson, 2006, 2011; Kimmel, 2002) and related patterns of power and domination (Anderson, 2013; Emery, 2011).

> The construct of intergenerational transmission of violence and victimhood is rarely critically examined, but frequently used to underpin domestic violence research and practice

Resilience literature on DVA is largely quantitative (neglecting an articulation of personal meaning and context) and emphasises resilience as a property of individuals (e.g. cognitive ability, social skills) or as facilitated / produced by adults (e.g. mothers, educators) (e.g. Martinez-Torteya et al. 2009; Gewirtz & Edleson 2007; Howell 2011) . A small number of qualitative studies have highlighted the importance of children's experiences (Mullender et al., 2003; Carolina Øverlien & Hydén, 2009; Carolina Øverlien, 2011a; Swanston et al., 2014a), but most literature neglects an in-depth engagement with young people's voices, producing 'child focused' literature in which children's accounts are almost entirely absent. Consequently, the complexity of relationships affected by DVA is under-theorised, and focused primarily on mother-child relationships (Katz, 2015), and how mothers' own coping mediates children's capacity to be resilient (Conde-Agudelo, Belizán, & Lammers, 2005; Flach et al., 2011; Whitaker, Orzol, & Kahn, 2006). Much of this literature is mother blaming (Callaghan, 2015) implying that if children experience negative impacts from DVA, it is largely a consequence of compromised mothering (damaged by violence and abuse histories) (e.g. Wekerle et al. 2009), or of mothers' abuse linked or pre-existing mental health or addiction related difficulties (e.g. Levendosky et al. 2006).

> Children's voice is largely absent in a literature that purports to be about them

One of the main concerns that emerged in our analysis of the literature on children's experiences of domestic violence was the way in which children's voice is largely absent. The literature on both the pathological impact of domestic violence, and on children's capacity for resilience is primarily quantitative, driven by questionnaires. Even where quantitative measures were being used, the vast majority were clinician or parent scored – so even in the limited space afforded by questionnaires, children had no particular representation in this literature. In a literature that purports to be about children who experience domestic

violence, children's voice is obscured and elided. This has a particular effect, as the child is rendered doubly passive, both by the framing of them in this literature as 'witnesses', 'exposed' to violence, and by their relative voicelessness. They are positioned as lacking in agency, lacking in voice, as 'vulnerable', and as lacking in the capacity to resist.

In contrast, the UNARS project emphasises the importance of children's lived experience of domestic violence and abuse, extending the small body of qualitative literature that is concerned with children's voice in this area (Bowyer, Swanston, & Vetere, 2013; Katz, 2015; Mullender et al., 2003; Carolina Øverlien, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Swanston et al., 2014a). The project specifically focused on how children are not merely the damaged witnesses of domestic violence, but how they are able to have a sense of agency, and build resistant and resilient sense of self in relation to the violence that they experience. Our interest is in exploring how children's capacity for agency and resistance functions in highly located and contextualised ways, and the implications of this for intervention into the lives of children who experience domestic violence.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review – Key Points

➢ A literature review was completed, focused on children, domestic violence, mental health, wellbeing and resilience. From this process, 177 articles were identified for inclusion in the review. Terms like 'exposed', 'exposure', witnessed' and 'witnessing' were frequently occurring in articles about children's experiences of domestic violence.

➢ Literature overwhelmingly focuses on the negative impacts of domestic violence on children such as mental health difficulties, an increased likelihood of experiencing educational difficulties, being bullied, challenges with social skills, increased risk of experiencing violence and abusive in their own romantic and intimate relationships, and vulnerability to exploitation and sexual abuse.

➢ Much domestic violence literature is mother blaming (Callaghan, 2015) implying that if children experience negative impacts from DVA, it is largely a consequence of compromised mothering (damaged by violence and abuse histories) (e.g. Wekerle et al. 2009), or of mothers' abuse linked or pre-existing mental health or addiction related difficulties (e.g. Levendosky et al. 2006).

➢ One of the main concerns that emerged in our analysis of the literature on children's experiences of domestic violence was the way in which children's voice is largely absent.

➢ In a literature that purports to be about children who experience domestic violence, children's voice is obscured and elided. They are positioned as lacking in agency, lacking in voice, as 'vulnerable', and as lacking in the capacity to resist.

➢ These terms function to produce a passive construction of children who experience domestic violence – terms like 'exposure' and 'witnessing' imply that they are simply watching the violence, that they are present, impacted, but have no agency in their experience of the violence. The term 'exposure' seems particularly problematic, since its connotations (exposure to disease, to toxins, etc) position children who experience domestic violence as vulnerable and passive, but also as contaminated, and potentially contaminating.

➢ Children are often absent from legal definitions of domestic violence, except as victims of dating violence. In law and policy children who 'witness' domestic violence tend not to have legal status as 'victim'. Children are therefore constructed in law and policy as an absence, as 'collateral damage' to adult domestic violence, and this has consequences for how they are understood and treated in criminal justice, social services and voluntary sector organisations.

Chapter 2: Description of the Project and Method

2 Method

2.1 Overview: An Action Research Approach

The UNARS project adopted an action research approach, organised in two phases. The first phase of the project involved establishing an understanding of children's experiences of domestic violence, and the resources available to them to support them in that experience. This was achieved through the use of individual interviews, photo elicitation, and creative methods, with children. In addition, we developed an understanding of the service landscape and policy context for children in each partner country, to understand both how children who experienced domestic violence were seen in each country, and what interventions and support were available to them. Our learning in this phase of the project informed the second phase, in which a group based therapeutic intervention was devised, implemented and evaluated. In addition, a training intervention for professionals and volunteers working with children who experience domestic violence was developed and implemented. Four countries participated in the UNARS projects – Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain. All partner countries participated in all phases of the project.

> 100+ interviews with children informed our therapeutic intervention programme and a training workshop package for professionals and stakeholders

2.2 Project Research Questions

The project addresses several major questions:

1. How do children experience domestic violence and what evidence is there in their accounts of capacity for agency, resistance and resilience?
2. How might we devise an intervention focused on agency, resistance and resilience for children who experience domestic violence, rather than the usual interventions focused on behaviour change and perceptions of damage? How do children experience such an intervention?
3. How do those who work with children affected by domestic violence see them, and what implications do these representations have for children's ability to cope with and recover from domestic violence? What does the policy and service landscape look like for these children?

4. How do practitioners who work with domestic violence experience training that enables them to consider children's agency, resistance and resilience

These questions were addressed in four workstreams, which are summarised in Table 1

2.3. Understanding children's experiences of domestic violence: Individual Interviews and Photo Elicitation

This element of the project was concerned with building a detailed understanding of how children experience domestic violence, and how they experience and make sense of their capacity for agency, resistance and resilience in their experiences of domestic violence. This was achieved through a combination of individual interviews, and photo elicitation activities, with children who have experienced domestic violence.

2.3.1 Participants

110 young people in total participated in this element of the project. 93 children took part in the individual interviews - 19 in Greece, 33 in Italy (13 in Puglia, 20 in Umbria / CoHor), 20 in Spain and 21 in the UK. 3 young adults were interviewed (2 in Puglia - whose siblings had been interviewed, and 1 in Greece), and who were living in the shelter / orphanage at the time the interviews were conducted (their data is not included in this report).   Table 2 provides a full list of participants' pseudonyms, age, gender. The children and young people ranged in age from 7 to 19, and included 42 boys and 51 girls. In Greece, the age range was 10 to 18 (plus one 20 year old participant), and there were 10 boys and 9 girls. In Italy, the age range was 7 to 18 (plus 2 older siblings, aged 23 and 24), and participants included 17 boys and 16 girls. In Spain, participants were aged 12-17, and included 6 boys and 14 girls. In the UK the age range was 8-18, and 9 participants were boys, 12 were girls.   25 young people, aged 9-17 participated in the photo elicitation processes (6 in the UK, 5 in Greece, 10 in Italy, and 4 in Spain). In Spain and Italy, these young participants were different from the ones who took part in the individual interviews. In the UK and Greece, they were drawn from the pool of individual interviewees.

There were 110 young participants in this phase of the project. 93 children and young people were interviewed in 4 different countries, and 25 children and young people took part in photo elicitation interviews.

2.3.2 Individual Interviews with Children

Semi-structured interviews were used in each of the four countries. The interview schedule was designed to be used flexibly, enabling some standardisation across the entire partnership, whilst allowing each country to adapt the schedule to their needs and context. Researchers used the interview schedule (see Appendix 2) as a guide, but enabled children to shape and influence the direction of the interview, and used prompts and follow up questions flexibly to facilitate elaboration of children's answers.

A range of additional materials were used to support interviewing in each partner country. In the UK and in Italy, creative methods like family drawings and household maps (Dumont, 2008; Gabb & Singh, 2015) were used to support children in articulating their experiences of domestic violence and of the ways that they coped with violence. In Greece, 4 of the children were shown a public information video about domestic violence, as focus for thinking about how children might be supported to cope with their experiences. These kinds of creative methods and prompt materials were used to facilitate the articulation of an experience that is often difficult to express, because it runs so strongly counter to dominant ideas about 'normal' childhood. In addition, many of the children we spoke to reported that they were generally reluctant to talk about their experiences, for fear of either judgement or unwanted intervention from others. Non-normative and stigmatised experiences are often difficult to articulate (Callaghan, Gambo, & Fellin, 2015), and using alternative methods to support the interviews proved a fruitful way of supporting children in expressing these complex, conflicted experiences, for which there was sometimes not an easily available language.

Researchers in all partner countries attended a training workshop in the UK, in October 2012, to develop the interview materials, to further build skills in conducting interviews with children, and to agree frameworks for the analysis of the interviews. This ensured a shared approach to the research, and enabled the development of a network that allowed researchers to support each other as the project unfolded.

2.3.3 Photo Elicitation: Understanding children's experiences of domestic violence

Children and young people were invited to participate in photo elicitation based activities (Harper, 2002). These activities offered a space for an alternative form of self-expression for children from the traditional interview, enabling children to explore information, feelings, and memories differently in the visual and creative form. This was important in enabling children's exploration of their use of space and place, and embodied experiences of emotion and of managing emotion, which are not easily accessible to 'voice', but that emerged as significant aspects of the way that children coped in situations of violence and in recovery from violence. Participants were asked to take photos that expressed something about how they coped with violence, and that made them feel stronger, more able or more empowered in recovery from violence. The children brought these photos into either and individual process (in the UK and Greece) or a group activity. In the activities, children ordered and selected their photos, adding words and stories to build a visual narrative account of their experiences. In Italy and Spain, participants engaged in an additional group based process, negotiating a group representation of their experiences, through a consensus building process.

> Photo elicitation offered a space for an alternative and creative form of self-expression from the traditional interview, enabling children to explore information, feelings, and memories non-verbally

2.3.4 Analysis of interviews and photo elicitation

The individual interviews and photo elicitation were analysed using Interpretive Interactionism (Denzin, 2001), a method that focuses on the construction of personal experience within social and political contexts. This method enables researchers to consider the interface of the personal and the social in participants' life stories, allowing us to explore how young people live with and cope with the often socially stigmatised experience of violence in the family. Interpretive Interactionism explores how children's sense of self is constituted in their narrative accounts, attending to the turning point experiences or 'epiphanic moments' that structure their experiences of domestic violence and of coping with violence. We analysed the transcripts through Denzin's steps of bracketing the phenomenon[2], construction and contextualization. Transcripts were coded independently by two members of the research team, and codes were then shared and discussed to facilitate refinement of the coding system. In the 'construction' phase, codes were classified, re-ordered and categories were produced to enable increasing interpretive abstraction. Finally,

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[2] In Denzin's method, bracketing is a different process from that in, say, phenomenology. Rather it involves close consideration and coding of the interview text.

the various transcripts were considered together to contextualise the accounts, exploring how meanings and experiences were constituted across different children's accounts.

2.4 Developing a Therapeutic Intervention: Evaluation methods

Children who participated in the therapeutic intervention (See Table 3 for summary of intervention participants) were invited to also take part in the evaluation of the intervention. Children who consented completed two routine outcomes measures – one tracking individual outcomes on a session by session basis (the Children's Outcome Rating Scale, CORS) and a session rating scale evaluating their experience of the group (the Children's Group Session Rating Scale, CGSRS) (Duncan et al., 2003). The Children's Outcome Rating Scale provides an accessible measure of children's experience of their levels of personal distress, interpersonal wellbeing, social role and overall wellbeing. The Children's Group Session Rating Scale provides a session by session measure of children's perception of the group process, focused on their experience of mutual respect and understanding, relevance of goals and topics, their sense of 'fit' to the group and to the practitioner, and their overall sense of the group alliance. Copies of these two measures can be found in Appendix 8.

At the end of the group, children were asked to participate in individual interviews, reflecting on their experience of the group intervention and of its impact in their life. The interviews were conducted by the independent researcher, to maintain a level of separation between the group process and the research. It had been our intention to only interview 3 children in each partner site, but a larger number of children explained that they strongly wanted to participate, and consequently a larger group of 21 children were interviewed. (See Table 4 for a summary of evaluation participants.) These interviews were analysed thematically (Braun & Clark, 2006).

2.5 Policy Analysis: Mapping the service and policy landscape

In this section of the project, our aim was to understand how policy frameworks and the practice landscape might represent young people in a manner that does not just focus on ideas of 'damage' or 'victimhood', but is also able to incorporate their capacity for agency, resistance and resilience. This will help with the envisioning of possible positive future selves for young people.

The policy analysis was guided by the following questions:

What is the current policy landscape with respect to DVA and CYP at regional and national level?

How do policies influence the way young people and professionals conceptualize domestic violence?

How can the policy context be changed to better enable agency, resistance and resilience amongst young people who experience domestic violence?

The following documents were selected for analysis:

Policy documents		
No.	Location	Document
1	Europe	The Istanbul Convention, The Council of Europe
2	UK	A Vision for Services for Children and Young People Affected by Domestic Violence (VSCYPADV - Local Government Association, The Association of Directors of Social Services, Women's Aid and CAFCASS, 2007)
3	UK	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
4	UK	The Survivors Handbook (TSH), Women's Aid
5	UK	Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTSC), Department for Children, Schools and Families.
6	UK	The Local Safeguarding Children's Board Northamptonshire's (LSCBN) 'policy, principles, and values' document
7	UK	The LSCBN DV policy
8	UK	Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Forum's Review of 2006-9, strategy for 2009-12, (NorDAF strategy)
9	UK	Annual Report 2010/2011, Nene Valley Christian Family Refuge (NVCFR-AR - 2011).
10	Greece	Law 3500/2005 (article 6) (known as the Law for domestic violence)
11	Greece	Committee of the Rights of the Child- Sixtieth Session (2012). *Consideration of reports submitted by State Parties under Article 44 of the Convention- Concluding observations: Greece.* Convention of the Rights of the Child, August.
12	Greece	The Greek Ombudsman (2012). *Parallel Report to the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child: Findings and Recommendations on the Implementations*

		of Children's Rights in Greece 2003-2011. The Greek Ombudsmen-Department of Children's Rights
13	Greece	ENOC-ENYA (2010). Draft Joint Recommendations for Preventing Violence against Children. *ENOC 14th Annual Convention,* Strasbourg, 7-9 October
14	Greece	Petroulaki K., Tsirigoti, A., Kouveli, E. And Sotiriou, P. (2013). *Escaping from a Violent Relationship: A Guide.* Athens: The European Network Against Violence
15	Greece	Tata-Arcel, L. (Ed.) (2011). *Violence against women: A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures.* Athens: General Secretariat for Gender Equality
16	Greece	The National Programme for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women 2009 -2013 (Issued by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality). (Παραπομπή: ιστοσελίδα)
17	Italy, Umbria	DCR No. 20 OF 9 OCTOBER 2000 'Law August 28, 97, n. 285 (promoting the rights and opportunities for children and adolescents)
18	Italy, Umbria	DGR. 405 of 8/03/2010 "Guidelines for the regional area of children and family responsibilities"
19	Italy, Umbria	DDL "Rules for gender policies and for a new civilization of relations between women and men."
20	Italy, Umbria	DGR. 1116 of 02/07/2007 "Adoption of guidelines for the promotion of the welfare of the younger generation. Action in the area of social prevention"
21	Italy, Umbria	Regional Law 16 February 2010 n. 13 "Discipline of services and interventions in favour of the family"
22	Italy, Il Meridiano	Istanbul Convention (2012)
23	Italy, Il Meridiano	Law 119/2013
24	Italy, Il Meridiano	Law n. 154 of 2001
25	Italy, Il Meridiano	National Law 149 of 2001 (foresees the measure of separation of the parent from the household, when their behavior causes major harm to the minor.)

26	Italy, Il Meridiano	National Law of n. 154 of 2001 (This law meets the need for *the protection of victims of family abuse .)*
27	Italy, Il Meridiano	Regional law n.14-2014 - *"Rules for gender prevention and contrast, support to victims, promotion of women freedom and self determination".*
28	Italy, Il Meridiano	Regional Bill of Law 119 of 2013 (introduces the aggravating circumstance of "witnessing violence")
29	Spain	Fundamental Law 1/1996, of 15th January, Legal Protection of Minors (article 148.1 20 Constitution)
30	Spain	Article 3 of the Children Rights Convention (1990)
31	Spain	Article 92.2 of the Civil Code
32	Spain	Childhood Observatory (1999) (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Equity)
33	Spain	Law 27/2003
34	Spain	Fundamental Law 1/2004, gender-based violence
35	Spain	Fundamental Law 11/2003, domestic violence
36	Spain	Victim Statute includes the European Directive 2012/29&UE
37	Spain	Law 7/2012, 23 November, Regional Government, comprehensive law against violence towards women in the Valencian Region
38	Spain	The Law 12/2008, 3 July Valencian Regional Government, Child and Adolescence Comprehensive Protection of the Valencian Region.

The policy documents were analysed thematically (Braun & Clark, 2006) to explore the way that the child was constituted as an object of policy concern, as well as the way that domestic violence was constituted. In particular we were concerned with the way that domestic violence was described and understood, and how the child appeared (or disappeared) in policy frameworks

2.6 Focus Groups: Mapping the Service Landscape

Focus groups were conducted in each country, with groups of professionals who work to support families affected by domestic violence, and with groups of carers and parents.   11 focus groups were conducted with 74 professionals. Table 5 shows the number and demographic detail of each professional focus group. The focus groups explored how professionals saw children who experienced domestic violence, their understanding of children's needs, the services available to children, and obstacles they saw to children receiving help. (See appendix 4 for a copy of the focus group interview schedule.)

9 focus groups were conducted with 39 parents and carers with legal / day to day parental responsibility for children who had experienced domestic violence. Table 6 summarises group membership and composition. The focus groups explored parents / caregivers experiences of parenting through and in the aftermath of domestic violence, their perception of their children's needs, and their understanding of how their children coped with the violence, and with recovery from violence. The focus group interview schedule can be found in Appendix 5.

Focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). This method involves a fine, line by line analysis of the focus group transcripts, breaking down data in units of meaning, and labelling these units of meaning with clear descriptive and interpretive codes. Researchers then explored patterns of similarity and difference in the textual data, exploring how these patterns help us to make sense of how participants understand and make meaning of children's experiences of violence, how they experience their interactions with children, and the experience of providing or securing support for children, and how children's experiences is socially represented.

2.7 Training Evaluation

Training was offered to a range of professionals and voluntary sector workers whose role involved support to families affected by domestic violence and abuse. The training was offered as 'core' training with several additional follow up workshops to facilitate the translation of the research into practice. Each participant was invited to complete a questionnaire evaluating the training (See Appendix 9). The questionnaires included quantitative and qualitative feedback questions, and focused on the quality of the training, as well as the value of the content of the training for their practice.

2.8 Ethics and Safeguarding

The research was designed with safeguarding of young people in mind. We only interviewed young people who had left situations of DVA, or who were assessed by professionals working with the families to be living in safe circumstances (Morris et al. 2012). The research teams worked closely with local organisations to ensure that appropriate children and young people were interviewed, and that support was in place in the event that interviews or the photo-voice project provoked emotional upset or distress. Where therapists facilitating the intervention programme, or researchers were concerned for the safety

and wellbeing of participants, they consulted with the referring professional or social worker. Before each interview was arranged an initial meeting was held with the child participant and their non-violent parent, to explain the aim of the project and participants' ethical rights and protections, including their right to omit questions, stop the interview, or withdraw their data. Participants were also assured of the voluntary nature of their participation, and it was explained to them that their participation or non-participation would not have implications to service provision or access. Following a cooling-off period of at least 24 hours, researchers contacted participants to see if they wanted to commit to taking part in the research. Informed consent was obtained from young people and their parents or legal guardians. Information about the project was provided in written and oral form before consent was sought, and particular attention was paid to the age of young people involved when presenting this information to ensure that developmentally appropriate materials were used. Information sheets were written in clear, understandable and jargon-free language. Although potential participants were identified as living away from violence, in order to further mitigate the risk of harm, unless they specifically asked to keep information sheets, they were not automatically given them to take home. Instead, potential participants were given time to read them on several occasions (during the initial meeting and prior to interview). They were also provided with an anonymised contact card, to telephone or email the researcher if they had any questions or wanted to withdraw from the research. Researchers' informed potential participants that the project focused on domestic violence and they were shown the kinds of questions they would be asked prior to agreeing to participation. Interviews with children were structured to take into account young people's developmental level, and the interviewers were flexible in their interactions, adapted phrasing, the form of questions, and style of interaction to the needs of the young person in each interview (Pascal & Bertram, 2009). In the focus groups, interviewers communicated to participants the necessary limitations to anonymity afforded by the focus group context.

To protect anonymity, all identifying information (names, place names, etc) were changed at the time of transcription, and where specific incidents or events were provided in enough detail to make participants or their families identifiable, these thick descriptions have been altered (without changing meaning) or omitted. All data will be securely stored, with digital data maintained in appropriately encrypted digital locations and protocols were established to enable partnerships to store data securely in a web storage space. To ensure the safety of researchers, a lone working procedure was introduced whereby the researcher would make the project administrator aware of the expected start, finish times and locations of initial meetings and interview appointments, checking in and out of appointments appropriately.

Chapter 2: Description of the Project and Method – Key Points

➢ Four countries participated in the UNARS projects – Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain. All partner countries participated in all phases of the project.

➢ The UNARS project adopted an action research approach, organised in phases. The first phase of the project involved establishing an understanding of children's experiences of domestic violence

➢ Children were invited to participate in 1:1 semi structured interviews and photo elicitation activities. There were 110 young participants involved in this phase of the project. 93 children and young people were interviewed in 4 different countries, and 25 children and young people took part in photo elicitation activities.

➢ Photo elicitation based activities were important in enabling children's exploration of their use of space and place, and embodied experiences of emotion and of managing emotion, which are not easily accessible to 'voice', but that emerged as significant aspects of the way that children coped in situations of violence and in recovery from violence.

➢ The individual interviews and photo elicitation were analysed using Interpretive Interactionism (Denzin, 2001), a method that focuses on the construction of personal experience within social and political contexts.

➢ As part of the knowledge building phase, we developed an understanding of the service landscape and policy context for children in each partner country (through policy analysis and focus groups with professionals and carers)

➢ Learning from the knowledge building phase informed the design and implementation of our manualised group-based therapeutic intervention for children, and training programme for professionals and stakeholders who work with children affected by domestic violence.

➢ The therapeutic intervention was evaluated through quantitative measures of the group process and subject wellbeing. At the end of the programme, interviews gave children an opportunity to reflect on their experience of the group intervention and of its impact in their life.

➢ The training programme was evaluated through questionnaires which focused on the quality of the training, as well as the value of the content of the training for their practice.

➢ The research was designed with safeguarding of young people in mind. We only interviewed young people who had left situations of DVA, or who were assessed by professionals working with the families to be living in safe circumstances (Morris et al. 2012). The research teams worked closely with local organisations to ensure that appropriate children and young people were interviewed, and that support was in place in the event that interviews or the photo-voice project provoked emotional upset or distress.

Chapter 3: The "Voices" of the Children: Experiences of agency, resistance and paradoxical resilience

3.1 Interviews

Our interviews with children were dynamic interactions, in which children were able to articulate their experiences of violence, and of coping with violence. Children described the impact of domestic violence on their lives, and were able to articulate a range of strategies they used to cope with these experiences. It was clear from children's interviews with us that they did not experience themselves as passive witnesses to domestic violence, rather they were active in making sense of and coping with the experience of violence in their lives. Children's ways of coping were not always obvious, and may seem, to a clinically trained gaze, to be problematic, even dysfunctional. However, we argue that, by seeing children's experiences and understanding their responses to domestic violence in their context, it is possible to make sense of children's lived and contextualised capacity for resilience and resistance within families affected by domestic violence. Children's experiences of woundedness and coping intertwine, and responses that may appear to an external professional to be 'pathological' or problematic often have features of a kind of *paradoxical resilience.*

> By seeing children's experiences and understanding their responses to domestic violence in context, it is possible to make sense of children's lived and contextualised capacity for resilience and resistance within families affected by domestic violence

3.1.1 Managing Disclosure

Children were active in managing their disclosure of domestic violence. They often avoided labelling violence *as violence*, preferring to use euphemisms to refer indirectly to domestic violence. They talked about the dangers of speaking out, with many children describing disclosure of violence at home as being risky – leaving them open to bullying at school, leaving them and their families vulnerable to criticism and judgement, and exposing themselves and their families to what they often saw as the risk of professional and service involvement. Many felt that they should keep quiet about their experiences, and that disclosure needed to be 'managed'. For example:

Lucy (UK): I'd always hesitate of what I would say...even if I said "Hello", I'd always think before like, is he just going to shut me out? Is he going to respond in a nice way, or be angry or anything like that? I'd always think ahead of what I was saying

Lucy describes here how she is always regulating her speech, monitoring the perpetrator's mood, and tailoring her speech to it. She is constantly anticipating him, planning how she should present herself to him.

Children are also cautious in their disclosures to other children – reluctant to say too much, in case other children pass information about them on:

> Children were active in managing their disclosure of domestic violence. They often referred to violence indirectly using euphemisms, and they reflected on the dangers of speaking out

Anna: So from that day on she knows, my friend ((eeh)) and I talk to her but she wouldn't say anything to anyone (Anna, Greece)

Anna reflects a clear sense here that talking to friends is a potentially risky thing, and that there is a need to be careful about who she discloses the violence too. She is guarded, and only discloses to those she is certain she can trust not to break her confidence.

Int: Do you speak with anybody about what it happens at home? With a friend?
Giacomo (Italy): No, nobody cares.
Int: Do you have friends?
Giacomo: Friends?
Int: Yes.
Giacomo: I do, but I don't want to call them.

Giacomo reflects a slightly different position from Anna's – that he does not wish to disclose because on the one hand, nobody is interested in what is happening to him, and on the other there is no-one he wishes to tell. For both Anna and Giacomo, this sense of caution around disclosure seems to be related to a perception of family secrets that need to be guarded.

Children reported that it was easier to disclose to the other children who had experienced similar things.

Angelo (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): "I do not remember, maybe I was talking with my classmate who had the same situation. I was talking with him because sometimes we were at his house or we were at my house and we were talking about these things.

However, generally children reported a sense of isolation that others would not understand, had not experienced family life like theirs, and seemed to reflect a concern experiencing domestic violence is socially stigmatised. This sense of domestic violence as unspeakable and stigmatised is partly produced in families:

> Int: So if you went to your best friend and you talked to her about the things that had happened to you at home, in the past, what would that feel like for you?
>
> Kate (UK): A bit OK? ((sounds unsure))
>
> Int: A bit OK.
>
> Kate: Yep.
>
> Int: OK. What does a bit OK mean?
>
> Kate: Like it's fine sometimes, but it's not OK.
>
> Int: Why? Why would it not be OK?
>
> Kate: 'Cause mum says don't tell that to them
>
> Int: Your mum says don't, don't tell…
>
> Kate: don't tell them that.
>
> Int: Don't tell them that. Does she tell you why you shouldn't?
>
> Kate: No.

> **Children were concerned about not being believed or taken seriously. Many reported feeling isolated and unable to share their experiences of violence**

Although Kate's sense is that her best friend would be receptive to disclosures about her experience, her mother's silencing of Kate prevents her from doing so. However, children were reluctant to share their experiences, because they were concerned that they would not be taken seriously – particularly because they were children.

> Edara (Italy, Puglia) I felt helpless, passive and fragile
>
> Int: What made you feel that way?
>
> E: my age
>
> Int: Why?
>
> E: it is a constraint. No one listens to you if you're a little girl "

> I told my aunt but she wouldn´t believe me, to whom she was going to believe to her son or to me? (Maria, Spain)

> Lydia, Greece: Would they have listened to me? I'm a child.

Amaya, Spain: "I felt, I felt alone, I have always felt alone, I always felt alone even by being here I felt alone"

This concern about not being taken seriously, not being heard, not being believed was a significant one for children, who felt that it was generally safer to keep quiet about their experiences than to disclose. However, at the same time, children also felt that there were dangers involved in **not being heard**. Many reported feeling isolated, unable to share their experiences. For example, Natalia (Greece) says:

Natalia: Basically yes, … 'cause I don't talk about it with anyone else. To whom can I say these things?

Natalia expresses a common perception that other people would not understand the experiences she has had of violence at home, and that it is therefore better not to speak out. This produces a clear sense of isolation *('To whom can I say these things?').* Others suggested that professionals and others with the power to help them simply did not listen to their stories, focusing instead on what adults had to say about the experiences they had.

Some children did not only choose who to tell and who not to tell, but were also active in covering up what was happening at home. When asked how she responded to a very violent incident at home, Anna (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) responded

I went to school as if nothing happened.

Children also tailored their accounts to their audience. For instance, Emily (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) reports how she varies her behavior and the way she talks, depending on who she is with:

Emily: if I had the same behavior that I have with the professionals (ehm), I think …It's different, with the professionals I behave in a way, with my mother in another. I consider my mother as if she was my age, as if she were a girl. Sometimes when we talk she gets to my level.

Some children expressed a sense of distrust in simply being able to tell their story, instead, preferring to stick to an 'authorised' version of what happened to them. Children 'manage' what they will and will not disclose to others. This can be done in subtle and less subtle ways.

Amy (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): united. That is, (.) We are all united. Even if we fight, we want always good, but … (ahem) (smiles) nothing.
Int: the story of your family?

41
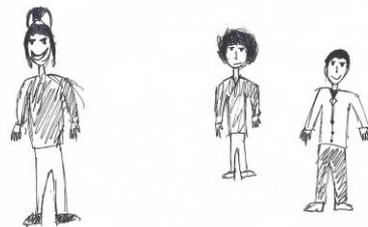
Amy: (ehm) (.) In what sense?

When Amy is first asked to tell the story of the family, she begins with a rather idealized version of family life that seems to peter out, losing the thread. When the interviewer asks a little more about the family story, Amy falters, and begins to ask for clarity on the question. The family story is far from straightforward for children to tell, and they often seem to seek clarity on which *version* of the family story the interviewer is looking for. A similar hesitation characterizes Beth's account:

Int: And if you had to explain the story of your family, so your story, what would you say to me?

Beth: ((umm)) ((…))

Int: So what would the story of your family be?

Beth: ((.)) now, now or?

Int: Well what you've experienced with your family in the past and now, yeah

Beth, who is very articulate throughout the interview, hesitates in telling the family story. She seems to double check which story the interviewer wants to hear, as if very aware of the importance of telling the right story. Again, here it seems clear that the children have learned to manage their speech, to decide what to disclose, when and to whom, and that they are very aware of their audience.

Alison expresses a very firm view of the importance of telling the 'right' version of events:

Alison: if you wanna know a (my) story, fuck off and read my file.

Int: Read your file?...Why? How?

Alison: 'cause it's all written down((.)) and that's one story and people can read the same story..And if it's written down, you can't get anything wrong.

'The file' represents the production of a version of family history that is authorised and stable. Variability in the family story is seen as necessarily untrustworthy, and Alison is clear that the advantage of producing a single stable written version is that it removes the risk of 'getting anything wrong'. In a family characterised by secrets, and frequent court appearances, Alison has learned that if you have to speak about your family, it is best to stick with the authorised version of events, and that 'getting things wrong' is dangerous to her and to her family. She has learned to manage her speech very carefully, and seems to have a sense of speaking about her family and her experiences of violence is *risky.*

The strength of her concern about getting the version of events 'right' is understandable in high conflict families, where there is much contestation of the truth. In addition to the risk of social censure that attends

talking about domestic violence, children have a clear understanding that speaking out can draw unwanted attention to the family, or to themselves.

> *Paul (UK): Yeah, cause we stopped talking to ((social worker)) because she told our dad stuff we'd said. And he got very mad.*
>
> *Int: why is it important to you to keep things private?*
>
> *George: Well, cause then other people won't know and they won't get angry about things that you said about them.*

They have learned to be careful about what they say – even to professionals – because there is always a risk that when they speak honestly about their experiences that might be reported back in ways that they have no control over. In this case, the social worker's disclosure of their concerns about their father had severe consequences for the two boys.

> In order to maintain a sense of control over their own and their families lives, children were often careful about speaking – perceiving verbal expression to be risky

Children are not only concerned about speaking out to professionals – they also express worries and an awareness of who they can and cannot trust in their families, and amongst their friends:

> *Emma (UK): Yeah, and they just found out about it because of, one of, the friend that I told wasn't the friend that I normally talked to about that kind of thing and I thought I could still trust her anyway, so I don't have nothing to do with her any more now but, I talked to her about it and then she started telling other people and then that's how it got round the school kids and I had a lot of problems because of that. They was like, "Haha, your stepdad hates you," ((mock nasty tone)) and all this stuff*

Emma's decision to disclose to the 'wrong' friend has horrible consequences for her, resulting in continuous bullying at school. Rachel describes similar concerns regarding her extended family, who informed her father where she and her mother had fled to, when they sought refuge:

> *Rachel (UK): We do see them, we just haven't like ((umm)) seen them for a while and they were the ones who ((erm)), they sort of like told my dad that we had moved and stuff so we couldn't really rely on them ((.)) [I: Right, okay] So they knew and they told my dad that we had left…. Yeah, we used to see them quite a lot, we used to tell them quite a lot of things but since then we haven't really spoken to them.*

She and Emma have both learned that disclosing is a high risk action, and feel that they have to be careful about who they trust. They both suggest that some people are simply unreliable and are unable to you are your secrets. This is particularly important when keeping secrets is one of the things that help you keep safe.

Emma and Rachel have both learned to be cautious in their relationships, and to only trust those who have proved themselves to be trustworthy.

At the same time, children do recognize the value of expressing themselves and working through their experiences.

> *George: Sometimes you don't want to say stuff but you need to.*
>
> *Int: Does it help to talk or… ?*
>
> *George: It helps because then… you can leave the past behind and you don't get in trouble and stuff.*
>
> *Int: Do you want to leave the past behind?*
>
> *George: Yeah. (…)*
>
> *Int: Why?*
>
> *George: Because you can start fresh*

Having someone to talk to, finding a way to 'say stuff' that you do not want to, but need to, is portrayed by a lot of young participants as a route to healing and recovery. However, given their experiences of the risks of speaking out, this is necessarily a complex and fraught process for children.

Summary

Children's management of what they will and will not say, and to whom they will speak, is a powerful coping strategy, that enables them to establish a sense of being in control of their own life stories. It enables them to feel they can protect themselves and their families, by making conscious choices about who to tell, how and when they tell. However, this strategy also presents specific problems for professionals who might wish to support the child and the family who have experienced domestic violence. The conscious management of disclosure means that the child's stories may be over-rehearsed, partial or highly crafted to protect the family, to protect themselves, or to avoid unwanted service intervention. Children have learned to tell the stories that adults want to hear, and the job of professionals becomes supporting children in finding different – possibly non-verbal – ways to tell their own stories.

3.1.2 Redefining Relationships

The children we interviewed were very active in their management of their relational worlds. They reflected on explicit strategies for keeping some people close, and others distant. The construct of the child as 'witness to violence' that is predominant in academic literature, social care, and criminal justice positions the child as passive recipient of family relationships. This is in keeping with a more general discourse of childhood and parenting, that views relationships as something that is *done* to children (the idea that parents parent, while children receive parenting). In contrast, the children we interviewed demonstrated high levels of agency in their relationships - in the ways that they forged, maintained and managed complex, and often highly conflictual family relationships.

> The children we interviewed demonstrated high levels of agency in their relationships - in the ways that they forged, maintained and managed complex and often highly conflictual family relationships

Who is family?

Children made quite strong decisions for themselves about who they did and did not include in their definition of family. Drawing boundary lines around who was and was not family enabled them to create quite a clear sense of who they allowed close and who they did not.

> Rachel (UK): *I've only put people on my picture (of my family) who like I know I can rely on and I talk to and I have to go to and stuff like that. Like people who have always been there for me*

Many of the children we interviewed explicitly framed the perpetrating adult (most typically their father, or a stepfather) as someone they were not close to, and even as someone who they did not regard as part of their family. This was also notable in children's drawings of their family, which largely excluded their fathers. This extract from an interview with Josh (UK) illustrates this well:
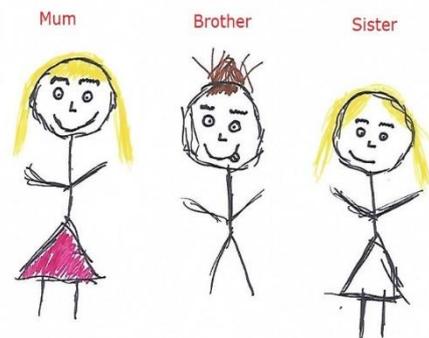
> Josh: *No I don't call him "dad"*
>
> Int: *Did you ever call him "dad"?*
>
> Josh: *Erm not really, I just called him Phil, even at home when I still lived with him*
>
> Int: *Why was that?*

Josh: Because I don't want my mind to think he's my dad, 'cause he's not. I don't want a dad that hits me.

Josh uses naming and labelling as a way of recreating his family, by defining in language who does, and does not 'count' as family to him. He explicitly excludes his father from his definition of family, by refusing to label him as 'dad'. Similarly, Lally (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) suggests she has 'no family' as a consequence of violence and its aftermath:

Int: I wanted to ask you to describe your point of view, how is your family ...

Lally (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): Do I have to describe my father and my mother? ...

Int: well, perhaps beyond how they are as individuals... how would you describe your family?

Lally: (silence) ... mmmm ..... I do not have a family.

Int: ... has it always been that way or was there a time when you felt like a family?

Lally: Always ... until last year ...

The violence, and the disruption it produced, has shattered Lally's sense of family and belonging, such that she seems almost confused by the very concept of 'her family'.

> Children made strong decisions for themselves about who they did and did not include in their definition of family

Yve (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) frames her family a little differently, creating positive boundaries around who she wants to *include* in her family, rather than who she wants to exclude:

Int: How would you describe your family? If you were to tell your story, what story would you tell me?

Yve: It's me and mom. It's our perfect family. We don't need no other.

She has re-defined her sense of who and want family is, in a manner that is protective for her and for her mother (who she worries may find another man who will hurt them both). As long as it is just her and her mother, she knows that her family is safe. She excludes from her sense of family her father and stepfather, who through their violence and other behaviour had, in her mind, excluded themselves and given up any right to be part of *her* family. Anna (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) chooses the members of her nuclear family who she includes in her understanding of family.

Anna: I do not have brothers, I live alone with my mother... We are emancipated women! Almost two sisters. I tell her everything... And she tells me everything.

Anna does not only build her sense of family on her choice of who is and is not included in it, she also builds a sense of a new identity for her and her mother – they are 'emancipated women'. She uses her re-definition of family as a beginning point to forge new senses of self.

Maria (Greece) took an even stronger position, suggesting that she was unwilling to be 'close' to anyone in her family, because of her sense that she had been abandoned and mistreated by all of them.

> *Maria: with my dad, my mum, and my brother. I don't want anything with anybody. Neither with my grandmother, but especially with them nothing.*

Children also suggested that they would include or exclude family members based on their perception of who was trustworthy. They expanded their definition to include friends who they relied on, but also narrowed their definition to exclude those who were difficult, where there was too much conflict, or where they felt they had been let down by a family member. For instance, Natalia (Greece) sees her grandmother, who is very critical of her mother, as responsible for a lot of the family's trouble. She says:

> Children often set clear boundaries around those they wished to be close to, and those they did not - sometimes redefining 'family' to include extrafamilial relationships

> *Natalia: To me ((eeh)). I used to listen to her, but now I don't even listen, I leave and she speaks to herself. Because I'm tired of listening to her anymore ((almost whispering while crying))*

Here, Natalia is making clear decisions around who she will and will not relate to, and these decisions enable her to feel more in control of family life. While she is clearly still upset by the disharmony in her father, refusing to listen enables her to isolate her grandmother – even if this is only in her mind – so that she views her grandmother as 'speaking to herself'.

Family is also framed as a source of support, and extending the sense of family beyond the immediate nuclear structure can enable children to include supportive others within their sense of their family.

> *Int: Was something that makes you feel better?*

> *Giulia (Italy): Yes, my niece… my niece makes me feel loved, I just need a embrace from her, or a smile.*

When asked to draw her family, Jess (UK) represents perceived familial divisions graphically in her drawing, clearly delineating those who she feels are important to her, and those who are 'also there'. In this way she sets her own clear definition of her sense of family, setting clear boundaries around who she wishes to be close to, and who she does not. She further redefines 'family' by including a friend in her drawing:
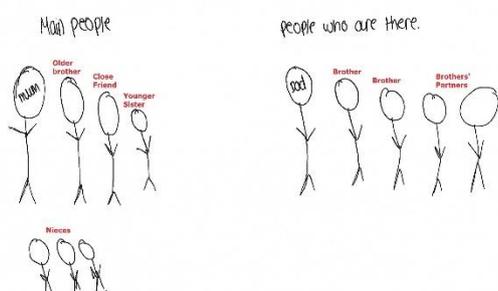
Jess: She's not even family, but I class her as family, I class her as my sister because she's always there for me, she's been there through everything, but them ('People who are there') they just don't bother.

This reframing of who is and is not family is perhaps most powerfully illustrated by Lotty (UK) who had moved several times, as her family evaded her father, who kept tracking them down:

Int: and who do you live with now Lotty?

Lotty: My mum and my big sister and my dog ((.)) and my baby sisters

Int: Oh you've got baby sisters too? ((sounds surprised))

Lotty: Yeah, ((smiles)) Shona and Shelley

Int: and how old are they?

Lotty: Shona's four, Shelley's seven

Int: and then your older sister, how old is she?

Lotty: is seventeen ((.)) April, she's gonna be eighteen

Int: Right, so you're in the middle then?

Lotty: Yep! ((.)) Shona's the last one

Int: What's it like to be the big sister of two younger sisters?

Lotty: Really fun ((laughs)) 'cause I get to tell them off ((laughs))

Post interview it has become apparent that the two younger 'sisters' that Lotty talks about are children who lived in the same refuge that Lotty also previously lived in. Lotty refers to her 'sisters' frequently throughout the interview, and her story about having two younger sisters is, in a biological sense, completely fictitious, and parts of her story in relation to her 'sisters' are improbable. However, by including these 'two sisters' Lotty is making a choice to reconstruct and define her family to include people she built close relationships with whilst living in refuge. It's also very probable that these relationships are maintained after living in refuge and that the children continue to see each other due to the close proximity of Lotty's house to the refuge.

This kind re-framing is not limited to those who others might judge as even possible sources of support. For instance, Alison, who was the sole survivor of a set of triplets, says:

> *Alison: For me, if I was closest, I'd be closest to my two dead sisters. People say this is weird and all that, but I can see them, I can feel their presence. At night, I'll just lay there and I'll be having a conversation, and they'll (family) be like "who the hell is she talking to?" ...I suppose I'm closest to them (sisters) because I can tell them a secret and they'd keep it a secret because they couldn't go and say it to no-one else.*

Alison also sees the fact of her survival as important – the fact that she survived, while her sisters did not marks her out as special. She says:

> *Alison: I'm protecting my family by being alive, if I wasn't here, I couldn't do nothing could I?*

Her relationship with her dead sisters enables herself to position herself in a way that is quite powerful – as a survivor, and by virtue of her survival, as a protector. The 'dead sisters' also function as a kind of fantasy support network, of people she can relate to but who will never betray her. Alison is doing very complex relational work here. While her statements may seem extreme, even a little grandiose, there is a clear intertwining of these positions that we, as observing adults, might see as 'damaged' or 'strange', with an active construction of a resistant self-identity, as a survivor, as a coper.

Children's ability to manage family and other relationships, and to re-define relational networks also enables them to re-shape their connections with their family in recovery from violence and abuse.

> *Int: How would you describe your family? If you were to tell me your story, what story would you tell me?*

> *Abraham (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): We are alone against everyone. But it doesn't scare us, we are ready ... we spent years so ugly, now I'm ready for anything.*

He positions his family in a kind of 'us against the world' way, unified in the face of challenge and adversity. He draws strength from this positioning, describing himself as part of a family of survivors, who are able to cope together after years of adversity.

Given the high conflict nature of family life for children who experience domestic violence, they demonstrate remarkable resilience in their capacity to re-read, re-define and re-shape their sense of what family is, and
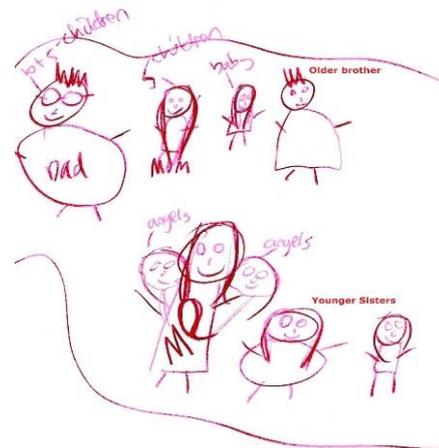
their relationship to that family. They build on their sense of who and what is trustworthy, to rebuild supportive networks that enable them to move forward in recovery from violence. They draw flexibly on the notion of family to include those who they regard as supportive and exclude those who they do not. This is a potent and highly agentic strategy that enables them to keep themselves safe, and to create spaces for themselves to enjoy a positive sense of family, even in families where levels of difficulty and conflict are high.

Caring for others – problematic parentification or adaptive coping?

In therapeutic literature, it is often noted that children in high conflict families exhibit what is termed 'parentified' forms of relating – relating to parents, siblings and others in a manner that is regarded as too adult, and too focused on the child taking on a parental role. The children in our interviews certainly frequently reported their involvement in various forms of care-giving, across a range of relationships. For some children, the caregiving role is complicated. For example, Edara (Italy) reflecting on the complexity of her relationship with her mother, who she wants to care for, does feel it is important for her to keep some perspective on what care she can and cannot provide for her mother:

> *Maybe I take too much responsibility because I know the kind of affection that she is looking for is not mine, she needs to be loved by a man*

And

> *I try to explain her that she is not alone, that I'm on her side, I'm getting sick and tired too. We have to fight together, but if she is I still cannot do anything ... I am forced to play the part of the adult even if I am a teenager. I am made to do everything by myself*

And she notes too that caring for others in the family can be burdensome:

> *Int: It's hard living with your sister!*

> *Edara: It is! I have to clear up mess made by her, I always tidy up bedroom... I don't know ... sometimes she looks stupid*

In therapeutic literature, it is often noted that children in high conflict families exhibit what is termed 'parentified' forms of relating – relating to parents, siblings and others in a manner that is regarded as prematurely adult. But is this an adequate interpretation of the caring behaviour of children in situations of domestic violence?

Luca (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) similarly seems to see caring as something he *must* do, rather than chooses to do:

> Luca: "With my brothers I feel compelled to protect them because they are small they no longer have a male figure ... except the grandfather ... I feel obliged to help them in everything, from the study to small difficulties every day... Sometimes I and my brothers were hiding in the room. To stop them from getting scared too, I pretended to play, to play hide and seek… I would try to comfort my brothers

However, in addition to the sense of caring as an obligation, Luca also identifies another function in his caregiving – both for himself and for his brothers. He describes the ways that he was able to help his brothers find a safe space within which they could maintain some semblance of 'normal childhood'. He describes himself as providing comfort to his brother, of playing with them to stop them from feeling scared. While on the one hand he felt that caring was *required of him*, this caring role also offers him various positives too: he is able to be the Big Brother, able to care and feel competent in his protection of his brothers (a powerful self-positioning) and he is also able to find space to play, even as the conflict goes on. This sense of the possibility to build a positive identity in the caring role is clear in the accounts of many of the children we interviewed:

> Although children reflected on their caring role in complex ways, they often positioned their role as important for the protection and wellbeing of the family which in turn provided them with a sense of empowerment and value

> Rachel*: my brother was crying, I took my brother into the bathroom while my mum went into the bedroom, my mum got herself cleaned up and I put my brother in the shower um and like sorted it out

> Aldo (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): I feel I have to protect my brother because he is younger than me and he does not have a paternal figure... I feel I have to help him with homeworks or when he quarrels with somone... I like to go to speak with his teachers with my mom

> Abraham (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): (I'm closest to) my mother and my sister 'cause I'm the man of the house, I have to defend them. Maybe I'm jealous... I'm from South Italy and people from South Italy are very jealous.. I'm responsible for them.

> Maria, Umbria / CoHor, Italy: since the situation at home has changed, I feel more relaxed and definitely stronger than before. I wanted to be strong for my mother and my brother. My mother then needed all my support ...

The quotes above illustrate a general pattern in our interviews that suggest that caring gives children a considerable sense of validation, empowerment and competence. Understood from the point of view of the professional, this kind of caregiving is problematic, representing children taking on premature adult roles. However, this kind of interpretation is firmly located in normative understandings of childhood; it is an adultist interpretation, which does not take into sufficient account how children understand the experience of caring themselves. We would not want to suggest that the sense of power experienced in being a carer does not come at some cost. Children secure a sense of personal power by positioning themselves as carers, but this caring role also often means that their own emotional needs become obscured and can be overlooked (Callaghan, Alexander, Fellin, & Sixsmith, 2016). Children are simultaneously and paradoxically positioned as important in managing everyone else's distress and emotional needs, and as unimportant in relation to their own needs. However, we argue that recognising the importance of being a carer in the eyes of the child is key to successful intervention with children who experience domestic violence. It is a building block on which their sense of themselves rests. Most therapeutic intervention focuses on restoring 'ordinary' childhood relating in the aftermath, placing children back in their role as child, not carer. However, this infantilisation fails to respect the complexity and locatedness of children's coping. As Emma (UK) notes:

> "if I tell my brothers off, for example, if they do something that she don't like and I wouldn't like, she tells me, "Stop trying to be their mum." and I'm thinking, well I had to be their mum, before"

Here Emma articulates very clearly the importance of recognising and respecting how children have coped, before attempting to intervene in the family. It is important to note that these apparently 'premature' adult roles cannot simply be put back in a box. By relying on an unrealistic and normative notion of childhood and family, we risk imposing that on children who have long had to play roles in their family that routinely exceed our idealised notions of 'proper childhood'. As Emma so articulately notes, she had to take on an adult role and can't just stop doing so.

Friends

Children who experience domestic violence are often described in domestic violence literature as having poor social skills (Wood & Sommers, 2011) and as having difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy friendships and relationships (Holmes, 2013; Margolin, 2005; Siegel, 2013). In common with other areas of domestic violence research, these kinds of studies tend to reduce children's relationships to a set of 'social skills' that can be measured and predicted.

Children's relational experiences and relational coping are subtle and complex when living with domestic violence and its aftermath

Detailed interviews with children suggest that this is only a partial story of children's experiences, and that

children's relational experiences and relational coping are subtle and complex when living with domestic violence and its aftermath.

Friendship and social support

The experience of domestic violence can be very isolating for children, and it is perhaps unsurprising that friendship emerged as an important source of support for children, challenging the sense of being different that so many children feel:

> *Lizzy (UK): Because ((.)) I didn't really go school very much because my mum was depressed because of it [I: Right], I didn't really have any friends except my next door neighbour ((.)) and the only time, ((voices breaks)) sorry ((cries))*

It was important to have friends who they felt really understood what they were going through. The children argue that a good friend is one who understands how you feel, understands what you have experienced. This is sometimes made easier by shared experience.

> *Int: is there someone you can talk about what happens or has happened?*
> *Naomi (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): my friends, always! Some of these friends also have these problems.*
> *Int: what do you say to them and what they tell you?*
> *Naomi: they say that I don't have to worry. (...) (Eh) (...) That is reassuring.*
>
>
> *Harry: Because I can trust him to talk about it. He would understand because his mum and dad are divorced but they still see each other. So he knows how it feels.*

This sense of shared experience facilitates a sense of trust in the children that they will be understood. This is particularly important given how strongly children feel that they are different from others, set apart by the violence. Shared experiences challenge their sense of isolation.

> *Int: And does he know about what's happened to you?*
> *Josh: Yeah.*
> *Int: He does?*
> *Josh: Yeah, cause I can tell him, cause he doesn't tell anyone.*
> *Int: OK. ((...)) And is it important that he doesn't tell anyone?*
> *Josh: Yeah. And he wouldn't anyway, cause he's my best friend.*

Josh's friend Martin has been a steady, stable friend for several years. He has felt safe in disclosing his family experiences to his friend, and knows that he is trustworthy. This gives him an important source of social support.

Emily (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) recognises the importance of broader social support in recovery from domestic violence:

> Int: How do you face this kind of situation? Although now there aren't anymore, how would you behave?

> Emily: if it happened again I would have reference points to contact. I know there's a community.

Friends offered a huge range of potential support for children. For instance, Christina (Greece) reflects on the substantial practical support she received from her friends.

> They [friends] had put there some books and some notebooks and they had put it there to, because I wasn't going to school at that time, and they would go and teach me letters and stuff like that. And they would help me to learn how to read.

Her friends coordinated support, when her life was at its most disruptive, to help her not fall too far behind in school. However, friendship is also understood as reciprocal, and children recognise that they do not just receive support, but are also able to give support.

> **Friends are a significant source of potential support for children**

> Petros (Greece): [when I'm having a general conversation with a friend who has some problem ((.)) I have this thing? I make him to ((eeeh)) I help him. I'm telling him some things, I give him other points of view, he understands… He cheers up, and in five minutes he has forgotten about everything. And I am glad that I am helping him.

This sense of being a good support to friends is also something that contributes to their positive sense of self.

Making and being friends

Maintaining and making friends seems a very important aspect of being well, coping and having a sense of agency for many children. Many saw their friends as an important source of support and continuity, turning to them in times of need. These children saw their friends as confidants, reliable individuals, who cared for them. Friendships were valued as a potential source of support, security and continuity:

> Josh (UK): And the other thing that looked after me, it wasn't in the house, it was at school it was my best friend Martin. … He always kept me safe.

Josh had remained friends with Martin throughout the violence, and beyond, and he valued this friendship very highly, even planning his next school transition to ensure that they could remain together.

Isabel (UK): 'cause I know I'm with my friend and I know she always makes me happy

Natalia (Greece): ((…)) ((Ah)), I think friends (would help). True ones. Even one of them or two, I don't know, but with this particular friend we are, now, distant and I don't think I have anyone else to talk to and I had sort of talked to her about this matter. Not that I talked to her about it in this way, but a little bit, around the bush like that and again I was crying. ((Eeh)) That's it.

As in other relationships, friendships were managed through complex practices of distancing and keeping close. For instance Edara (Italy Puglia) says:

I don't have much social life apart from my boyfriend...I'm fine, I chose to live in this way because of last year, when I lived a hard time, so I preferred to distance some people... I wanted to be on my own

She finds it easier to maintain a sense of distance in relationships, keeping people at arm's length to protect herself, and to provide herself with the space to recover. Even in good relationships, that were relatively unproblematic, children reported that they would be very careful in managing what they did and did not tell their friends, and were quite strategic in their behavior with friends. Having dealt

> For many children recovering from domestic violence, friendships were a complex terrain to navigate

with complex and difficult relationships at home, they approach their friendships in much the same way – as potentially volatile, as liable to go wrong.

For children fleeing domestic violence, particularly moving away from their home, friends were both a source of potential loss, and a source of support. Many children noted that one of the worst losses when they had to leave home suddenly was the loss of their friends, and they were particularly troubled that often, they did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to their friends.

Ali (UK): ((said whilst rolling colouring pencils across the table)) We had to pack all of our stuff and wait for our Aunt to come and then we had to move out. So we didn't get to say bye to any of our friends or go to school and collect our stuff.

Harry (UK): Because ((...)) you know when people move, they don't see their friends again. So I want to stick with my friends. Because they'll be hard to find again and then I might move again to find new ones.

Harry here articulates the impact of losing friends, and of not being able to see old friends after moving. Given the disruption of moving away from a violent home, changes in school, and movements to shelter and from shelter to settled housing, children like Harry experience a string of losses, often of the very people

who make them feel supported and contained outside the home. Harry also notes that making new friends can be difficult.

Forming new friendships after fleeing domestic violence can be a multi-layered experience. Rachel is more cautious in her approach to friendship. For many children recovering from domestic violence, friendships were a complex terrain to navigate:

> *Rachel (UK): ((umm)) We've been to town together quite a few times, we haven't got to the point of sleepovers and stuff yet ((.)) ((err)) I don't know really ((...)) we, we're always together at school ((gestures group or cluster with her hands)), we never like split up or anything, we're always together.*
>
> *Int: Is it like a group of you together?*
>
> *Rachel: Yeah ((smiles).*
>
> *Int: Oh right, so you're in a gang ((laughs))?*
>
> *Rachel: Yeah ((laughs)) ((umm)) ((laughs)) ((.)) Yeah, it started off with just me and one friend what I made on my first day and basically we just got like more friends and they joined and, and stuff like that ((said smiling)).*

Here, Rachel demonstrates that she is very socially aware, and that she has a sense of a proper progression to friendships, that she conceptualises in stages (she hasn't reached the 'sleepover stage' yet). That 'yet' suggests that she can see a future for the friendship, and that she expects it to develop sooner. She is cautious, but optimistic about her friendships. She goes on to say

> *They know that I've, where I've come from and stuff like that, and that I've moved but they don't know like the full details of why and stuff like that. .... ((erm)) It's nice, obviously they haven't been through like the same thing as me but somehow they like GET how I'm feeling and I don't know why but it's nice because it's good to know that you've got like some people to trust and stuff like that and that you can go to when you're upset.*

As with the 'stages of friendship', Rachel is also managing disclosure within the friendship, testing the strength of her friends' trustworthiness through gradual practices of telling, and not telling. They know she's been uprooted, but they don't know why. She finds the sense of someone to talk to very supportive, and notes that, even if they have not experienced what she has, her friends are able to listen and understand, and that sense of having her feelings heard and understood is important to her.

At times, children did falter in their reading of relational contexts, and found it difficult to interpret and maintain friendships:

> *Jess (UK): I was living with her in May, I lived with her for three months – what was it? Was I in the refuge or was I at home? - I was at home in the house but then I went back to my mum because I just wasn't happy but then I wasn't happy when I was with mum. But then Angela said, " if you're going to go home I don't want to hear your shit anymore," So I didn't speak to her for two or three weeks because I was, "Right what do I do, I've offended her."*

Here Jess demonstrates a certain naivety and lack of skill in managing friendships. She sees her friend's tough line on her returning home to her mother as rejection, and unsure how to manage this, she simply stops talking to her.

In contrast, Alison (UK) demonstrates a good understanding of what constitutes good friendship, and accepts quite cynically an

arrangement that suits her in some senses, but that she recognises is not 'true friendship':

> *Ali: I dunno. I suppose there's my neighbour Sue ((.)) and she'll, she'll come and take me down horses but we're not friends 'cause she doesn't do it all the time. If it was a friend, you'd do it all the time, and you'd actually play out, you wouldn't be their last option. If her neighbour don't come, or she aint got anyone else to go to, or her sisters, or brother or mum won't go down with her, she'll come for me LAST person ((emphasis on word Last)) ((.)) That's not a friendship is it?*

In maintaining this relatively cynical view of these interactions, Alison sees herself as protecting herself from possible rejection and disappointment.

Friendship as resistance

While perpetrator attempts to control social access and increase the isolation of adult victims is well documented, in our interviews we noticed that this was a recurring feature of many children's experiences too. In this context, the importance of friendship extends beyond social support and reciprocity, forming a direct challenge to elements of coercive control in perpetrator behaviour. Matina's friend is a secret shared by her and her sister – a common source of support, advice and trust.

Matina (Greece) However, none of my family knew what, me and my sister, we were trusting a common friend that we had.…. Yes, my friend was helping me in some things like, I was asking her "if this was happening in your family, what would you do?" and she was telling me and she was giving me various ((eemm)) various … advice.

This friendship is very highly valued by Matina (Greece) takes risks to maintain her valued friendship, even when her father threatens her if she maintains the friendship:

> The importance of friendship extends beyond social support and reciprocity, forming a direct challenge to elements of coercive control in perpetrator behaviour

and my father was telling to me not to play, not to play and I was saying "ok, good, I will play in the playground", and either she was came there, or I went to her [inaudible] and we were meeting each other.

Her friend offers her an important element of support. However, in meeting with her in secret, Matina is also engaged in another form of resistance to her father, a gesture of defiance, in maintaining a connection that he wants to control and put to an end. Emma too found that her friends offered her an opportunity to feel safe, and to challenge the control the perpetrator tried to exert over the family:

Emma:...when I had friends round, nothing would happen, he wouldn't dare try anything, so...then when I did realise that I used to get friends round all the time.
Int: ...And how did you feel, when they were there...?

Emma: Safe, I could just go wherever I wanted, I'd go downstairs, sit in the living room, be a bit of a daredevil, in my head.

Her friends provide a safety net for her, a shield against her stepfather's violence and control. While generally she used the space of the house very carefully, and would not go into the living room when he was there, when her friends were visiting, she would move round the house with a sense of impunity. Her identity as a 'daredevil' suggests that this gesture offers a small opportunity for her to find a foothold for a resistant and agentic sense of self.

Summary

Children made extensive use of relational networks to help them to cope with the experience of domestic violence. Since domestic violence impacts on relationships within the family very strongly, with controlling behaviours and psychological abuse in particular pervading family relationships, one of children's most powerful strategies of resistance and relational resilience was to redefine what *family* meant to them. They made conscious and strategic decisions about who to include and exclude from their sense of 'family'. Caring

relationships also emerged as an important source of validation for children who experienced domestic violence. This is important to note, as many professionals are concerned with the negative impact of 'parentification' and the burden of care on young people. However, we argue that it is important to understand the way that children themselves experience caring relationships, and the meaning of being a carer, rather than imposing external social norms of 'good childhoods' that prescribe certain kinds of child-adult and child-child relationships as 'normal'. While children do sometimes experience caring as burdensome, they also experience it as empowering, and it is important to build from existing relational strengths in supporting children's recovery, rather than risking undermining relational experiences that children have previously found to be a source of power and validation.

Friendships were an important source of social support for children both when living with domestic violence, and in recovery after fleeing. They reported that friends offered an opportunity for mutual support, for self-expression and for the development of trust. Contrary to the emphasis in domestic violence literature on children's poor social skills and relational challenges (Black et al., 2010; Boivin, Lavoie, Hébert, & Gagné, 2012; Spanvill, Clayton, Hendrix, & Hunsaker, 2008a, 2008b), many of the children we interviewed demonstrated a strong understanding of friendships, and a sensible approach to building and maintaining them. We are not suggesting that they did not experience relational difficulties, but rather that perhaps a decontextualized, quantitative reading of children's relationships such as that that typifies academic work on friendship may not pick up the nuances in children's relational lives.

Domestic violence is often an isolating experience for children and young people, either because their experiences make them feel ashamed, making it difficult for them to bring friends home to visit for instance, or because the perpetrator deliberately isolates family members, making it difficult for them to form and maintain friendships. In this circumstance, having a friend also emerged in young people's accounts as a possible gesture of defiance: maintaining a close relationship was a way of resisting the experience of isolation that living with the perpetrator produced.

3.1.3 Use of Space and Material Objects

The experience of being embodied subjects, moving in physical spaces emerged as an important feature of both children's experiences of domestic violence, and of their resistance to it. Even when children were not directly physically hurt themselves, their bodies were still experienced as both a target of control and as a site of resistance to that control.   Children were acutely aware of the spaces of the home, and the ways

those spaces were used by the family at different times of the day. They were aware, for instance, that shared spaces – living rooms / lounges, dining rooms, kitchens – were more dangerous spaces, and that these spaces were often highly regulated and controlled by the perpetrator. Children used a range of strategies to create alternative safe spaces for themselves. These included monitoring of home spaces (particularly shared living spaces) the use of dens and hideaways, the use of outdoor spaces, and the construction of alternative worlds and fantasy spaces for themselves.

Use of space: Monitoring and movement

As we have already suggested, the designation of children as 'witnesses' or as 'exposed to violence' constructs an image of children as passively observing the violence and controlling behaviours taking place in their homes. However, this underestimates the active use of the gaze, and of monitoring behaviours in children who experience domestic violence.

> The experience of being embodied subjects, moving in physical spaces emerged as an important feature of both children's experiences of domestic violence, and of their resistance to it

Children found very creative, complex ways of responding to this control of the physical spaces of the home. They monitored the space, checking with great sensitivity for the tone of the room, and moving out of the shared spaces if things became tense. They also were aware of times of day when the rooms became more, or less, risky, moving into shared rooms when the perpetrator was not there, or when his mood was good, and moving out of the space at 'home times', or if alcohol was being consumed, or if they felt that for whatever reason, the shared spaces had become unsafe.
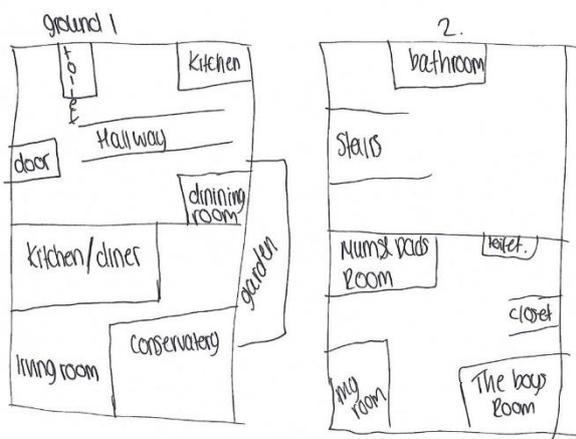
Jess (UK): Well when it would happen with (older brother) it was always in the bathroom, but with mum, it was between the kitchen, the garden, living room – all downstairs basically. Downstairs was never safe if Dad was about because they'll be an argument. He'd make an argument out of an old argument, so downstairs was all his power, I suppose."

Jess demonstrates an intense awareness of the home space, and the way that home space was routinely used. In particular she is aware of the spaces that become safe or dangerous, as different people move

through them. The entire downstairs area of the house became a no-go zone for her when her father was around, as she saw this as the space in which arguments would be picked. The downstairs area of the house was her father's domain when he was home, and she vacated it at these times.

Similarly Rachel describes how she would monitor the emotional tone of the downstairs space, and would adapt her reactions according to what she saw and felt.

> Rachel: I went straight upstairs to my bedroom, ((umm)) I'd sort of like sneak downstairs and check
> that no one was arguing or anything and if it was all OK, I'd come downstairs and sit down ((umm))
> ((.)) and watch TV with my brother ((umm)) but if there was an argument I'd run downstairs, grab my

Jess and Rachel are engaged in acts of almost constant monitoring of the home environment, to enable their safer use of space. In this sense they are very much the 'mini radar devices' of Swanston, Bowyer, & Vetere's (2014b) small scale study of primary age children. Jess and Rachel are both actively scanning the spatial and emotional horizons of their home, and are realigning their use of space accordingly.

Children paid attention to the temporal as well as the temporal dimensions of the home. For instance, several of the children suggested that 'home coming time' was danger spot, and that they needed to adjust the way they used the home space, and the way that they behaved, in order to accommodate the risk that their father / stepfather's return posed:

> Int: …when you're at home with your mum, and your brother and sister, and you knew that your
> step-dad was coming round, did it feel different then?

> Sophia: Yeah… Like Oh no, I've got to keep my mouth shut and I can't say anything

While children moved in and out of shared spaces cautiously, they did find ways of moving into the places where conflict was occurring to monitor what was happening - sometimes simply out of a need to know what was going on, and sometimes to ensure the safety of other family members. Many children achieved this by suggesting they 'just needed to get a drink' when conflict was flaring.

> Matina: Yes, at that time, I wanted some water, that's why I was going to the kitchen and because I
> heard some voices too, I went mum gave me water, I saw her and I heard someone crying. And I
> saw mum. At that moment, dad was gone and [inaudible] I with my mum at that moment and I
> asked her "mum, what's wrong?"

> Lotty (UK): I went downstairs to get a drink of water ((.)) or juice ((.)) yeah, juice, I saw, I saw him hit
> her and it ((.)) I couldn't sleep again

Andy (UK): (...) the next morning my dad ((erm)) started hitting my mum and then she said, "The marriage is over", and then he hit her again. And then I asked mum for a drink and she said, "No, get it yourself". I said, "Okay". And then my dad started swearing at her and everything and then hit her again.

In these cases, 'getting a drink' enabled the child to move into the space of conflict, without immediately endangering themselves or others. This kind of report challenges the view of children as watchers. They are moving themselves out of spaces of relative safety and into spaces of conflict - sites of violence. Potentially in an attempt to divert their parent's

> Children were far more aware of the conflict occurring around them than adults often credited – they understood it, and acted on it

attention, they are not only present in the space, but also request 'a drink' – a task that requires a physical, cognitive action – a diversion away from the conflict. Perhaps a simple request for a drink is an attempt by children to distract, to halt conflict and violence and prevent it escalating – an action which may (as in Matina's case) or may not (as in Andy's case) fulfill its intention. Children were also far more aware of the conflict occurring around them than adults often credited – they understood it, and acted on it. As Yve suggests:

Yve (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): I would be locked in my bedroom ... or I went to my friend's house. Mom didn't want me to stay there when they quarreled. She believed that I didn't understand, but I understood everything. I pretended to sleep in my bedroom, but I could hear everything.

In this extract, Yve's watching is not a passive act, but in some senses an act of resistance. Not only oes she hear what is going on, but, she says, she 'understood everything'. This challenges her mother's positioning of her as 'not knowing', positioning her instead as 'knower'. She is not a mere passive observer, but one who knows and understands.

The image of the child watching from the stairs is a common one in anti-domestic violence campaigns, where these images seem to function to emphasise the innocent child watcher – a passive, unagentic representation of the child who experiences domestic violence. The children in our interviews certainly watched, but not with a passive gaze. Rather they were actively engaged in watching, listening, monitoring, and made decisions based on what they saw, to keep themselves and others safe.

Escape: Dens, hideaways and safe spaces

The children we interviewed use space in a range of ways to keep themselves and others safe. One of the most common was the identification or construction and use of dens or hideaways. Again, the image of the child cowering in a cupboard is a dominant one in media constructions of the child who experiences domestic violence and abuse. In some senses this may seem the ultimate construction of the passive recipient of domestic violence – hiding away, frightened and helpless. However, discussing these experiences with children in interview, it became clear that, while they were certainly afraid, this use of space by them was actually framed in relatively empowered ways. Consider this example, from an interview with Nancy (UK):

> *Int: You know you said that when you go to your dad's and if there's fighting, you go to a "tight space", why a tight space?*
> *Nancy: That way they, they couldn't get to me*
> *Int: Who?*
> *Nancy: Everyone. It means like, they can't come and start bothering me, which means I feel safer, which means when I feel calm, I go back, ((.)) and being in a tight space it feels like part of a game, like being in a cave.*

Nancy has found for herself a bolthole in the house, to which she can retreat when there is conflict – her 'tight space'. She describes this as a proactive choice, a space in which she is able to make herself feel safe,

Children constructed and utilised safe spaces such as dens, hideaways and boltholes during times of conflict. They framed their use of space in relatively empowered ways

and where she can prevent bigger people from reaching her. In this sense she is protecting herself from being 'bothered' by others in the family. Using her 'tight space' is also presented here as a form of emotional self-soothing, and she suggests she emerges calmer. Her final sentence here is particularly interesting, in that, in the midst of conflict and difficulty, she is also able to re-create her removing herself to a 'tight space' as a game, creatively re-framing what is going on around her through her use of space and her re-interpretation of it as less threatening. This creation of dens and hideaways was very widespread throughout the interviews conducted, and seemed to be about more than just cowering away from violence. Rather children were creating a sense of safety for themselves:

> *Angelo (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): "I locked myself in the room with my brothers, but we did not have the key. We were scared, and we put a sofa in front of the bedroom door; we looked through the crack of the door and we could hear the screams"... We had big closets in the room and we would move them against the door. Before we moved the sofa and then the closet, we thought of locking the door. I hid on top of the wardrobe and I had built a kind of fort: I had put some pillows more*

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durable and I hid there with my brothers to play... "I was trying to be comforting for my brothers.
Since I was little I've always tried ... I understand these things, and I have always tried to figure these
things in the form of the game "

When asked, later in the interview what advice he would give to other children who experienced domestic violence, Angelo said:

I suggest to create a supportive environment. For example, we sometimes we put the blankets on the
upper bed and the bed below and we went there with the flashlight.

This underscores strongly the sense that, from his point of view, creating forts and dens was a substantial way of caring for yourself in this kind of situation.

Rachel describes the construction of a den using her brother's cabin bed

Int: "So when there was fighting in the house, where would you go to?...
Rachel: My brother's room.
Int: You went to your brother's room?
Rachel: Yeah, we used to hide under the bed ((jovial)) and stuff like that 'cause we had this little den
built and we used to hide in there… We were trying not to think about it, we just like, my brother
would think of a game and we'd just start playing it under there, we'd get out some of his toys and
stuff like that but we'd still hear the shouting, like at some points when the shouting got really loud
my brother would just like pause for a minute and look at me ((mimics frightened look)), I'd be like,
"It's OK, it's OK," cause sometimes he'd just like freak out and stuff like that, he'd be quite scared
about what was going on cause he was, probably scared if someone was going to get hurt…. You
could see like he was going to start crying or something and you'd just try and like, try and get on
with the game quite quickly, ((umm)) just try and like carry on playing, make the game like amusing
and stuff so he could try and forget about it.

Rachel describes how she produces a safe space for her and her brother to retreat to, using blankets and duvets to create a tent from the cabin bed, in which she is able to cloister herself and her brother. Within this safe space, she has a little more control over the sensory stimuli to which she and her brother are exposed. They block out some of the sound of conflict with sounds of play, they distract themselves by focusing on the game. She also presents herself here, not as a frightened child, but as a carer, who comforts Marcus when he is afraid. She presents herself as carer, shield and protector. This is achieved in the relational use of material spaces, in staking a claim to their one little section of the house, and creating their own sense of control and order within it. In their little space, they feel safe, together, regardless of what else is occurring in the house.

> Children often used and produced safe spaces to retreat to as a means of protecting themselves and younger siblings. Safe spaces also functioned to enhance sibling relationships and develop bonds

Josh (UK) similarly creates a safe space for himself, in the garden shed:

> *Int: Was there anywhere you felt safe?*
>
> *Josh: In my bedroom, or I would have hid in my shed*
>
> *Int: What was it about those places that made you feel safe?*
>
> *Josh: Because he didn't know really where I am, they just kept me safe because I kept things in there that meant a lot to me.*

Josh has produced a safe space for himself, set slightly away from the house, where he is able to be a little quieter, and where he feels he will not be found. It is particularly interesting that he populates this safe space with objects that are meaningful to him, things that make him feel anchored in a safer and happier personal history, and that enable him to feel more in control of his environment – he suggests that having those objects with him 'kept him safe' *because* they meant a lot to him. It seems that Josh, Antonio, Nancy and Rachel are not describing just the construction of a safe physical space but also a space in which they feel able to hold on to elements of the self, particularly a relational self. It is interesting too that this use of space is described so frequently as 'making a game' or 'playing together'. In constructing this safe space for themselves, using the ordinary and everyday objects of childhood, they seem to be constituting for themselves and their siblings a space in which childhood is enabled to continue, despite the caring roles they are taking on, and despite the physical
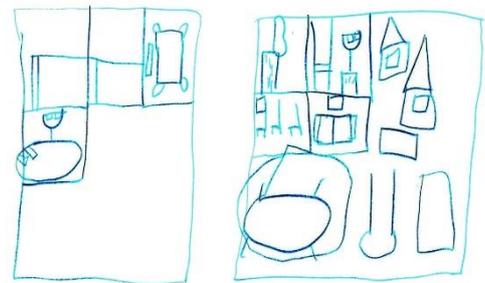
violence and coercion they are resisting. Indeed holding their childhood in these material spaces seems, in itself, a powerful form of resistance to violence and control.

Children made use of the space and material objects around them to restore a sense of control over the sounds of home, with many children describing the use of music in particular as a way of restoring a sense of calm for themselves:

> *Mariam (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): (speaking about her brother) When our father raised his voice broke and things, he took refuge under the covers, with music in the ears ...*

> *Lally (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): I shut myself in the room and listened to the music*

Here Mariam and Lally describe the use of space and objects (the covers, a closed room) to create a sense of refuge or safety in their bedrooms, blocking out the sounds of fighting with music.

The children also spoke about literally removing themselves from the circumstances at home. For instance

> *Jordan (Italy, Puglia): I put on my shoes, I took the jacket and I ran away.. I ran a lot..*

> *Anna (Italy, Umbria / CoHor) I ran away ... I was gone for two days, maybe… yes … two days.*

> *Abraham (Italy, Umbria / CoHor): When I was a child I went to my sister's bedroom and she put her hands over my ears to not hear my father and my mother were screaming ... then when I was older I went out by the window of my bedroom. I went to the park with my friends ...but when I came back home they got angry with me ...*

Many of the children we interviewed spoke of leaving their home country, when they were older, and living abroad to escape from conflicted and difficult families. They use family spaces, friends' houses, or just walked out to get away from the situation:

> Giulia (Italy, Puglia): *I was tired! I can't take it anymore, I did not want to stay at home, I was always at D's home. Then I was nervous*

Here, Giulia describes using her boyfriend's house as a safe space to escape to. Lizzy explains how she hid, both within her home, and by fleeing to the neighbour.

> *and then he'd start like ((erm)) hurting my mum. And then he'd take her into the living room and sometimes I had to hide in a tiny ((smiles)) cupboard with little like piles of ((erm)) blankets and stuff in there and just hide in there and then I just, there was a neighbour next door and every time that he used to start I used to get out and I used to run over to the other people*

Several children also described planned escapes in the future, leaving their towns or countries to get away from histories of domestic violence.

> *Lally (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): and then if I leave ... I go abroad ...*
>
> *Int: Do you have decided to go away? … Do you already know where you want to go?*
>
> *Lally: either in London or in New York or Los Angeles ...*

These kinds of fantasized futures provide a kind of psychic escape from the present, a mythic future in a new place where things will be better for them. Through these fantasies, children in desperate circumstances can maintain a toehold on a vision of an alternative way to live for themselves.

> Many of the children we interviewed spoke of leaving their home country, when they were older, and living abroad to escape from conflicted and difficult families

Acts of physical resistance:

Children did engage in direct acts of physical resistance, intervening directly in the violence they saw unfolding.

> *Guilia, Italy. "I and C (brother) have taken action, we jumped on him, I said " Daddy please stop you're hurting my mom, dad stopped " and cried. C. threw himself upon him and took him to the neck, I do not know how he did, my brother is strong (!), he took my father and he said "G take mom, run away, come on, I cannot resist too much"*

Giulia describes a clear physical intervention into the situation, jumping on her father, as well as entreating him verbally to stop hurting her mother. This is quite a powerful physical resistance to her father's violence, and an inversion of the traditional roles of child and parent, as the child attempts to discipline the father, and to moderate his inappropriate behavior. In taking this fairly extreme action, Giulia and her brother do seem aware that they are transgressing the traditional boundaries of childhood and minimizes this transgression (even though it was fairly effective) through using the language of childhood (particularly, calling him 'daddy') and emphasizing their relative physical weakness (her brother was not able to resist for long). While they were able to get their mother to a place of safety through physical intervention, the effectiveness of this resistance is somewhat underplayed.

> *Edara (Italy) I always put me between my mother and my father*
>
> *Int: was it a help?*
>
> *Edara: it was*

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Int: did you stop them? Could you stop your father?

Edara: yes, I stopped them

In contrast, Edara suggests that she was able to stop her father simply by inserting herself physically between them. Here, she seems to be evoking notions of normative childhood, placing herself between perpetrator and target. Presumably this insertion of a child into the violent interaction was sufficient to give her father pause, and seemed to Edara to be an effective strategy in halting violence.

Similarly, Anna and Amy, inverting the traditional roles of child and parent seems to be able to reason her family out of violent behavior.

Anna (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) then if they arrive at the violence I am intruding and try to reason with them by making them calm. You should not reason with violence

INT: Is there something that when these things happen that you to do to try help yourself cope?

Amy (Puglia, Italy): for example, if my brother and mom hit each other I went there and I separate them and I told him that was not a good thing to do.

They combine the use of their physical presence, and their taking on of an adult, rational role, as being sufficient to interrupt the violence. However, Anna does appear to be aware of the dangers attendant to such intervention, and the limits of attempting to use rational processes with people who are being irrational.

Self-soothing

Children described their use of space and material objects to support self-soothing and self-comforting behaviours. As we have seen, sometimes this took the form of simply using objects to block out the world (e.g. Andrea (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): *I blocked my ears, closed my eyes, went to sleep).* This was often interlinked with their uses of dens and safe spaces. However, sometimes the processes underpinning self soothing practices can be more complex. For example, Nancy describes her use of comfort objects to make herself feel safer and more relaxed:

Int: So it sounds like all the fighting really does upset you

Nancy: Yeah, that's why, and when my dad got me this owl duvet and when

Int: A what?

Nancy: An OWL duvet

Int: Oh, an OWL duvet

Nancy: I go upstairs and I go under it and I play with the owls 'cause I like animals, and the owls make me feel as if I'm in a forest, and I make a game of it

Nancy's use of her comfort blanket has a range of features that help us to understand how children make use of space to cope with and manage experiences of domestic violence. She combines the sensory experience of a blanket she can hide under, with the relational, as she articulates the connection of the object to her relationship with her father. In addition, she uses the object to construct a fantasy space in which she can move herself away, in her mind, from her present circumstance, to a forest where she is surrounded by animals. She combines the physical, the relational and fantasy, to produce a safe space in which she can self comfort and sooth. Matina's use of a stress ball has similar features:

> **Children used physical objects to cope with their circumstances, by constructing fantasy worlds through play, and by using sensory objects they self comforted and self soothed**

Matina (Greece): The ball that has different shapes and stuff like that. My mum bought it for me to play, but I was holding it in my hands and I was squeezing it. ((.)) And when I was sad or upset, yes, I squeezed it sometimes. But it's not as if I had a lot of strength ((slightly laughs)), but a little [strength], and with as much as I had I squeezed it ((.)) and it was easier ((.)) to escape, these things

The ball was given to her by her mother, a gesture of kindness and care. It was given to her just as a toy, but she converts it into a stress ball, and object she can use to release tension. It enables her to act out physically, to exert what strength she feels she has, to release tension, and to escape the current physical reality in which she finds herself. In this sense, just like Nancy, Matina has found a way to remove herself from current stressors, through the use of fantasy (which enables her to absent herself from the present), an object imbued with some symbolic and relational meaning, and her use of space and embodied experience.

Places of safety: Finding shelter

Because of this complex use of space, children's experiences of home were often highly ambivalent. On the one hand, home was a scary, threatening space, in which children felt unsafe and at risk. On the other hand, home was also the space they made for themselves, their siblings and other family members. For instance, Anna (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) suggests that, despite the challenges she has faced there, home is where she feels she most belongs and can most be herself:

> *I 'm better off home anyway ... I go out of the gate and already I am more quiet ...*

Emma (UK) considers it an injustice that she and 3 members of her family were uprooted and relocated to refuge following her step-father's violence, whilst he got to remain in the spacious family home alone:

Emma: He should have been the one kicked out the house.

Int: ((Ah)), OK.

Emma: 'Cause I liked that house we lived in, it was, had a massive garden and massive, it's quite a big house as well.

Int: So you moved but you say he should have moved actually?

Emma: Yeah, he should have got out of there. Idiot ((laughs))

Int: You sound quite angry about it.

Emma: Yeah, I mean I liked that house as well.

Like Emma, other children reported a sense of loss relating to the family home, when forced to flee domestic violence. For example, Nancy says:

Nancy: Upsetting, 'cause I loved my animals. It just felt horrible having to say bye to   them, 'cause it felt like half of me went missing that night

Losing her home, her pets, she feels like she lost something of herself. Having to leave behind the things and spaces tightly bound to her memories and her relationships was experienced as a profound loss. At the same time, family homes also came to feel very unsafe, and at times and extension of the violence and control exerted by the perpetrator:

Franci (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): I do not know ... suddenly nothing my mother or I did was good enough…. We wanted to run away at any moment ... as if the house had become too small... I think

Refuges, shelters, institutions and orphanages were described as complex and paradoxical spaces for children post-separation, on the one hand seeming to be foreign and unhomely spaces, full of strange noises, and smells, cramped and difficult. On the other hand, the refuge was also a communal space, in which they forged supportive relationships, important resources for beginning the process of rebuilding their new lives. This paradoxical meaning of refuge is clear in Rachel's account:

Rachel (UK): ((umm)) It's quite nice 'cause like when you're at like hard times and everything 'cause like ((.)) 'cause all three of us share like a room we're always at each other's throats like shouting all the time because it's such a cramped space and like in the mornings when you have an argument, like sometimes I have an argument with my mum ((umm)) you go to school and it's nice to have like some people to cheer you up and take your mind off it... It feels quite different 'cause you're used to having, ((remembers with fondness)) when you're asleep you're used to having loads of dogs on your

feet and you can't move and they're nicking all your cover and stuff like that but now you can sleep and like sometimes, 'cause Marcus still sleeps in the same bed as me, ((umm)) you can feel like his feet and you're thinking it's the dog so you try and kick it ((jovial)) ((laughs)) and Marcus wakes up and he's like, "What are you doing?" I was like, "Oh, sorry, I thought you were the dog." It's quite funny.

The refuge is noisy, and space is limited. But at the same time, the refuge offers a space for some ordinary family interaction. Although they are 'at each other's throats', the tone of her disclosures here suggests this is far more the rough and tumble of ordinary family life, not the terrifying family aggression she is used to. She can have an argument, and can share that with people around her. While she misses her dogs, these are replaced by different sorts of domestic comforts in the spaces she shares with her brother. Mariam similarly points to the paradox of living in refuge:

Mariam (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): A sense of liberation definitely ... in those months in the safe house I got to know other stories like ours ... some worse ... but since we left our house felt like we were being hunted , we knew he was looking everywhere.... I was safe, but I had left all my things at home and I wanted to go home, get my stuff, my books ... but most of all I was missing school and my friends …

Here, we see a clear sense of the ambivalence of the refuge. On the one hand, it is a shared space in which they were able to feel they were not alone. The community of families affected by violence within the refuge are able to share their stories, and build a sense of solidarity and of freedom. However, on the other hand, the refuge functions as a constant reminder that they are unsafe. The refuge is also described as an *unhomely* space, characterized by disruption and dislocation. She is not 'at home', she does not have her things, she feels disconnected from friends and school.

Kate and Harry (UK) are both positive about their experiences of refuge, talking about having space to play and build friendships:

Int: What's it like to live there?
Kate: Quite, a little bit fun.
Int: Why is it fun to live there.
Int: Are they your toys, or do they belong in the refuge, in the house?
Kate: [inaudible] Some are from mummy, some from the place.

Harry: Yeah. Because before I had lots of friends but they all moved to different schools so I would say it was better than this year. It was better before when I lived in the refuge because I liked it when I was in the refuge because I had lots of friends then, before they moved. …

Int: What kind of stuff did you do there?

Harry: I would watch tv. I would play outside. See my friends. I would play games. I had lots of things to do. I would see my friends from the other – that lived somewhere else.

Given that families affected by domestic violence are often characterised by isolation and high levels of social control, the space that the refuge allowed for children to play and build friendships was highly valued. Children reported that this second meaning was often overlooked by well-meaning support staff,

Refuge was highly valued by many children, allowing them the opportunity to form friendships with others who had similar experiences

who were focused on helping them start over in new homes. This meant that important relationships were often lost when children moved out of institutional spaces, and into more nuclear family homes.

Harry: It felt different. I didn't really – the first time I went to the house that I live in now – I wasn't enjoying it as much as the refuge. But now since I've got used to it I'm really enjoying it more. 'cause I'm really good friends with my friend Jamie who lives across the street. So I've found another friend. So it's like the refuge.

For many parents and support workers, there was a sense that children should be encouraged to settle in new post-refuge homes and build new relationships, starting fresh. However, this does not recognise enough the importance of the community that refuge offers, or the importance of the shared experiences of friendship in recovery that children have.

Both home and refuge spaces could prove very frightening to children, whose hypervigilance and monitoring behaviours could also mean that they were finding things to worry about, even in relatively safe spaces. For example, Rachel, extending her comments about refuge also notes that she feels unsafe in the shared space:

Rachel: Only 'cause I'm scared that like my dad's going to find out where we are and I don't feel very safe 'cause there's not like a lot of locks or anything, ((umm)) there's only one lock on the door, there's not like any security or anything here. What makes me like kind of uncomfortable, we've only got like a little bolt on our door so….But like at night time, it's kind of like worrying, 'cause like you're laying in bed and it's quite like scary 'cause you're going to think that someone's going to turn up or something.

Rachel still seems to live with a constant fear of her father, even in refuge. She feels that refuge is not safe enough. She engages in checking, monitoring (how many kids know what kinds of locks there are on the doors?) and this reveals how physical spaces might simultaneously feel like places of safety and dangerous spaces. A similar account is found in Lizzy's (UK) description of living in a target hardened home:

> *Lizzy:* Yeah. So this one had the balcony door, and that's, he could climb over there, so that, he could get in easily there. Outdoors had alarms on, our windows had alarms on, 'cause the police come and fitted them on…
>
> *Int:* What, to protect against-
>
> *Lizzy:* -Yeah, so if someone tried to break in, the alarm'd go off.
>
> *Int:* Yeah. Was it specifically to protect against him?
>
> *Lizzy:* Yeah. We didn't have them before, but because the windows kept getting smashed in and forced in, we had alarms put in, and then after that we thought the door was safe, so after that we got an alarm put on there.
>
> *Int:* Right.
>
> *Lizzy:* It was really, really loud ((laughs)).
>
> *Int:* And what about ((erm)), sorry did you say the bathroom and the kitchen felt unsafe to you?
>
> *Lizzy:* Yeah. He used to, like, like smashing the win, like smash the windows, and we could hear it from my mum's room, so it was quite

Lizzy's account highlights the complexity of providing safe and homely spaces for families in the aftermath of domestic violence. While target hardened homes are upheld as a good example of sensitive housing solutions for families fleeing violence, there are perhaps unintended consequences to living in a home that has been made 'safe' in this manner. In every mechanism put in place to keep her safe, Lizzy experiences a trigger to a memory of past violations of her safety. The bars of the windows remind her of times they windows were smashed, the burglar alarm serves as a jangling reminder that her father might come and break in and hurt them again. The hardened house becomes a symbolic memorial to the violence done to her and her family. In this context even the safest of houses can feel unsafe.

Summary: Use of Space - Homing the unhomely

In their use of space, children are able to produce some sense of control, however tenuous it might seem, when domestic violence and coercive behaviours may seem totalising to them. These may be gestural, and to an outsider they may seem futile. However, to support children better, we do need to acknowledge and work with the ways that they are able to hold a sense of self, and a sense of resistance in the face of violence and control. Use of space is one way that they achieve this. Describing the experiences of adult victim-survivors, Wardhaugh (1999) described domestic violence as being 'homeless at home'. Being 'at home' involves a sense of belonging and control. Home "can constitute belonging and / or create a sense of marginalisation and estrangement" (Mallett, 2004, p. 94). In our interviews, we see evidence of children re-forging and recreating a sense of 'home' even within marginalised spaces, through movement and use of space that gave them a sense of control, and redressed some of the material experience of power imbalance.

> To support children better, we need to acknowledge and work with the ways that they are able to hold a sense of self, and a sense of resistance in the face of violence and control

3.1.4 Experiences of Services

Children's experiences of services were varied, but generally not particularly positive. Most reported a sense of not being heard, not being listened to, by those who were supposed to be there to help them.

> Children's experiences of services were varied, but generally not particularly positive. Most reported a sense of not being heard, not being listened to, by those who were supposed to be there to help them

> *"(I wished) Well, that they had asked me…or explained… in a 'light' way…(I needed) Explanation and help"*

> *"They didn't ask me anything, nor reassure me…only my mum"*

These quotes illustrate children's sense of being overlooked by those who are supposed to help and support them, as the focus was more securely on adult victims and perpetrators. Children were not consulted, and their needs not taken into account, when professionals were responding to domestic violence.

In most countries children and carers perceived statutory services as potentially threatening, with many telling stories about how they felt that they had to be careful around professionals. Some parents and

carers reported that support professionals often used their children as leverage, threatening to remove children if carers did not leave the violent partner, or if they did not cooperate with social services intervention, or take up particular kinds of support.

Responses in education have produced challenging outcomes for children, perhaps also underscoring a need to have a fuller understanding of children's experiences of domestic violence, from teachers:

> Int: Were you able to talk about what was going on at home.
>
> Emma: No, because the time that I did talk about it was when we did get the help but I talked to a teacher thinking I'd be able to trust her and she went straight to the headmaster and all the stuff started going on where the headmaster like threatened my mum saying, "If you don't sort this out, we'll ring child services," and all that stuff, my mum could have had us taken off her 'cause of that. (...)
>
> Emma: ((Erm)) I can't remember what I said, I think I said something like, I think I had like a bruise on me or something and I told a friend what happened [Int: Yeah], and she made me tell this teacher and then that's how it started, just 'cause I talked about a little bruise that I had on my arm.
>
> Int: Was it from-
>
> Emma: -From him, yeah, I think he like pushed me in the arm and I bruised quite easily when I was little so he pushed me in the arm pretty hard and I just ended up with this like bruise on my arm.

It is entirely understandable (and appropriate) that Emma's disclosure triggered a safeguarding response in the school. However, from Emma's point of view, the school's reaction was a breach of trust, which produced more difficulties for her and her mother. The threat of a report to social services if the mother 'doesn't sort this out' is an inadequate and inappropriate response from the school, putting both her mother and Emma under further pressure. Other children echoed this sense, suggesting that talking to social workers, teachers and other professionals was potentially dangerous, and that they were not trustworthy, would disclose the things that they were told, and that these disclosures were potentially endangering to children.

The context of the generally offers children a refuge from the family, a safe space in which they can be with friends and be less vigilant about family disputes.

> Lydia (Greece): I say to myself "Wish I was in school now, to be with my friends".

Children identified engagement with school and with education as an important coping strategy. School was seen as a place that is their own. For instance, Natalia (Greece) says:

then I threw myself into studying … What else can I do? I study … It helps me ((eeh)) I study for school because I want to ((.)) I want to? I think about the grades ((eeh)). And that helps me stop going in and out of the rooms and stuff ((eeh)) ((.)) and to get away, not to think about all this stuff ((.)) That's all.

And Mariam (Umbria / CoHor, Italy) says:

Now I want to finish high school, then I'll go to University, I thought at the Faculty of Medicine. Mom now works with a cooperative that helps families in need like ours ... She thinks it's the right thing to do, and aside money for me and my brother for our studies ... We all work very hard ... perhaps to avoid thinking….

School offers a space that is free of violence, and a space that is just for them – a space in which the can 'avoid thinking' and 'get away'. Natalia and Mariam report that they work hard at school for themselves, because they want to. It enables them to have aspirations for the future, and a hope for a future life in which they will have some autonomy and power in their own right.

The everyday-ness of friendship that characterises life at school is important in helping children to cope.

> *Int: is there anything else that helped you, ((.)) or helps you now, to cope?*
> *Emma: Just being with friends, and with family as well sometimes, 'cause you just surrounded by people that care.*
> *Int: OK. So, people that care. And you know, what's it like being with your friends?*
> *Emma: They're just, we just do lots of funny things, we just, you don't really think about anything else, you just think about whether their parents are gonna tell you off for making a lot of noise (laughs).*

However, while school was generally seen as a happier and better environment than home, it was not a perfect, or entirely safe space. A lot of children reported bullying at school and for many, that bullying was linked to their experience of domestic violence;

Int: So where did you feel happiest?

Emma: Probably at school…. School was definitely the happiest place. I mean, obviously I had problems with bullying and stuff in primary school and secondary school, but when I was in school, you just had that time with a friend ((.)) which you, like play with and trust that kind of thing…. In primary school it was just bullying to do with how I looked, dressed, what I like, sometimes my mum would find it hard to find money for school uniform so I literally wore jumper from Year 1 till Year 6, I had to wear that all the way through school, that's why the bullying was in primary school, because of the clothes I was wearing

because my mum just couldn't ((voice breaks)), generally couldn't afford to buy it, so [Int: Yeah] and then the secondary school was just silly little people making up rumours about me and my family, so I ended up moving school as well, again ((laughs)).

Bullying was a particular issue for children in the UK sample, though it was an issue in other countries too. In the UK, it also emerged as a predominant theme in the intervention with children, where children were quite preoccupied with bullying as an aftermath of domestic violence.

> *Isabel (UK): Yeah that was before I was getting kicked out of school because I was getting threatened, I was getting emotionally bullied by the two girls that were meant to be my friends, I was getting emotionally bullied by them saying if I don't do anything they're gonna kill me*

School responses to children's disclosures of domestic violence, or their reactions when learning about children's challenging home lives could also be problematic. For example, when Emma's experiences were disclosed to a teacher and headteacher, the information 'leaked' into the wider school community:

> A lot of children reported bullying at school and for many, that bullying was linked to their experience of domestic violence

> *Emma: I did get a bit of hassle of people 'cause they found out as well, just normal people in my Year (at school) … but, I talked to her about it and then she started telling other people and then that's how it got round the school kids and I had a lot of problems because of that. They was like, "Haha, your stepdad hates you," ((mock nasty tone)) and all this stuff*

Thus while children's experiences of school were generally positive, and the school provided a potential space for them to feel safe from the violence at home, nonetheless more could be done to improve the effectiveness of educational responses to children who experience domestic violence.

When children called for police, or police were called to the home by others, their experiences were mixed, but generally negative. Children reported that they did not feel heard, and that the police overlooked them, often did not talk directly to them, and that they did not provide an explanation to children of what they were doing. This is illustrated by this example, from an interview with Maria, in Spain. In this case the perpetrator of domestic violence was the mother.

> *Maria (Spain): She calls the Police, and they came. You could tell from far away that my mother was stoned, they realised that but none of them came to talk with me, or rather they came to see her, no one wanted to talk to me.*

> *Int.: Do you believe that they just focus on the adult?*

Maria: (She answered straight away) Yes

Int.: Would you have liked that someone had asked you?

Maria: Yes, besides, when I said what was happening no one believed me

In this case, as in many of the cases of the children we spoke to, the responding officer discounted the child's account, focusing instead on the adult. This situation was frustrating to the child whose voice was simply not heard. However, in some cases, the consequences of not taking children's accounts of events can have serious consequences. For instance, in this case, Maria's mother convinced the police that it was Maria who had been 'trouble making', and Maria was arrested.

In Greece, Maria (2) explained that she had little faith in the police's ability to help her and her family:

Maria (Greece): [...] and the policemen didn't do anything and then I say "I will press charges against my dad" because he had hit me in the past too and I hadn't done anything to him.

And later in the interview, she notes:

And I say "I am not going there", I say, "No Way, my life is in danger", I say, "I am not going to go", I say. And they tell me "((Eh)) we can't do anything since he takes you back". I say "a child comes to you, to the police, and tells them that they have nowhere to go, and the child tells you that ((eeh)) has nowhere to go. And because they (the parents) are willing to take the child back to the house, these people who did so much to the child, you let the child leave?" He says to me "we can't do anything. We will give you two phone numbers to find a place to stay". They gave me two phone numbers, but nobody picked up at those numbers."

Her words here underscore her sense both of the police's impotence, and the unfairness of their failure to protect her. Further she describes statutory services' responses as entirely inadequate in their child protection strategies. Her sense of outrage at the irrational and unhelpful response of services is clear throughout this extract. She feels let down by services, and abandoned by the state – they quite literally do not answer her pleas for help and support.

Children often reported that police did not speak to them when responding to domestic violence calls, focusing instead on the adult perpetrator and adult victim.

Kate (UK): Quite scary.
Int: Scary? When you say scary what does that mean?

> *Kate: Like, when, ((...)) like when they chatted to my mum and dad when he was in the room and we*
>
> *comed out the room*
>
> *What was the most scary bit?*
>
> *Kate: ((erm)) The police knocking on the door.*
>
> *And what did you do while they were there?*
>
> *Kate: Just sat still*

Here, Kate explains the emotional impact of the arrival in the police. She was afraid of the police, and while she was sent away and 'sat still' while they were there. The impact of this experience is clear. While the police were there to 'help her', she simply experienced their presence as a frightening intrusion in the domestic landscape.

Several young people noted that, while police did respond to calls for help, they perceived their response as sometimes ineffective. Rachel reports that her expectation of police response is very low: she knows that sometimes she needs to call them, but she has lost faith in the action they take, fears the consequences of calling them, and her statement suggests she feels impotent as a result of their response

> Several young people noted that, while police did respond to calls for help, they perceived their response as sometimes ineffective

> *Rachel ((umm)) ((.)) Well, ((.)) it's nerve racking ((umm)) and quite scary but ((umm)) when they are putting him in the police car you can just basically, you know that it's going to happen again really 'cause I think he knows that's he going to be like let off with it and he's going to be out in one day, he's just going to carry on doing it, that's what I kept on thinking, 'cause he's being let off and he's just going to carry on.*

And

> *My dad was downstairs and my mum had rung the police ((.)) and then when the police had showed up I put my brother to bed and I remember looking out the window and my dad was like flipping out at the police and everything, shouting, screaming and I can remember when they put him in the police van, I started crying because I just hated it ((umm)) 'cause he'd done it quite a few times, ((speaking quickly)) my dad's been arrested quite a few times, ((umm)) but I'd just had enough really.*

She found her father's arrests 'nerve racking', not because he was being punished, but rather because she expected him to be released quickly, and that he would interpret the release as a ratification of his own actions. On the one hand, she has called the police, and sees their immediate response as important in terms of keeping her and her family safe. On the other hand, she does not feel she can exert her own need

for a more satisfactory solution on the police, nor can she rely on them to follow through on that promise of keeping her safe.

The experience of the children we interviewed does not bear up a strong sense that policing functions as an effective safety net for them. Their legal positioning as witness, positioned as 'collateral damage' in domestic violence, rather than as victim leaves children with no legal recourse in their own right. While they may be questioned as witnesses, their perspective, and the impact of the perpetrators' behavior on *them* is not considered: they are not perceived as the victim.

> Children's legal positioning as witness, and as 'collateral damage' to adult violence, rather than as victim, leaves children with no legal recourse in their own right

Our comments in this section are not intended to be read as reflecting on the failings of specific individual professionals, or even the failings of groups of professionals more broadly. Rather, our aim is to highlight the impact of the discursive positioning of children in professional, policy and legislative frameworks, as 'witnesses', as 'exposed to domestic violence', as 'collateral damage in adult violence', but not as victims in their own right. This enables and entrenches a form of practice that does not take children's experiences seriously, and that consequently does not respond appropriately to their needs.

3.2 Photo Elicitation

Children took photos, arranged them, and added a narrative to tell their own stories of how they coped with domestic violence and abuse. In this format children were able to powerfully articulate the creative, spatial, embodied and relational strategies that they used to cope with their experiences of violence and recovery from violence, a selection of these are presented here.

Let's move on to the next picture which is my favourite […] I took it through the computer
[Int: It's your favourite, why is this your favourite, Anna?]
Because I like little dogs and animals, particularly" […] And I like to, to tell my secrets […] That is, if I have something inside me, I mean a secret, ((eeh)) I go outside, I takeit for a walk and ((eeeh)) I speak to him ((the dog))" […] Basically, let's say, like that problem that I have with my family. I sha-, I share it with the doggie ((laughs slightly)) Even though he doesn't speak, ok, always. […] A doggie in the neighbourhood and kittens and ((eeh)) because they live in the back, in the back of, back of our apartment building, ((eh)) I go in the back and sit((laughs slightly)). With the kittens […] And it's very nice. […] And ((eeh)) I say all my thoughts, from inside […] That is, the family issues… It helps me to be-, to, because I have these inside, in my mind, and ((ts)) my brothers know them too, and my parents, but others don't know about that. And, it's that the dog some…. and the cats, and the rest of the animals help me, ((it's)) like I get it off my chest to a friend of mine. And trust her"

Anna, Greece

Anna describes a complex embodied and relational strategy of emotional management. She demonstrates an acute awareness of her emotional experiences, and a clear strategy for when her feelings become too much for her. While on the one hand, her strategy may seem quite isolating, there is nonetheless real emotional warmth in the way she regards her 'friends' – neighbourhood dogs and stray cats. In them she finds a safe way to express herself, and to find a kind of relational support. Some of the emotional tone of her relationships with her canine and feline friends is identifiable in the image itself. The dog is in her room, in her computer. It is a relatively intimate image, generating a feeling of closeness. In addition, the image itself is quite amusing, as he gazes out from inside the computer. It captures the relative lightness of her interaction with her animal friends.

From the window of my room I always used to see the roofs of the neighbours. During the winter they were full of snow and it was beautiful to look at them all.

Often I also went out of the window, on the roof up to the neighbour's balcony; then there were the stairs and I went to my friends. My parents got angry every time they discovered what I did. But they do not know how many times I went out without them knowing!

Fabio, Umbria / CoHor, Italy

The visual image is of a relatively idyllic location, the rooftops of a beautiful village, with a good view of the surrounding mountains. This photograph evokes an almost idealised childhood, one that stands in stark contradiction to the realities of the child's life. However, it is to this idyllic space that he retreats. In addition to offering him a glimpse of freedom, and of the freedom, beauty and spaciousness of a more ideal childhood, the rooftops also offer a real possibility of escape. This form of escape is experienced by him as a potent gesture of resistance – when he is caught, he gets into trouble. But most of the time, his parents do not know he is gone. This sense of outsmarting his parents is in itself described as a kind of liberation.

"The guitar, the music, I like it very much. I play the guitar, the sound …. I feel nice"
Natalia, Greece

The image of the guitar presented by Natalia is quite moody and soulful, and heavily shadowed. At the same time it is glossy, and has a pleasing shape. The image suggests that her guitar is a means of self-expression for her, a way for her to articulate her experiences. Playing guitar is a very embodied experience, as the instrument is held up close against the body when it is played. Natalia describes playing guitar as something that makes her feel good. A large number of the photo images included musical instruments. These seemed to represent a powerful form of self-expression for many of the young people we worked with.

Emma (Photo above left): "So it would be football, rugby and gym right now and that's how, if I do get upset or angry I let out my anger when I'm playing the sport, that's what helped me deal with things .... It just feels like loads of adrenaline's running through my body and then all of a sudden I'm running into someone and they're on the floor and then all of a sudden I just feel like amazing, I'm just like, oh my God ((laughs)), and I look around they're just like, "You need to calm down," I'm just like, "Oh sorry," ((laughs)), but then I just feel really relieved from just doing that"

Emma, Andy, UK

Emma and Andy (above left to right) (UK) expressed here a common strategy reported by children – using sport and other physical activity as a kind of catharsis. They find healthy ways of expressing anger and aggression, ways that feel more contained and controlled. This is also expressed, for Emma, through art and other creative practices:
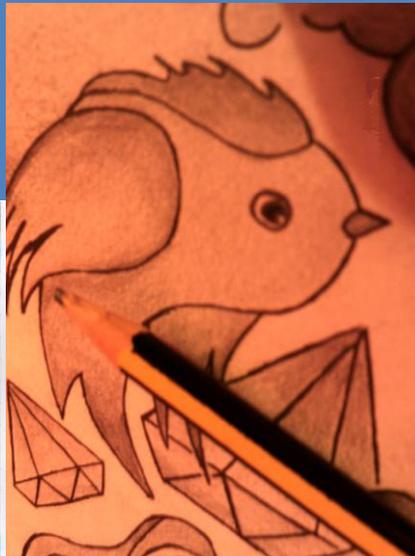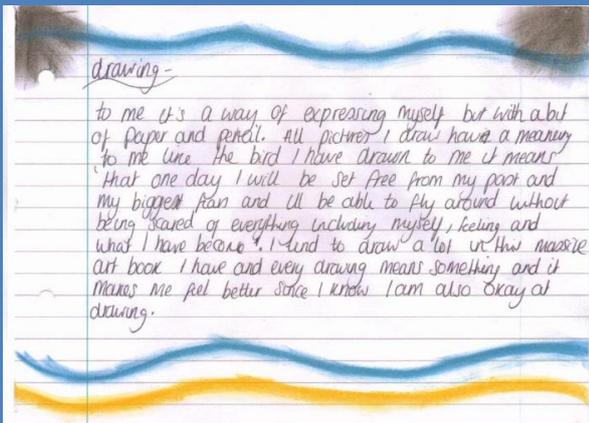
Emma: It's like, this is how I put it to my art teacher, it's like letting out your emotions on a bit of paper…. no one actually has to know what you went through, but they can know how you feel just with a drawing.

Int: Right. So you express yourself through drawing, but no one has to actually know the exact details.

She describes here, through drawings and words, her sense of creativity as a safe way to express emotions. She recognises these creative methods as a form of self-expression, and also recognises that these emotions are read and understood by those who view the imagery. However, at the same time, the detail of the experience to which the emotions refer are not necessarily present in the drawing, and in that sense, the communication is both cathartic and safe.

Creative Group Processes
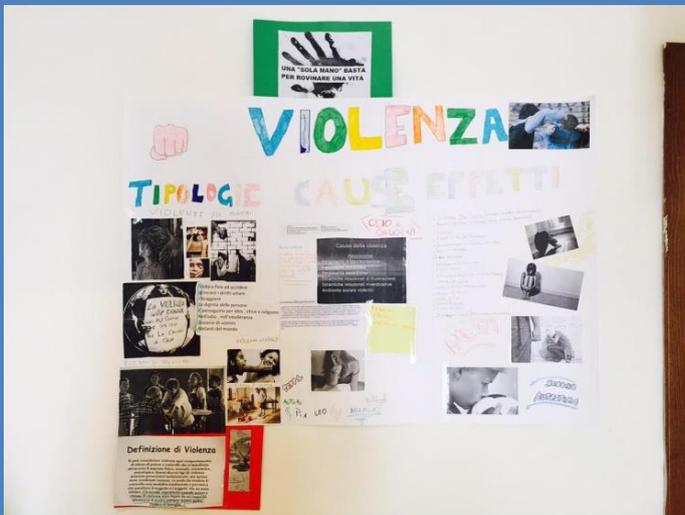
Italy, Il Meridiano

Spain

2 countries within the consortium (Spain and Italy, Il Meridiano) hosted events for children and young people to participate in a group process which enabled children to verbally and non-verbally express their shared experiences of violence by bringing together photographs, drawings and text in collages.

Photo elicitation offered children an additional strategy to communicate their experiences, and this enabled an articulation of their non-verbal forms of coping and resisting in situations of domestic violence. Children are able to communicate clearly how their use of space, of relationships and of creativity and sport enabled them to

cope more effectively with the experience of violence and its aftermath.

Different strategies were used to build and share children's photo-based and other graphic articulations of their experiences. In the UK and Italy, videos were made and shared via social media to extend the reach of the project beyond those who could physically attend the exhibition. The videos can be viewed at http://www.unars.co.uk/young-peoples-page.php.   Exhibitions were held in each of the four partner contexts, to share imagery and text the children had produced. The exhibitions were held in town centre locations in each partner contexts. The exhibitions were attended by a good range of stakeholders, policy makers and professionals. Young people who had been participants in research and in group interventions were invited to attend the opening events for the exhibitions.

The UK exhibition drew a mix of visitors from a range of disciplines, including DV practitioners, local Counsellors, educators, adults who had experienced domestic violence, commissioners, academics, members of the public, artists and therapeutic practitioners. Feedback was very positive, visitors commented on the power of the images and the unexpected resilience and humour present in the children's stories. Interest mounted around our therapeutic intervention programme, and the possibility of roll out into the local area. Visitors made the following comments:

> *"A huge amount of fascinating and moving stuff. Need to come for a second look to take it in. Also an excellent example of a research-based exhibition."*
>
> *"Moving stories, effectively and sensitively presented."*
>
> *"Great stuff. Though I had to remind myself that I was allowed to laugh at the funny bits – not doing so seems disrespectful too. Thanks."*
>
> *"Powerful images and words. Dreams and hopes came through strongly as did the tension between wanting to leave and needing to stay."*
>
> *"Beautiful images and moving stories. The courage and spirit of survival shines through as well as the warmth and humour."*
>
> *"Very powerful and moving images, with many stories to tell. I hope more people can be made aware of this really important work. Thank you."*
>
> *(Visitors to the UK exhibitions)*

After its main exhibition, with an opening at the Royal Derngate Theatre, and a week-long exhibition at the NN Contemporary Art Gallery, the UK exhibition (which included UK images, but also incorporated a representation of the visual imagery of the entire project) was also shown at the international conference

"Violence: Children, Family, Society", in Northampton on 24-26 June 2015, and at the British Psychological Society's Psychology of Women Section Conference in Windsor, 8-10 July 2015. Visitors' comments suggest that the exhibition had a potent impact. The comments suggest that those who came to the exhibition were able to read in the imagery one of our key findings in this project, the sense of *paradoxical resilience* in children's lived experience of domestic violence and its aftermath – the sense that children's woundedness and difficulties are in many senses powerfully connected to their capacity to cope, to feel strong, resistant, and agentic.

In Italy, Puglia, the exhibition was held in Bari in a gallery in the old town, on 29-31 Mary 2015. This made the exhibition highly accessible to the public. Visitors to the exhibition made the following comments:

"Very interesting project: impressive pictures"

"Images tell about difficult lives, but those lives are also wings to take off and fly over open spaces. The freedom."

"Images charged with suffering but displayed with the lightness of artists."

"Avoid every corner because it is the most dangerous point, there is a need to create openings, windows onto the world, everybody should share and become part of the beauty of life. It takes only a little gesture to be able to listen, to help who is in need to get their own life back."

"The body cries out what the mouth is unable to say. The body knows the discouragement of not being understood. It is necessary to be more capable to listen; this exhibition with children's eyes express an aching solitude."

"It is the actual evidence that children and young people, if properly guided, are able, using creativity to articulate their complex life experience. Congratulations for the innovation and your commitment."

"Everything was so moving and touching"

"Good job. Images transferring emotions…. It should be taken to the public debate."

"Transforming discomfort into an opportunity of social redemption. Well done!"

"The emotion conveyed by images, words, voices is intense and powerful. They leave traces across the soul. My wish of a wonderful life to all girls and boys who participated."

(Visitors to the Puglia exhibition)

In Greece, the photo elicitation exhibition was held on 20-25 April 2015, entitled 'Keep Walking and Sharing'. It was held in the Foyer of the Administration Building of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, a central and accessible location. It was attended by a range of guests, including students, professionals, academics, and a group of school children. The exhibition was positively received, and there was discsussion with researchers, as well as comments in the guest book, that suggested the focus on resilience was of interest to

visitors. In Valencia, the exhibition was held as part of the final conference for the project, and was visited by approximately 150 people.

> *Very strong experiences from an interesting photo gallery*
>
> *Could a negative experience lead to self-awareness and resilience at the end?*
>
> *Really shuddered! Everyone should see this exhibition, in order for children's voice to be heard. Children cannot speak loud, because they are afraid!*
>
> *I liked the idea of the voice behind the picture*
>
> *It was a very strong experience for me. I liked both the idea of the intervention and the exhibition as a source of thinking*
>
> *So many broken hearts... Why?*
>
> *A very interesting exhibition, a reason for me to reconsider my views about resilience*
>
> *(Visitors to the Thessaloniki exhibition)*

3.3 Normative childhood and paradoxical resilience: Key insights from the interviews and photo elicitation activities

As we have previously noted, most of the literature on domestic violence describes children as 'witnesses' who are 'damaged' by their 'exposure' to violence. This kind of representation of children positions them as passive, wounded and unable to act. Effectively it is a pathologising representation that underestimates children's capacity to resist or to be agentic, simply because it does not *look at these capacities,* instead presuming that these childhoods are damaged, and looking for evidence of that damage.

In our account of children's agency in their experiences of domestic violence, we have highlighted the often complex, contradictory nature of the way that children cope. We do not wish to understate or underestimate how much pain domestic violence causes to children: its impact is significant. However, our argument is that in focusing just on damage and on a very limited reading of resilience that tends to position resilience as an outcome or a set of character traits or skills, the domestic violence literature effectively

functions to limit our reading of children's lives just to damage. It underestimates the points of strength that children are able to build, it underestimates their creativity, their capacity to find ways to cope with even the most difficult situations. It underestimates their capacity for resistance and for agency.

In understanding how children are able to resist and have agency in situations of domestic violence and abuse, we suggest that what characterises children's experiences of violence is a kind of paradoxical resilience. When children live in conflict laden environments, they have to find complex ways of coping and managing themselves and their relationships. What may appear as 'dysfunctional' and difficult in the eyes of clinically trained adults, is often the way that children have found to cope in highly located, creative and agentic ways. Consider this example from the interview with George and Paul:

> *George: Yeah, I sent a letter to ((my social worker)) saying I don't want to see my dad, and my dad found out and he got really angry and we never spoke to each other for a long time. And then ((my support worker)) got some people in, and I didn't speak a lot, my brother did, because I got my brother to speak, I told him what to say. Because I like, if I tell him and he says it, then if he's doing all the speaking and it doesn't get back to dad, then he'll get hmm hmm, and I wouldn't*

> *And then ((support worker)) got some people in, and I didn't speak a lot, my brother did, because I got my brother to speak, I told him what to say. Because I like, if I tell him, and he says it, then if eh's doing all the speaking and it does get back to dad, then he'll get (hmmm hmmm) and I wouldn't. Hm.*

> *Int: you'll hide behind your brother.*

> *George: Yeah. Sometimes*

George describes how he will position his younger brother to speak for them, so that, if there is any negative fallout from 'speaking out' about issues with his father, or other concerns, Paul, and not George, will be in the firing line. At first glance, this seems a horrible, manipulative and perhaps even pathological thing to do. However, it is often the case that young people who live in dire circumstances cope and express of resilience in ways that are not always 'prosocial' or particularly 'nice'. However, the incident described here needs to be understood in the context in which is it located – as a located response to a conflicted and difficult family life, and as located in the relationship between the brothers. From other elements of the interview, it is very clear that George and Paul enjoy a very close, albeit rather macho, bond, and that George in particular is actually fiercely protective of his brother. He knows, for instance, that his younger brother is less likely than he is to experience the full impact of his father's anger, and he also knows that his younger brother is more likely to be protected by others. He recognises that speaking out about his father is necessary to protect them both, but it is also risky. He also recognises that it is less risky for the younger brother to do the talking. He has learned, like most of the children we interviewed that keeping quiet is a protective strategy, but that

it has its limits, and that sometimes you need to be heard. Speaking out through others is a safer strategy for George, it is a highly resilient strategy. While it might be tempting to dismiss what George describes here as poor social skills or manipulativeness, it is more important, we argue, to read the incident as a highly located example of a kind of paradoxical resilience that can only be understood in its context – it is a resilience that may not look very resilient on the surface. We suggest that in our drive for closure and happy endings, professionals and those who support children who experience domestic violence risk obscuring their expressions of resistance and resilience.

It is also clear that, in children's accounts, there is an inextricable intertwining of their experiences of damage and of coping. Children's experiences of domestic violence is a little like a double helix, with the twin strands of coping and damage entirely intertwined. Their capacity to be strong, to be agentic, to be resilient can only be read in the context of the actions that function to undermine their development of agency and resilience, forms of relating that characterise violence, abuse and coercive control. Consider, for instance, the examples of children hiding away in cupboards, hidey holes and dens. In some senses this looks like an accession to abuse and control – children might be seen by professionals and academics as hiding away, as cowering in corners. However, if we only see this painful and difficult aspect of the child's behaviour, and do not try to make sense of the meaning they attach to it, we do not see the ways in which it is *also* resistant and resilient. Children are not *just* frightened, they are not *just* hiding. They are creating spaces for themselves, in which they can feel just slightly safer, just a little more like ordinary children.

This sense of paradoxical resilience, and the intertwining of coping and damage are key insights from the work we have done with children as part of the UNARS project. This understanding of the complexity of children's resilience and capacity for agency and resistance is captured well in this extract from one of the photo elicitation responses:

It has not been easy for me to take a picture of a bee. But for me it is important. For me, the memory of the bee sting is very painful, although I have never been stung. It was my mother who told me to say that I had been stung, if someone at school asked me why I had a red cheek. Once she told me to say that I had picked u a knock playing with my sister. She did not want me to say that it was my father….

But now I no longer think about that bee, but about the flower…. So I do not want to think about the sting, which has always made me so afraid, but to travel among the flowers, free and happy

Photovoice participant, Umbria, Italy.

This example illustrates perfectly the importance of holding children's difficult and complex experiences in mind, when making sense of their capacity to cope, to be resilient, and to have agency. The child here

indicates that it was *important* for them to take the photo of the bee, which symbolises both the physical pain of violence at home, and the betrayal involved in being told to cover up the true source of that pain. The child suggests that they no longer wish to think about the 'bee' but about 'wandering free through the flowers'. However, that they have chosen to present an image that draws the two together – the bee and the flower, the pain and the hope of freedom from pain, demonstrates the way that the two experiences intertwine. The child is aware that their capacity for resilience is rooted in the experience of pain that they have. Their capacity to resist, to have agency, to have hope, is located in the very experiences that caused them suffering.

In working with children who have experienced domestic violence, it is important to start from a position of understanding these paradoxical resiliencies – these are their 'strengths'. It is important too to recognise that relying on a pathologised representation of children who experience domestic violence relies heavily on constructs of normative childhood (Burman, 2008) that position alternative roles for children as necessarily problematic, a notion that has been challenged, for instance, in literature on child carers (O'Dell, Crafter, de Abreu, & Cline, 2010). A reliance on normative constructions of childhood obscures the complexity of relationships in which children cope with and manage the impact of violence and underestimates the role of relational coping (Banyard & Graham-Bermann, 1993; Fine, 1992) in children's responses to violence.

Chapter 3: The "Voices" of the Children: Experiences of agency, resistance and paradoxical resilience - Key Points

➢ Our interviews with children were dynamic interactions, in which children were able to articulate their experiences of violence, and of coping with violence.

➢ It was clear from children's interviews with us that they did not experience themselves as passive witnesses to domestic violence, rather they were active in making sense of and coping with the experience of violence in their lives.

➢ Children's experiences of woundedness and coping intertwine, and responses that may appear to an external professional to be 'pathological' or problematic often have features of a kind of *paradoxical resilience.*

➢ Children were active in managing their disclosure of domestic violence. They talked about the dangers of speaking out, with many children describing disclosure of violence at home as being risky – leaving them open to bullying at school, leaving them and their families vulnerable to criticism and judgement, and exposing themselves and their families to what they often saw as the risk of professional and service involvement.

➢ The children we interviewed demonstrated high levels of agency in their relationships - in the ways that they forged, maintained and managed complex, and often highly conflictual family relationships.

➢ Children made quite strong decisions for themselves about who they did and did not include in their definition of family. Drawing boundary lines around who was and was not family enabled them to create quite a clear sense of who they allowed close and who they did not.

Chapter 3: The "Voices" of the Children: Experiences of agency, resistance and paradoxical resilience - Key Points

➤ A general pattern in our interviews suggested that caring gives children a considerable sense of validation, empowerment and competence. Understood from the point of view of the professional, this kind of caregiving is often judged to be problematic, as children are seen taking on premature adult roles. However, this kind of interpretation is firmly located in normative understandings of childhood; it is an adultist interpretation, which does not take into sufficient account how children understand the experience of caring themselves.

➤ Children who experience domestic violence are often described in domestic violence literature as having poor social skills (Wood & Sommers, 2011). Detailed interviews with children suggest that this is only a partial story of children's experiences, and that children's relational experiences and relational coping is subtle and complex when living with domestic violence and its aftermath.

➤ The experience of being embodied subjects, moving in physical spaces emerged as an important feature of both children's experiences of domestic violence, and of their resistance to it. Even when children were not directly physically hurt themselves, their bodies were still experienced as both a target of control and as a site of resistance to that control. Children were acutely aware of the spaces of the home, and the ways those spaces were used by the family at different times of the day. They were aware, for instance, that shared spaces – living rooms / lounges, dining rooms, kitchens – were more dangerous spaces, and that these spaces were often highly regulated and controlled by the perpetrator. Children used a range of strategies to create alternative safe spaces for themselves.

➤ Photo elicitation offered children an additional strategy to communicate their experiences, and this enabled an articulation of their non-verbal forms of coping and resisting in situations of domestic violence. Children are able to communicate clearly how their use of space, of relationships and of creativity and sport enabled them to cope more effectively with the experience of violence and its aftermath.

Chapter 4: Building an Intervention to Support Children's Capacity for Agency, Resistance and Resilience

4 Developing an intervention to support children's agency, resistance and resilience

The group therapy intervention was built using insights from the interviews completed with children and young people. Our intention in the intervention was to build on the strengths and strategies that children told us had helped them to cope, be resilient and find ways to resist. It was important to us, in constructing the intervention, that we

> The therapeutic intervention was designed based on insights from interviews with children and young people

focus on what children who had lived with domestic violence had told us. We did not want to take an abstract or universalising approach to 'resilience' (Ungar, 2005). We resisted the tendency in work with children affected by domestic violence to attempt to restore 'normative childhood', instead respecting children's capacity for agency, and the paradoxical nature of their coping and resistance. We were interested in supporting children from the point of view of their own coping, rather than trying to dismantle their strategies to build ones that were consistent with idea of what 'good' or 'normal' childhood is.

We developed an intervention that valued children's capacity to cope and to have agency, and that drew on methods that the children in our 100+ interviews had told us were important to them. For that reason, our intervention focused on three areas: 1) creativity; 2) embodiment and use of space; and 3) relationality. The intervention was informed by systemic and creative therapeutic approaches, and used a blend of established and novel group therapeutic techniques to help children and young people express their sense of the experience of living with violence, the things that helped them to cope, and to strengthen their ability to cope. More detail of the activities embedded in the intervention can be found in the Intervention Manual, which can be found at www.unars.co.uk.

The focus of the intervention was not on violence itself but on its effects as experienced in everyday life, its relational implications as well as children's abilities and strategies of caring and coping.

Building on our research findings in the first phase of the project, the main objective of our intervention was to empower children by helping them: build safety and trust; develop trust in themselves and others; explore, share and develop coping strategies; build positive self-identity and envisage a positive potential future; challenge myths and self-fulfilling prophecies about domestic violence; foster caring relationships and social support; and deal with endings and loss. To this purpose we integrated creative, narrative, systemic and Gestalt therapeutic techniques. We developed a range of group activities children could choose from, that involved materials like photos, collages, puppets and other creative media (e.g. music, drawing, poetry..), together with embodied and somatic exploration. We presented children with input from the research phase (e.g. from photo elicitation activities, interview extracts, drawings), focusing on learning

and sharing adequate-adaptive coping strategies, while helping them to understand and change the more dysfunctional ones.

The creative and embodied techniques helped to engage children and adults in a shared process, by blending verbal with non-verbal communication. Creative and embodied methods are in this way child-friendly, non pathologizing and resource-oriented. Alternative and multiple symbolic representations of self, relationships and family systems are created so that the *not-yet- said* (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988; Larner, 2000) can be drawn and told, often for the very first time. Especially the *silenced or difficult to articulate narratives*, memories and questions are rendered expressible. At the same time difficulties in constructing identities and conflicts related to split loyalties within family relations (e.g. attachment to the perpetrator) could be acknowledged and expressed, discussed, validated and, sometimes, re-negotiated.

> Creative and embodied methods blend verbal and nonverbal communication, and are way child-friendly, non pathologizing and resource-oriented.

The group provided an open safe place to experience, share, express and regulate emotions and behaviours through different media. The group context offers a potentially less stigmatizing, pathologising and isolating experience compared to individual therapy, because of the possibility of shared experience and solidarity within the group, which can challenge children and young people's sense of 'difference'. .Although the intervention did not involve a formal 'psychoeducation' on DV, it provided children with range of feedback and reinforcement from peers and facilitators and enabled participants to practice different ranges of responses and learn from each other (modelling)– e.g. learn about emotions, consequences, what they are, what is 'normal', trauma and fear responses, develop understanding and emotional knowledge in puzzling, complex or aggressive relations (e.g. bullying, DV..).

The intervention was piloted in the UK, and then rolled out through the four countries of the partnership for a total of 10 groups (two sites in Italy) and 60 young people. Two 10 session groups were run in each partnership by two facilitators, all experienced therapists, supported by domestic violence support workers. Across all four partner locations, children and young people were extremely positive about the intervention. For instance, Antonia (Italy, Umbria / CoHor) reported that she felt the intervention was *"very positive, very important"* to her, while Leo (UK) said:

> *I've enjoyed it and I've looked forward to it. It's not like, "oh, I've got to go to UNARS" (mock miserable expression). I can't wait because I like the people and I like the people that lead it as well. So I've enjoyed it.*

The most common comments in the interviews were that they wanted the intervention to be longer, and that it offered a positive context in which they felt able to articulate their experiences – sometimes for the first time. For instance:

> *Gio (Greece): The number of the session was small, and I would say that it should be longer, because now we are emotionally tied all together, psychologists, children.*

> *Ath (Greece): I would like a bit more ((laughs))*

> *Teodora (Puglia, Italy): I wished that the programme ran more than once in a week and in a bigger room. As to the size of the group to me it was ok and I think also the activities offered were good. I wished the programme was longer. I don't know actually what to add or to delete to the programme*

> *Victoria (Spain): I wish that next year, this year ... there were more of these sessions.*

This concern that there was not enough time was the only consistent complaint about the group. (There were isolated concerns expressed in some interviews about specific personality clashes, but these were not consistent features of any of the interviews.) Orestis made a particularly poignant point that the number of sessions was enough to produce a sense of bonding in the group, but not enough for them to sustain the relationships formed there. The sense of not having enough time did seem to be a reflection of both how positively the group was regarded, and a sense of needing more space and time to process issues that emerged in the group, for instance, Kevin (UK) says:

> *I think it should probably start a bit earlier and finish at the same time that it does….. Because sometimes when we go I'm like, "Oh is it up already?"… Sometimes I'm like, "Oh, I wanted it to last a bit longer."*

4.1 Building self-expression, self confidence and trust

Children reported that they experienced the group as a positive, trusting environment in which they could express themselves, build self-confidence, and test out and strengthen their capacity to trust others. Trust was foundational to the work that children were able to do together, and was built organically. Antonia (Italy, Umbria / CoHor) notes:

> *"I learnt to respect my self and to open up with others. I learnt to trust in myself…. The intervention made us stronger, and improved our self-confidence. "* (Antonia, Italy, Umbria / CoHor)

From the shared activities, and particularly shared creative activities, children built a sense of trust in each other and in the group. For instance, commenting on doing the Tree of Life activity in the group, Hannah (UK) notes:

> *Int: what did you learn from doing that activity?*
>
> *Hannah: I learnt who I can trust*

Trusting relationships were established in the group, not so much in the explicit trust building activities as through a sense of shared experience and communal activity.

> Trusting was not just something that was necessary for the group to function, but was experienced by participants as a key outcome of the group process.

Trusting was not just something that was necessary for the group to function, but was experienced by participants as a key outcome of the group process. They felt that their experiences in the group enabled them to live more trustingly outside the group.

> *GIO (Greece):   The most important thing I learnt? To trust people, as before I didn't. I was cautious. But when you get to know someone and he/she trusts you, and you can always test somebody for that. And this is the most important thing for me, trust.*

Through trusting others within the group, Orestis has learned important skills that he can apply beyond – to trust people as he did not before. He recognises too that trust emerges in relationships as you get to know someone, and that he should not trust unthinkingly, but allow people to demonstrate their trustworthiness in relationships as they emerge.

Being in a trusting environment enabled participants to express themselves, talking about things that they had not previously felt able to discuss.

> *Int: What was it like being with the other people in the group?*
>
> *Ruby: The first time I was a bit scared and talking about the bullying because I had only told the people here who cook the food, and they told me that I should ask the group for advice. So Penny (facilitator) helped me say what happened.*

Here, Ruby (UK) describes how she was able to use the safe space of the group to talk about current experiences that were troubling to her – experiences of bullying. She had not previously been able to discuss these experiences, and the facilitative environment enabled her to express this. The participants described the experience of talking in the group as liberating:

Gio, (Greece): [...] And we were talking about issues, that were interesting for us, for our age and they 'opened our minds', which means that we were talking about psychology issues and our feelings and we were expressing them and it was like we relaxed, and we had a greater time.

Int: So when you come here, you're more able to talk about things?

Leo, (UK): Yeah. You can just think about, oh, what are we going to talk about tonight, or just have fun with it. You don't think, oh, we've got to talk about this. Oh, we've got to talk about that. The freedom in the sense that you can talk about a lot of things and mostly anything.

Ruby, (UK): It feels like how I feel and that I don't have to be afraid any more.

Int: Afraid of what?

Ruby: Talking .... I can speak more about what I want to do, and so I don't feel trapped inside anymore

Ruby's sense of being able to speak relates to past, present and future. She is no longer afraid to express the things she wants for herself, and this leaves her feeling freer. Both she and Orestis experience the ability to express themselves as a relief.

This ability to talk about their experiences and express their feeling also had a significant positive impact on their feelings of self confidence. For instance, one participant says:

I think that I'm more confident around people now. Before I wouldn't talk, nobody really knew anything about me. But now I actually like talk to people and show them how much I talk and the stuff I like and stuff, so I think it's helped with that as well. And my – I can't remember what it's called now – my self-image I think it is, because before I used to think I was really fat, because people would say that I was really fat.

She suggests here that her ability to speak out and to feel confident had had a significant knock on effect for the way that she saw herself more generally, undermining her negative self-image, and enabling her to question her acceptance of other people's negative comments about her.

It was also important that young people did not feel pressured to talk in the group, and it was acceptable to be quiet:

Kevin: No, I don't feel like I have to talk about things. I feel like it's comfortable if you don't want to talk about something you just say, "I don't want to talk about that."

Leo: Or if you don't feel like it, you don't have to talk about it

The ability to assert what he did and did not want to discuss was important to Kevin, who felt uncomfortable with some elements of self-disclosure. In addition, young people were offered the space to decide what they did and did not want to do, within a range of possible offers. The ability to decide not to speak is an important element of personal boundary maintenance – as important an element of expressing yourself as being able to articulate directly. Kevin noted that there

> A person-centred approach emphasised the importance of young people having space to decide what they did and did not want to do within a range of possibilities, and without feeling pressured to talk

were ways he was able to safely articulate himself in the group (sometimes indirectly), but strongly valued that he was not required to speak if he did not want to. When asked if he would recommend the group for people who found it hard to talk about their experiences, he said:

Kevin (UK): Yeah I think they should because maybe if they come it might be able to help them think about, "Well if I told some people it might – instead of keeping it all bottled up inside – it might help."

In addition, the safe space afforded by the group environment was itself experienced as a positive thing

Leo (UK): In a group where maybe kids have had experiences where they've had a bad upbringing and they can't talk about problems, being able to do that here is kind of like a little getaway.

Although the group is a space in which these 'bad upbringings' are directly considered and expressed, nonetheless the group offers a contained environment in which children can express themselves, and in that sense it functions as a haven for them.

This trusting space does not need to always be serious – rather the children often used the term 'fun' to describe their experiences of the group:

Hannah (UK): Yeah I trust them. Sometimes during the sessions they will say something and then one of the staff or one of the children would start making a couple of jokes so it doesn't get too uncomfortable, and then we'll have a laugh and then we'll go back to it.

Here Hannah describes the interspersing of difficult, more serious subjects with humour. This helps to diffuse tension and discomfort. In the use of humour in the group, Kevin learns something about himself and his coping style:

> *Kevin (UK): Things like when things are awkward I used to sometimes try and mess about and make it a bit funny to help me cope…. Personal things that I don't really want to talk about and so I try and avoid answering the questions.*

Through his participation in the group, Kevin has become aware of his use of humour as a defence, and has understood that he uses this as a strategy to avoid talking about difficult experiences. He later notes that this is also part of the way he tries to support other people, by lightening the mood and trying to cheer them up when he feels down:

> *Kevin: That I've learned more about how I make people feel and what reaction I have on people.*

This is a very positive reframing of what is a very common form of coping for boys who experience violence – the tendency to be the 'class clown', something that is often problematically labelled as disruptive or negative behaviour in schools for instance. Through the group, Kevin has identified his use of this strategy as a defence against difficult his and others' feelings, and has been able to re-work it (also) as a positive aspect of his self.

4.2 Shared experiences, challenging isolation

The groups were contexts of solidarity, in which young people felt they were able to express themselves and be understood. The children reported that they felt the group was a positive context, a space that they valued and looked forward to:

> *Ruby (UK): I like meeting new people, that was a good thing to do. …. When I came here, on Tuesdays I was really excited to come.*

> *Hannah (UK): I think it would help them so much. If they've had the same sort of life like me, it's helped my life so much so it would definitely help them. I think this group should be on for as long as it can be.*

> *Delia (UK): listening to what other people had to say and what happened to them is just really interesting because I only thought it happened to me. But it doesn't just happen to me, it happens to others as well.*

Martina (Spain) Yes because here ... I felt heard ... .and that I'm not the only one to have problems, and that has helped me ... the truth is not to keep thinking about my problems because I'm not the only one in the world that has problems and some have even more problems..

Sabrina, (Italy, Puglia): it helped me to be more sociable and to share my thoughts with the others.

Rosa (Spain): I truly liked it, I felt heard, because you talk about things you've lived and that others have experienced the same thing and that ... and I've never met before someone who had the same family problems I've had I, um ... abuse... thus ... then ... is a (softly) dunno how to... like ...it has been very positive.

Most children commented that they had not previously understood that other children had had similar experiences, and that being in the group with other survivors of domestic violence enabled them to feel a commonality with the other children. This helped them to feel less *different* from other children, because of a sense of shared history. Understanding that there were others with similar experiences also enabled the children to build a stronger sense of community, which allowed for a deeper level of connection and self-expression. Shared experiences enabled children to feel less isolated and different from others, recognising that other children had experienced the same kinds of difficulties they had.

> The groups were contexts of solidarity, in which young people felt they were able to express themselves and be understood

Gio (Greece): My participation in the program was useful because I was improved psychologically being in a place with children who had similar experiences. And the same views, almost the same views, and common problems

Int: what is the biggest thing you've learned from the programme?

Delia: That I'm not the only one who has witnessed domestic violence.

Shared experience was identified by Orestis as a key component in feeling better himself, psychologically, while for Delia, this sense of shared experience is one of the most important things she learned in the group. This sense of the impact of shared histories was particularly powerful in one of the group activities, where

participants explored some of the photo elicitation materials collated by partners in other European countries. The children found this a profound experience. For instance, Clio (Greece) says:

I am thinking that over here, yes, that these are happening in other countries too, I am thinking Really, me? To be in a programme with children from other countries. It is so good, I am so young and I am one of the thousands children, you could choose.

And Orestis (Greece) notes:

[…] it was about stories of children who were abused, who were facing an awful behaviour from their parents and depending, ones who read the cards, because they were from real interviews, could see that these children were feeling like us…. ((Eeeh)), I, just, it's like it opened my eyes, «Look how many more children, this thing is happening, no matter if they show it on the news as well» ((.))

In these quotes, we can see that the sense of being one of many children who have experienced domestic violence challenged their sense of isolation. Orestis highlights how the fact that the stories he read were *real children's* stories from real interviews was more impactful than, for instance, seeing it on television. In addition, the fact of having participated in a European project enables Clio not only to see herself as experiencing something that occurs to children all over the world, but also enables her to feel quite privileged to have received the support she did to work through her experiences.

The knowledge that they were with children who shared common experiences enabled them to talk openly about their experiences:

Leo (UK): But either way, it was just fun to just— Even if it was a moment where I was upset – I mean I've had one where I've cried – it wasn't embarrassing to do that because that's what you're there for. And the other people are there and they've had similar experiences and they've understood it. So just being able to talk about things is probably the best thing about it.

The shared history removes embarrassment or shame about what is often seen by others as a stigmatised experience. This community context also enabled young people to feel more positively about themselves. They experienced not just what they could take from the group, but also what they could give to others. For instance, Orestis said:

Int: You gave many things. What do you mean by that?

Orestis: ((.)) Let me say I gave good friendship, contact, good behaviour, a good impression (a role model) to many kids. I saw many kids do this. What I gave, in general, when we were talking… someone was giving advice to the other. So I am not bigging myself up. But these kinds of things…. I liked that. I was helping and they were helping me at that time.

The groups provided a context in which mutual support, respect and kindness was a group norm. This enabled all participants to experience the benefits of these qualities, both in themselves and others. The shared experience is seen as enabling mutual support.

Delia: Because then I know what other people are going through and I can give them the support that I got.

The young people reported that the mutuality of experience was key to the benefits they derived from the group – that shared experience both enabled others to listen to them when they spoke, and also enabled them to support others:

Leo: you feel like you're not alone. When you find out other people have experienced it, you help them as much as they'll help you. You give them advice or you give them what you did. You tell them how it happened to you and you can kind of relate. You're not alone. You don't feel in the dark. You don't feel like, oh, I'm not going to tell my story because it's stupid. You don't feel embarrassed by things. So, talking about domestic violence with other people your age that have experienced it, it's a good way to talk about it and get it out of your system because, if there are other problems, you want to talk to people. So it's just like that.

In some groups, there was a strongly expressed wish for this sense of community to extend beyond the therapeutic context:

Rosaria: I would have loved to go out with the others

Int: To go where?

Rosaria: For instance, to go to the sea.

This suggests that the intervention provided young people with a supportive context, and a sense of community, that they wished could be extended beyond the intervention context.

4.3 Creative and embodied methods

Given how powerful the creative methods had been in the first phase of the project, we felt it was important to embed these in the intervention. These methods also enabled an exploration of embodied experience that tied into our finding from the interviews with children in phase one of the project that many of the ways that they maintained a sense of agency and coping was through embodiment and use of space. A range of creative methods were used, including drawing, use of music, and some dramatherapy techniques. These were highly valued by participants in all four countries:

> A range of creative methods were used, including drawing, use of music, and some dramatherapy techniques. These were highly valued by participants in all four countries

> *Antonia (Italy): I loved when at the beginning of each session we listened to and danced with the music we could choose*

> *Ruby (UK): Drawing and talking about our feelings and things, that made me a bit happier.*

> *Victoria (Spain): Dunno ... some have helped me as when I had one of these problems.. they listened, they gave me confidence and that …. The wall painting one… and I don't remember now…Ah, yes, the one that you fell down and the other would catch you. And the wall painting one*

In addition, the creative and embodied methods enabled children and young people to tap into the embodied aspects of their experiences of violence and of recovery from violence – another issue that emerged as very important in the first phase of the project. Talking about one of these activities, in which participants were encouraged to explore their use of space, and their sense of personal space, Orestis (Greece) notes:

> *It had some meaning because I was seeing how my limits were and probably how they will be forever, because I don't think they will change.*

Gio articulates here how an exploration of his sense of embodied self in relationship with others enabled him to gain insight into his experience of interpersonal space – something that he valued in understanding his social interactions in the present and in the future. As Victoria (Spain) notes, it is not always easy to put the experiences she has into words, and she values the creative methods because they enable her to express things that are not so easily articulated verbally. Writing too offers a slightly more distanced and reflected way of putting feelings into words.

> *Victoria: The photos one ... the kids and these photos ones, the tree of life, and the one we just did...*
> *I liked it because there I can write what I feel ... and ... what goes well and what does not, and for*

example I put this ... goes well and this is not ... and it can help me, I cannot explain it ...dunno how to say it.

It is quite common for children who experience violence to be quite restless and physically agitated. For example, many children who have experienced domestic violence are labelled with the diagnosis of ADHD (Graham-Bermann & Seng, 2005). Because of this, children often valued the more embodied and physically expressive activities of the group:

Kevin (UK): Because I don't like sitting still.

Here Kevin reflects on the experience of finding it difficult to sit still, expressing a preference for more embodied, movement oriented activity.

Creative techniques in the group enabled young people to safely explore their experiences of embodied emotion, enabling a space for them to express and begin to name difficult emotional experience:

Hannah (UK): There was a sheet and it had a man drawn on it and we had to write good and bad feelings we've had. For example I put – sometimes when I get really upset it feels like my belly is going to burst open – and I drew that on. That's what we do, it's quite fun.

One of the things that is perhaps remarkable about Hannah's statement here is that, while she was describing a very challenging, difficult emotional experience that clearly is painful for her, the safe space of the group and the creative experience enabled this to be a non-threatening experience for her – one she is in retrospect able to label as 'fun'. A little later in the interview, she refers back to this, saying:

My most favourite was the person, because when we did the feelings we understood how they felt and if they were ever feeling like that again, we know how to comfort them and stuff. If I've got that pain again, they know how to comfort me.

In the shared creative experience she has acquired a profound understanding of the feelings she has, which had previously been unnamed and unarticulated. Now she is able to both recognise the feeling, and able to soothe herself. She returns to this concern when discussing her experience of anger. She describes this as something uncontrollable, explosive, that made her feel pulled apart *("it feels like my mind's blowing up and let's just say it feels like I've been chopped into cubes, glued back together and been blown up")*. She suggested that being able to express that anger was helpful for her:

Hannah: Yeah it's actually helped me be calmer. I've still got the strength on me, but it's sort of weakened it just a tiny bit, so I can hold it in more and not have to let it all out.

As she has been encouraged, through creative and embodied activities, to express her anger in a more contained and safe way, she has acquired more insight, seeing it as something she has more control over – she is 'calmer'. It is important that she does not see this as undermining her sense of her personal strength, but that she is now more able to hold her anger, contain it, and no longer feels compelled to express it explosively.

> Rosa (Spain): The one I liked, is that we had to bring pictures or drawings, and each image or drawing expressing what happened to you in your past, that's ... you remember and you realize, for example ... what you should have done to get out of this, all the abuses and such ... as how you might have fixed it and how before you were blocked ... and I did not know how to react to it, and now as I have come out of there, now I know ... not shut things up.

These methods use narrative structures – and it is always possible with stories to reframe and retell them, to change the endings, to play with different plots and different outcomes. This structure enables children to challenge a sense of themselves often articulated in domestic violence services and literature, that they are doomed to follow one plot line – the repetition of violence and conflict.

4.4 Understanding family and relationships

Some activities were designed to enable young people to visualise and work through their family experiences – for example, the 'tree of life', and ecomaps or family drawings. These were particularly highly valued by participants. These visual and spatial representations of family enabled young people to express complex and conflicted family relationships in ways that did not always require they have the words for the feelings and experiences they wanted to work through:

> Martina (Spain): the tree..Dunno why is that, the tree seemed…like you came out from a past ... Dunno, I liked it... because you can tell a story in a picture …

It became clear that relationships were both a source of considerable strength for children, and a source of conflict, complexity and challenge. Being seen as a 'carer' enabled young people to feel powerful, capable, kind – all contributing to a positive sense of self. However, positions in the family, including role inversions, being 'friends' or carers to siblings and to the non-violent adult, as well as familial alliances, conflict of split loyalties, and familial fractures and feuds, can function to unsettle children and young people too. This paradox within the family needed attention and consideration in the groups.

My favourite activity was 'Tree of Life' because it allowed me to comprehend many things about my life…. The activity 'family sculpture' allowed me to see things I could not see before. (Rosaria, Italy, Umbria / CoHor)

Young people reported a lot of anxiety about being 'like' the perpetrator, and fears about taking on the violent parent's aggression, relational challenges and irrationality. Given the popularity of the discourse of intergenerational transmission in professional work with families affected by domestic violence, this anxiety about learning the perpetrator's behaviours is often entrenched by well meaning

> It became clear that relationships were both a source of considerable strength for children, and a source of conflict, complexity and challenge.

professionals. This is further underscored by a service model that, when it does concern itself with children, tends to emphasise managing their problem *behaviours,* a model that is dependent on a view of children as passive recipients of environmental learning. For instance Leo said:

I did because I used to have anger issues, and my dad did to an extent, and I was worried that maybe in an argument I would just snap and I would just start shouting or maybe start hurting maybe my own kid or someone else…

I think we were discussing about how maybe I don't want kids or maybe how I don't want this and they'd say, "Why?" and you'd say, "Because I don't want to turn out like my mum or my dad," because of what you've experienced. And they kind of say to you, "Look, you can grow strong enough to grow away from that. You're a good person and you're a better person than that." So there were conversations about your future. Maybe if you were scared of turning out like your parents or turning out like the situation, they reassured me. The other day they said, "Look, you'd be a brilliant dad," or this and that, "because of your personality." And maybe if you do feel like you've got some of your dad in you or some of your mum in you, then you can break away from that because, by doing that and knowing what's wrong, you know what's right.

Leo finds a space within the group both to express his anxieties about being like his father, and also to work

> The construct of intergenerational transmission is entrenched in professional discourse, but it has implications for families' anxieties around repeating the behaviour of the perpetrator

through those anxieties. The positive recognition in the group of qualities that were different from the perpetrator was reassuring for him, and helped him to begin to envision an alternative positive future for himself. This was exacerbated by the sense in many families of a very black and white representation of the

perpetrator, where he was positioned as entirely bad. In Ruby's account of her father, it became clear that she had started to idealise him, and crave contact with him, precisely because she was unable to talk about him at all. In some families the perpetrator had become almost unspeakable in the family, and children's relationships with their perpetrator parent / step-parent were rendered inarticulable in this dynamic. *Ruby, UK: It (the group) makes me more confident. Like aim and talk to my mum more, but we don't really talk about him in the house because my brothers don't like him.*

The group provided a space in which Ruby could start to speak about her father, and her ambiguous feelings about her father. She recognises that she cannot easily discuss this at home, but being able to talk to him in the group gives her a space in which he can be more articulable, increasing her confidence to be able to discuss him at home, where he has become an unspeakable. Ruby used resources she learned in the group – particularly the drawings and other creative activities produced in the group – to 'take home' these messages to her mother.

This sense of the father as an unspeakable within the family was particularly problematic for some children, for whom the violent parent became larger than life, or for whom the positive elements of their relationship with the violent parents became inexpressible. The need to recognise both the positive and negative aspects of historical relationships with perpetrator parents was discussed at length, particularly in the

> **Children's relationships with their fathers were often complex, and they needed space to work them through.**

UK groups. This was not always straightforward – for instance, Leo says:

> *So in a way, my dad's wrongdoing has done a lot of right, but at a sacrifice. So as much as I want to drink and explore as a teenager and a young adult, when you grow up you kind of realise what damage it does, not only to your personal health but your actual mental health and what you can do to other people.*

By talking through the problematic aspects of his relationships with his father, and working through is experiences with him, Leo is able to find ways of incorporating these positively into his sense of who he is – and who he is not.

The group based activities and discussions also helped young people have a better understanding of domestic violence. For instance:

> *Teodora (Italy, Puglia): I learnt that violence is unacceptable*

This included an understanding of the limits of their own responsibilities and what they should do in relation to preventing violence

Int: What activity did you find most helpful in understanding domestic violence?

Hannah: Well we had a conversation and it was about what violence you shouldn't get into, what you should, like help the person, separate. We also discussed that if we haven't got anything good to say then don't say anything. So we discussed quite a bit.

Int: Okay, so when you should and shouldn't intervene in violence?

Hannah: Yeah. …. Because every single fight – every time my dad used to fight my mum - I used to try and pull him off her, scream at him, grab his shoulders, pull him off and then Sky saw that I was really worried about mum and then she started getting really worried so she helped. We did that a lot.

Although Hannah is still quite confused in relation to the violence she has seen at home, she shows here some insight into the limits of her responsibility in preventing violence. She recognises that she did try to intervene, and had some agency in relation to the violence happening at home. But there also seems to be an understanding that in many sense that was not her role, and certainly not her responsibility. A similar insight is shared by Alexia, in Greece, and Delia, in the UK:

> In evaluation interviews, children described themselves as having a better understanding of domestic violence itself, and its impact on family relationships

Alexia: (((…)) I used to think that what was happening was my fault, but then I realized It wasn't. It was ((.)) someone's fault. Anyway. I realized that from this group.

Delia: (I came to understand) that it wasn't my fault that it happened and that I shouldn't blame myself for it happening and stuff.

Children also described themselves as having a better understanding of domestic violence itself, and its impact on family relationships.

Int: has it helped you to understand domestic violence more?

Hannah: Yeah, so much. Because now I know how mum was feeling and now I can support her more…. Yeah because now I know what she's been doing, how she feels and how to solve fights and arguments, to keep her calm.

Here, Hannah sees what she has learned in the group as having a positive impact on her relationship with her mother, who she feels she now understands better. By gaining better insight into her own feelings of anger, and the way that these are in turn shaped by her experiences of violence, she is able to extend those insights to her relationship with her mother. In this extract, we see Hannah engaged in what other authors have described as parentified behaviour (Katz, 2015) – caregiving for her mother, looking after her feelings. But as we have previously suggested, enabling children to channel this often very positive and empowering sense of self as carer, rather than pathologising it as 'premature' may be more functional, and respectful to the ways that children have had to learn to cope with violence in the home. Here, Hannah presents herself as a partner with her mother, managing difficult feelings together, in alliance. Similarly Kevin highlights how he has used his learning in the group to tackle conflict in his friendship group or at school in a more positive way:

> Kevin: It's like I find it hard to cope with if there's some violence, just try and make peace.
>
> Int: How do you do that?
>
> Kevin: If I heard someone arguing I would say, "Can you stop arguing?" And be more like sit down and talk about it instead of standing up and shouting in each other's faces because that won't make it better, that would make the other person angrier.
>
> Int: Okay, so have you learned to intervene but intervene in a different way?
>
> Kevin: Yeah, in a sensible way instead of walking round and just shouting at them.

Delia also reported a positive impact on her experiences of family life and communication at home:

> Delia: It's helped me be able to tell my mum stuff and not be scared or ashamed of what's happened…. I never used to tell my mum stuff. I just used to keep it in.

Here, she describes a real change in her ability to articulate experiences and feelings in familial relationships, and an increasing openness in familial relationships. This in turn had a positive impact on her sense of self, by reducing feelings of shame & fear.

The intervention did not only impact on familial relationships, but also on relationships with peers. For instance, Beatriz (Spain) says:

> Beatriz: Security (safeness), friendship, and know how to reflect… … knowing that apart from my sister and my family, more people can help me.

Ruby (UK) reports that the intervention transformed her view of relationships. She says it helped her:

Not to bully people because it's not right and because you got bullied in the past it doesn't mean that you can take out how you feel on others. Because I used to take it out on my brothers when I felt unhappy…. Because when we were talking about bullying, because some of the group didn't really talk when they were getting bullied, I learnt my lesson not to take it out on others and how you are feeling doesn't mean you can take it out on others sometimes.

:

Hannah, UK: I also enjoyed – I can't remember the activity – I enjoyed the activity where we drew the person and different feelings, because by that you can learn how different people can feel and how people are different, and how you can't just judge them by their looks and stuff.

Bullying emerged as a strong theme in the UK intervention interviews, as discussions of power and violence had led young people to disclose and work through experiences of bullying that they saw as linked to domestic violence. Young people here indicated that the discussions of power, control and violence had enabled them to develop a better understanding of bullying. For instance, Hannah when asked about the biggest thing she's learned from the programme says:

How to help people not to be worried about bullying and how to stop it. If you're being bullied – I don't know how to explain it – if you're being bullied, how to get the bully to understand what they're doing and try and find out why the bully's doing it and help them to stop.

Here she extends her group learning to an understanding of how to deal with bullying herself, as well as how to support others who are experiencing bullying.

4.5 Positive visions of the future

As we have already discussed, many of the young people we spoke to had very real anxieties about being doomed to repeat the cycles of violence and abuse to which they had been exposed. This is a significant discourse in circulation in professional, academic and popular representations of children who experience domestic violence, and it is particularly important that many young people felt that they had shifted their perspective on this, and had, through the intervention, been able to forge a more positive vision of their future selves.

> Through the intervention, children were able to forge a more positive vision of their future selves

> *Rosaria (Umbria / CoHor, Italy): I learned that anything that happens in our lives, even bad things, can be transformed.*

Here, Rosaria clearly articulates a sense of the possibility of transformation, that she is not doomed to repeat. When the facilitator asked Orestis (Greece) which activity had meant the most to him, he said:

> *When Ms ((Facilitator)) made us think how our life would be in 10 years. And we closed our eyes and think how we would be. I thought of a profession and finding my wife…. My children, my home. I had an imaginary world in my mind and it was very nice, I was relaxed. How nice if the future was like that. Now it's still early, I can make my future, I have enough time until then….. I have more optimism for the future, because I didn't have before, with the situation we have.*

He envisions himself not just successful in the world of work, but also as relationally competent, happy and settled. He ascribes this to a sense of fresh hope that he had built in the group intervention context – a new optimism that a better future was possible for himself. In addition to this focus on the distant future, children also reflected on the changes that they have been able to make in the present and near future, and how this will help them build towards a positive adulthood:

> *Ruby (UK): it made me happier so I can get outside and do things, like activities, talk about how I feel and what life ahead of me holds so I can say, "I'm going to try and aim for this in the future" and try and aim for what I want.*

> *Rosa (Spain): Cos you express yourself, and you think about your future, your past and your present ... and that normally you do not stop to think about all that, your dreams, your skills ... how you are too, it helps to know yourself inside.*

> *Beatriz: (Spain) Yes, I like to think about future, roughly shape it in my mind*

> *Gio (Greece): [...] and when I returned from every meeting I felt happier, I felt calm, much better than before and this helped me in other things as well, better grades, better behaviour, in school.*

> *Arturo(Italy, Puglia): Because it helps to cope with these moments and to move forward.*

> *Ath (Greece): It helped me overcome things I couldn't before and now I could.*

A characteristic of many people's experiences of violence and trauma is a sense of a foreshortened future – a sense of living only for today (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As Ratcliffe, Ruddell, & Smith (2014, p. 2) note, this sense of foreshortened future involves "a sense that the future is bereft of positive, meaningful life events is equally a sense that one's meaningful life is in the past, finished." Adding to this the anxiety children felt about being doomed to repeat cycles of violence, and it is clear that this shift in their

feelings about 'tomorrow' is an important one. Leo very eloquently articulates how the integration of familial experiences into his sense of self enables the development of this more positive sense of his future:

> *Leo (UK): we did do a bit of activity where we did the tree of life, or whatever they call it, where you discuss your roots and then what your main things are, your trunks, and then your branches off and your fruits, your dreams and that. So that helps you think ahead and think about what you really want to be. It made you really realise what you've got and what you want … So when you talk about the tree of life, you're trying not to forget where you come from. So when you talk about your roots and talk about your family and who's helped you and who's been there in your dark times and your good times, by doing that you can also talk about who you've got right now and where you want to go after, just in case, because the branches identify different paths if you don't make it. So if I don't make it as a footballer, I've always wanted to be into sports science at university. And if I don't do that, I want to be maybe an artist or an architect. So you can just aspire and you can also discover your other interests and see if they'll ever take you somewhere.*

Like almost any bright, capable teenager, Leo describes a sense of his future where his world is his oyster. This is rooted in a sense of his family where he is no longer doomed to repeat familial patterns, but is able to take strength from and learn from his history, and use it – even the broken and painful bits – to build a sense of his future.

4.6 Routine outcomes monitoring

Children completed routine outcomes monitoring before the first session, and at each subsequent session of the intervention. The outcomes tracked children's perception of their subjective wellbeing (the CORS) and their perception of the group and their relationship with the group.

Fig. 1 shows one participant's CORS scores across the duration of the 10-week UK intervention programme. There is evidence of a positive effect, an upward trend in which progress increases between 1 - 4.5 points between the first and final sessions. 'Me' is the only item not to dip throughout during the course of the programme suggesting that although 'Child 5' may have perceived a decrease in progress in specific areas of their life (e.g. family and school) it did not negatively impact upon their own subjective wellbeing or perception of self.

Fig. 1. CORS Scores: UK Child 5
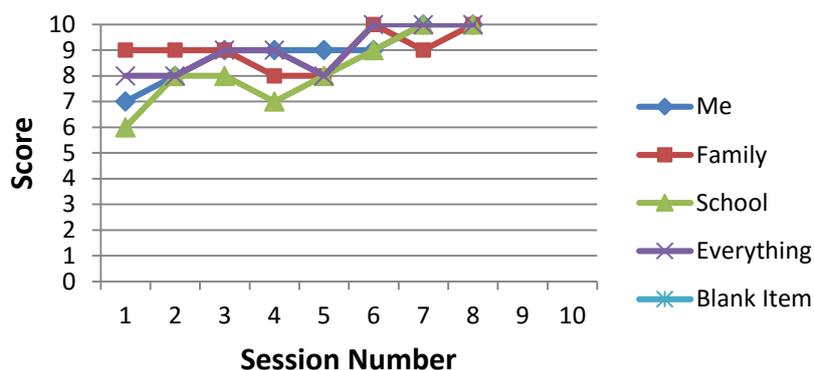
Interestingly, as noted in Fig.1 other children participating in the therapeutic intervention programme perceived a reduction in their subjective wellbeing in relation to their families during the course of the intervention - see fig.2 below. Fig. 3 shows 64% of the UK participants report fluctuations in subjective 'family' wellbeing scores, with some sharp troughs and peaks. During the running of the programmes in the UK, facilitators and co-ordinators were contacted by carers, who at times expressed concerns for changes in their child's behaviour, specifically, their child's

Findings in relation to the perceived wellbeing of the family, suggests that a holistic, whole family approach to domestic violence intervention would be helpful in empowering and facilitating the family to process their experiences together

desire to talk about the person who had perpetrated the domestic violence (most commonly the children's father or parental figure). These findings might lead us to conclude that intervention which supports only one member of a family that has been affected by domestic violence to process difficult and emotionally challenging material, may have a slightly unsettling effect on the way the family is perceived, or on the family system itself. This is not to suggest that some disruption to the family system would be entirely negative, it could have positive consequences, spurring the child, young person and family into revaluating their relationships and underlying issues and working to improve them. This finding specifically in relation to the subjective wellbeing of the family, does suggest that a holistic, whole family approach to domestic violence intervention would be helpful in empowering and facilitating the family to process their experiences together, working through difficulties and tensions as they arise.

Fig. 2. CORS Scores - UK Child 10

Fig. 3. CORS 'Family' Item - UK
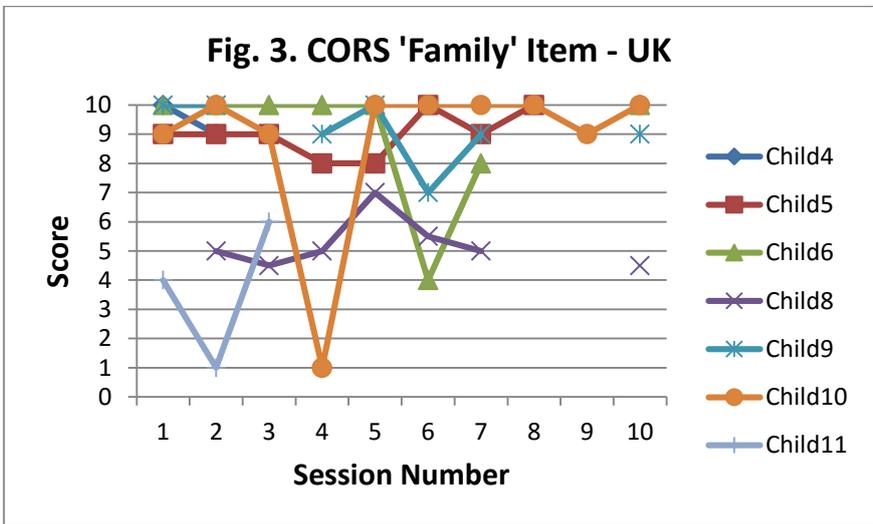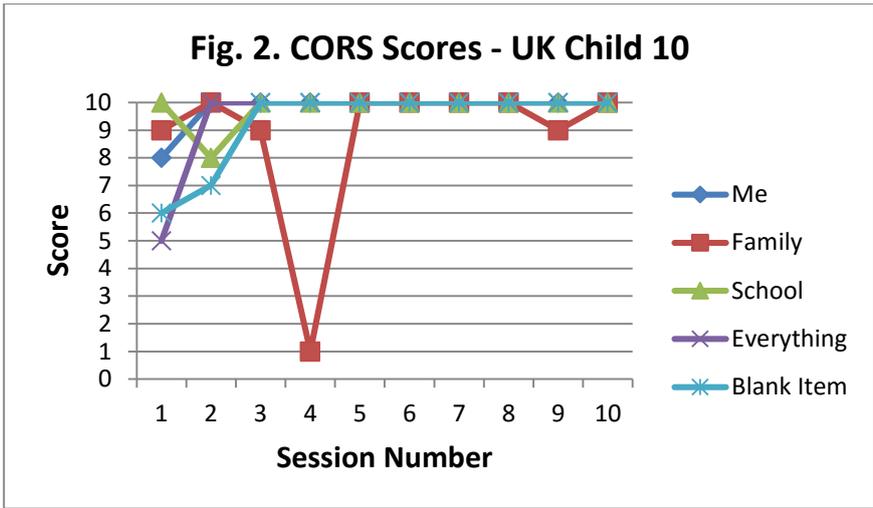
Fig.4 and 5 show an upward trend in Umbria / CoHor and Puglia Children's CORS scores, with participants' ratings following similar trends. Although there is some fluctuation across the two programmes in the children's perceptions of wellbeing (in relation to 'Me', 'Family', 'School', 'Everything', and a 'blank' item – left empty to allow children to chart their own progress in a given area), generally scores increase between 1-5 points.

Fig. 4. Median CORS Scores - Umbria / CoHor, Cohor
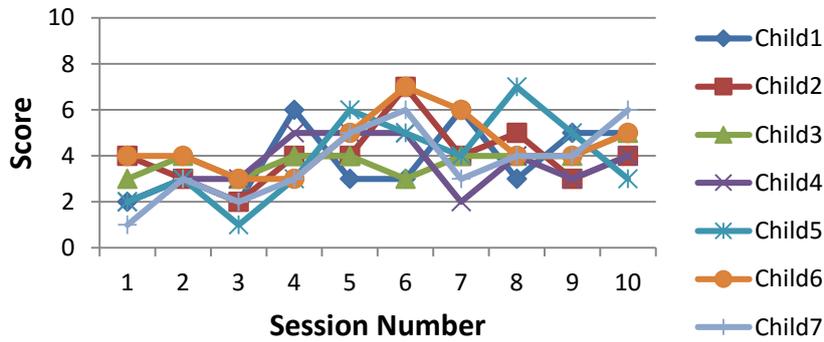
Fig. 5. Median CORS Scores - Puglia, Il Meridiano
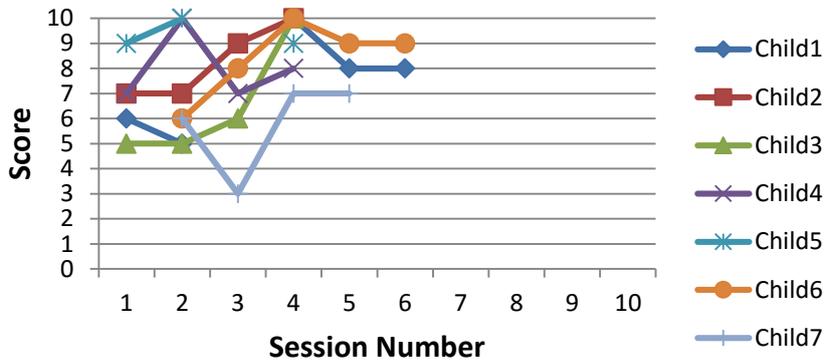
Children were invited to rate the group process in CGSRS questionnaires ('Child Group Session Rating Scale'), which specifically attended to how they felt the group 'Listened', the 'Importance' of discussions, how they felt about 'Activities' and each session 'Overall'. Children in Spain (see Fig.6 below) scored highly (scores predominantly sit between 9-10 points), with only one child's scores dropping to 5 before returning back to 10 points. Similarly, Umbria / CoHor median CGSRS scores (Fig. 7) all increase over the duration of the programme between 1-4 points, further evidence of children's positive experience of the intervention.

Fig. 6. Median CGSRS Scores - Spain

Fig. 7. Median CGSRS Scores - Umbria / CoHor, Cohor
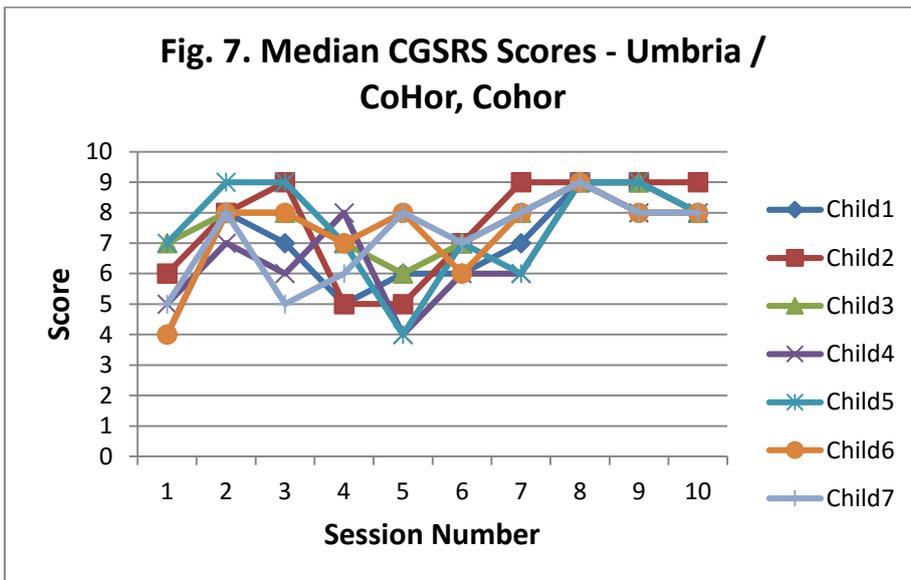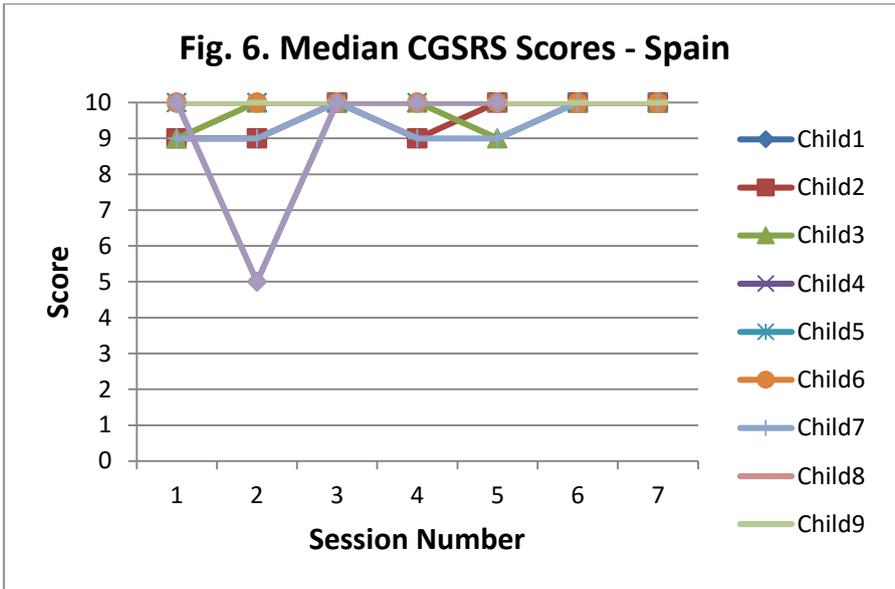
Children attending the intervention in Greece consistently rate their wellbeing highly throughout the programme (see fig.8. below). There is an upturn in scores for one participant (Child 25), but generally individual participant's scores remains consistently high over time. The intervention in Greece was conducted with a majority of children whom had either been removed from familial contexts of violence and were residing in an orphanage, or who were receiving statutory support through a day centre.. High wellbeing could reflect a sense of stability and safety in these children's circumstances as well as companionship, empathy and understanding from the children they live with who have experienced similar difficulties.

Fig. 8. Median CORS Scores - Greece (p19-25)
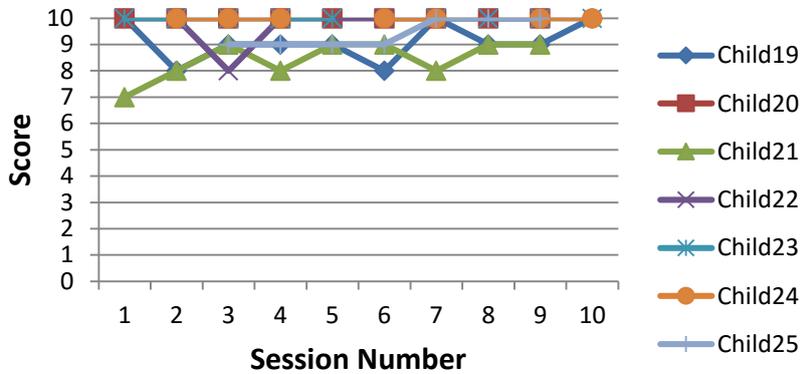
Fig. 9 & 10 (below) show the European quantitative pre and post intervention evaluation data from session 1 to session 8 (prior to the final 2 follow-up sessions). The output from the Wilcoxon test shows participants' positive ratings in each item outweigh negative ranks by between 1-15 points, with 9 out of 10 items relating to wellbeing and group process significantly improving between the first and last session. Only 1 item failed to significantly improve, this was the 'Blank Item', an item that

Children's scores on the wellbeing measures at the beginning and end of the intervention showed an improvement in subjective wellbeing in all 4 areas ('Me', 'Family', 'School', 'Everything')

was left blank to allow participants to track their progress in an area of importance to them (e.g. football, guitar playing, homework). This item did not seem to engage participants as the other items on the questionnaires did and it was infrequently and inconsistently completed by participants. Children's scores on the wellbeing measures at the beginning and end of the intervention did show an improvement in subjective wellbeing in all 4 areas ('Me', 'Family', 'School', 'Everything'), as children moved through this programme, and the difference between pre and post measures was statistically significant. Because there was no control group, it is impossible to comment on whether this improvement was directly related to the intervention, but it does suggest an overall positive trend, that tallies with the qualitative interviews completed with children. Participants found the group process to be a positive experience, the intervention content of value and importance, activities enjoyable and feeling as though they were listened to by the facilitators and their peers.

Fig. 9. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test: Intervention Evaluation - Pre & Post Measures

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Me 2 - Me 1	Negative Ranks	0[a]	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	15[b]	8.00	120.00
	Ties	7[c]		
	Total	22		
Family 2 - Family1	Negative Ranks	2[d]	8.25	16.50
	Positive Ranks	16[e]	9.66	154.50
	Ties	3[f]		
	Total	21		
School2 - School 1	Negative Ranks	3[g]	6.00	18.00
	Positive Ranks	14[h]	9.64	135.00
	Ties	5[i]		
	Total	22		
Everything 2 - Everything1	Negative Ranks	2[j]	3.50	7.00
	Positive Ranks	14[k]	9.21	129.00
	Ties	5[l]		
	Total	21		
Blank Item 2 - Blank Item 1	Negative Ranks	0[m]	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	1[n]	1.00	1.00
	Ties	1[o]		
	Total	2		
Listening 2 - Listening 1	Negative Ranks	1[p]	10.00	10.00
	Positive Ranks	11[q]	6.18	68.00
	Ties	3[r]		
	Total	15		
Important 2 - Important 1	Negative Ranks	2[s]	2.50	5.00
	Positive Ranks	10[t]	7.30	73.00
	Ties	3[u]		
	Total	15		
Activities 2 - Activities 1	Negative Ranks	1[v]	1.50	1.50
	Positive Ranks	11[w]	6.95	76.50
	Ties	3[x]		
	Total	15		
Overall 2 - Overall 1	Negative Ranks	2[y]	9.00	18.00
	Positive Ranks	12[z]	7.25	87.00
	Ties	1[aa]		
	Total	15		

a. Me 2 < Me 1

b. Me 2 > Me 1

c. Me 2 = Me 1

d. Family 2 < Family1

e. Family 2 > Family1

f. Family 2 = Family1

g. School2 < School 1

h. School2 > School 1

i. School2 = School 1

j. Everything 2 < Everything1

k. Everything 2 > Everything1

l. Everything 2 = Everything1

m. Blank Item 2 < Blank Item 1

n. Blank Item 2 > Blank Item 1

o. Blank Item 2 = Blank Item 1

p. Listening 2 < Listening 1

q. Listening 2 > Listening 1

r. Listening 2 = Listening 1

s. Important 2 < Important 1

t. Important 2 > Important 1

u. Important 2 = Important 1

v. Activities 2 < Activities 1

w. Activities 2 > Activities 1

x. Activities 2 = Activities 1

y. Overall 2 < Overall 1

z. Overall 2 > Overall 1

aa. Overall 2 = Overall 1

Fig. 10. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test: Intervention Evaluation - Pre & Post Measures – Test Statistics

	Me 2 - Me 1	Family 2 - Family1	School2 - School 1	Everything 2 - Everything1	Blank Item 2 - Blank Item 1	Listening 2 - Listening 1	Important 2 - Important 1	Activities 2 - Activities 1	Overall 2 - Overall 1
Z	-3.426[b]	-3.012[b]	-2.777[b]	-3.157[b]	-1.000[b]	-2.294[b]	-2.681[b]	-2.959[b]	-2.174[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.003	.005	.002	.317	.022	.007	.003	.030

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

4.7 Summary Chapter 3

Drawing on the experiences articulated by children in the first phase of the project, we built a brief intervention that focused on supporting young people to express their experiences of domestic violence, and to build on their existing strengths to increase their capacity for resilience and agency. The intervention was loosely manualised, to enable it to be used flexibly with different participants, in different contexts. The intervention was used successfully in all four countries, where children who participated in the intervention reported that they felt it helped them considerably by helping them to normalise their experiences, recognise their abilities, and find support through other people. The creative, embodied methods, coupled with being in an environment with other young people who shared similar experiences, enabled them to express things that they had not previously disclosed, or perhaps even recognised themselves. While the intervention worked directly with children and young people, it also enabled them to consider family relationships, and to reconfigure their sense of their relationships with others. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods used with children and young people suggested that there was improvement in their subjective wellbeing over time, and that they experienced the group as a positive, supportive space.

➢ We developed an intervention that valued children's capacity to cope and to have agency which drew on methods that the children in our 100+ interviews had told us were important to them. For that reason, our intervention focused on three areas: 1) creativity; 2) embodiment and use of space; and 3) relationality.

➢ The intervention was piloted in the UK, and then rolled out through the four countries of the partnership for a total of 10 groups and 60 young people.

➢ Across all four partner locations, children and young people were extremely positive about the intervention. The most common comments in the interviews were that they wanted the intervention to be longer, and that it offered a positive context in which they felt able to articulate their experiences – sometimes for the first time.

➢ Children reported that they experienced the group as a trusting environment in which they could express themselves, build self-confidence, and test out and strengthen their capacity to trust others.

➢ Through the intervention, children had shifted their perspective on the inevitability of intergenerational transmission, and had been able to forge a more positive vision of their future selves.

➢ Understanding that other children had experienced similar difficulties promoted a sense of social connectedness to others and reduced participants' feelings of isolation and 'differentness'.

➢ Children's scores on the wellbeing measures at the beginning and end of the intervention did show an improvement in subjective wellbeing in all 4 areas ('Me', 'Family', 'School', 'Everything'), as children moved through this programme, and the difference between pre and post measures was statistically significant.

➢ Some activities were designed to enable young people to visualise and process their family experiences. These visual and spatial representations of family enabled young people to express complex and conflicted family relationships and these activities were particularly highly valued by participants.

Chapter 5: Policy and Practice in work with children who experience domestic violence

This chapter explores the context that frames children's experience domestic violence and recovery from domestic violence. In particular, we explore how children's experiences are understood and represented in policy frameworks around domestic violence, by professionals who work with them, and by the parents or carers who support them. Our aim is to understand how children are 'constructed' within this policy and practice landscape, and how representations of children who experience domestic violence opens up or closes down spaces for agency, resistance and resilience.

5. Mapping the Service Landscape - Policy analysis and practice

5.1.1 Domestic Violence Policy: The European Context

The Istanbul Convention opened for signature in May 2011, and entered into force on 1 August 2014. It has therefore provided an overarching set of concerns, shaping and shifting the European policy context, as this project unfolded. It is the first legally binding European instrument to directly tackle the issue of violence against women and domestic violence. This project considers the implications of this convention, and the way that it has (or has not yet) translated itself into national and regional policy, and its implications for children who experience domestic violence. The Istanbul convention focuses explicitly on violence against women, and expresses a commitment to "prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence", "design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence", "promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence"; and "provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence".

Children are not explicitly defined as victims in the Istanbul convention, an exclusion that can be traced through the national and regional legal and policy frameworks that implement it. Children are typically are absent from legal definitions of domestic violence, and if they are described, it is as 'witnesses', not as 'victims' (except in the case of victims of dating violence). (This is changing in Spain, where the distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' victims is being removed from Spanish statutes). Children are constructed in law and policy as an absence, as 'collateral damage' to adult domestic violence, and this has consequences for how they are understood and treated in criminal justice, social services and voluntary sector organisations.

By focusing on children's capacity for conscious meaning making and agency in relation to their experiences of domestic violence, we highlight the importance of recognising the impact of domestic violence has on children, and their right to representation as victims in the context of domestic violence.

One of our concerns in UNARS is with the way that young people are talked about and represented in public discourse about domestic abuse. Talking about young people as 'witnesses' to domestic abuse positions them as relatively powerless and as passive recipients of circumstances in which they have no control. In addition, pathologising discourses that position young people as damaged by domestic abuse leave little space for young people to identify as agents, capable of positive coping and change. Further, our project highlights how framing children as 'damaged' and as 'wtinesses' undermines their capacity to experience violence as conscious, meaning making beings, and erode children's representation and voice in professional and policy discourses.

It is therefore important to look carefully at public discourses about domestic abuse, to ensure that young people have positive alternative identities to victimhood available to them. Our project explores how young people are constructed in policy, through an analysis of the policy landscape in each of the participating countries. Our research is concerned with understanding:

- dominant representations of children and domestic abuse, in domestic violence and child protection policy

- how the policy landscape within each country & region shapes the ways children in situations of domestic abuse are conceptualised by young people and professionals

Our aim is to understand how policy frameworks might represent young people in a manner that does not just focus on ideas of 'damage' or 'victimhood', but is also able to incorporate their capacity for agency, resistance and resilience. This will help with the envisioning of possible positive future selves for young people.

In the UK, Greece, Italy and Spain, the UNARS policy analyses highlighted the need for greater recognition in each national policy of the place of children in families affected by domestic violence and abuse. The policy documents on domestic violence in all four participating countries generally omits children altogether, entrenching a view that children are not victims of domestic violence, but witnesses to it. We argue that this produces a service landscape in which the needs of

> The policy documents on domestic violence in all four participating countries generally omits children altogether, entrenching a view that children are not victims of domestic violence, but witnesses to it.

children are portrayed as *additional* in domestic violence support.

Our research has evidenced that children are not mere witnesses to violence, and they are not 'collateral damage' in violent adult interactions. We argue that national and European policy must shift to a place where the impact of domestic violence on children is recognised in policy and law, and that children are seen as *victims* of domestic violence, not just as witnesses. Our work has also highlighted that children are not passive in relation to domestic violence and abuse. Rather they are active in making sense of the violence, responding to it, coping with it and resisting it. Children are conscious, active beings who experience domestic violence and its impact just as much as adult victims do. Policy representations of children as passive and silent witnesses to abuse regard children as collateral damage in adult violence, and this is not an adequate framework within which to make sense of children's lives, or from which to intervene properly with children who experience domestic violence. A policy framework that discounts children as mere witnesses rather than victims enables a practice landscape in which children are treated as additional in domestic violence services, in social care, criminal justice and mental health. [3]

5.1.2 United Kingdom Domestic Violence Policy and Legislation

UK domestic violence legislation and policy represents domestic violence as something that occurs between two adults in an intimate partnership (or formerly in an intimate partnership). Children are absent from such legal definitions. The UK Home Office guides and coordinates domestic violence initiatives and policies, through a range of statutory and non-statutory organizations (Matczak, Hatzidimitriadou, & Lindsay, 2011). The Home Office provides a clear definition of domestic violence as:

> *"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality."* (Home Office, 2013 p. 2).

This definition incorporates psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse and control, and notes explicitly the importance of taking seriously the more subtle elements of control and coercion in providing an appropriate response to families affected by domestic violence and abuse. However, because the legal definition only recognises domestic violence, and because it only sees such violence as occurring between two adults, children are not recognised as *victims* of domestic violence and abuse – when they are

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[3] The policy framework in each country is only briefly presented here. For a fuller treatment of policy in each country, please go to http://www.unars.co.uk/policy-analysis.php

included in policy documents it is as additional - the construction is typically 'women victims, and their children'.

> It is important to recognize, both legally and in work with families affected by domestic violence, that the exercise of power in abusive and controlling relational dynamics can be most troubling and distressing for children.

The familial conditions that coercive control produces have not historically been part of the established UK *legal definition* of domestic violence. (This is a common limitation in legislation, and is not unique to the UK.) This historical definition restricts our legal understanding of domestic violence to intimate relationships, predominantly in adult dyads. The implication of this framing of domestic violence is to reproduce, discursively, conditions in which children are only ever positioned as 'collateral damage' in the policing and management of domestic violence. Children are not recognized in policy or in criminal law as direct *victims* of domestic violence. If they are discussed at all in domestic violence policy, it is as witnesses or as 'also affected'. This is at odds with the well-established and still growing body of evidence that indicates how damaging domestic violence is to children. It is rooted in dated understanding that domestic violence is primarily about violent interactions in the dyad and not the intimate family relational structure of violence psychological abuse and control. It is important to recognize, both legally and in work with families affected by domestic violence, that the exercise of power in abusive and controlling relational dynamics can be most troubling and distressing for children. Further, children in families where domestic violence occurs are more likely to be direct victims of violence themselves, particularly of parental violence (Devaney, 2008; Humphreys, 2007b), and child domestic homicide are often preceded by adult domestic violence, suggesting an association between the two (Bourget, Grace, & Whitehurst, 2007; Jaffe et al., 2012). Failing to recognise the risk that domestic violence poses to child safety can place children at increased risk, particularly if that risk is not taken into account in child protection, and in contact arrangements post-separation (Hester, 2011). This kind of language positions children as impacted by domestic violence, but it does not give them the status of direct victims. Rather, as in policy or in criminal law, they are framed as 'collateral damage' in families affected by domestic violence – the fallout of the abusive couple relationship, and not themselves victims. In their 2014 policy briefing, the organization Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA, a national charity supporting a multi-agency and risk-led response to domestic abuse) recommend that "To ensure children are protected and helped, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) should monitor provision and outcomes for children exposed to domestic abuse" (p. 9). By placing children's needs on the agenda, CAADA are certainly advancing our thinking around domestic violence and abuse and children's experiences in relation to this. However, the language used in this briefing remains framed in terms of children as 'exposed to domestic

abuse' – positioning children as living with abuse, affected by it, but not as its direct victims. This framing is common in the UK, and leaves us a little distant from, for instance, a Norwegian model, that requires us to take both the child and the parent's perspective into account when working with domestic violence (Øverlien, 2009). We need to move away from the more passive framing of children as 'witness' to a more complex framing, one that sees them both as victims and as active beings, making sense of and working with their experiences of domestic violence (Mullender et al., 2003; Carolina Øverlien & Hydén, 2009; Carolina Øverlien, 2011a), if we are to genuinely help children deal with and recover from domestic violence. As Overlien & Hydén (2009) suggest, when we talk to children about domestic violence, it is clear that it "is not something the children 'witness', in the sense that they watch it passively from a distance. Children who experience violence in their homes experience it with all their senses. They hear it, see it, and experience the aftermath." (p. 479). Theoretical and legislative frameworks that do not recognise children's capacity for meaning-making in adverse situations and agency in relation to them are inadequate to support children who have experienced domestic violence.

It is possible that changes in the UK legal framework for domestic violence and abuse may start to open up spaces in legislation that will enable children to be recognised as victims of domestic violence and abuse. This is because of proposed changes to the Serious Crime Bill in 2015 that will criminalise patterns of coercive, controlling and psychological abuse – not just the violence that is one expression of that abuse, coercion and control. This is recognition of the way that psychological abuse and controlling behaviours contribute to victims' experiences of domestic violence, and the way that these elements feature significantly as part of many experiences of domestic violence and abuse.

While domestic violence has long been recognized by scholars as being an issue of power and control as much as it is one of physical violence and coercion (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Gondolf, 2007; O'Leary, 1999; Øverlien, 2013), up until now, the definition of domestic violence that has legal strength and guides criminal and related official proceedings has been one that focused on physical violence, and has neglected the role of power, control and psychological and emotional abuse. This has clear implications for how domestic violence is understood, managed and prosecuted, as well as how resources for responding to domestic violence might be funded and distributed. It also has clear consequences for how 'victims' of domestic violence and abuse are understood and defined.

Campaign groups have pointed out that apparently isolated incidents of physical violence can be more challenging to prosecute, when they are not viewed in their full context of ongoing abusive and controlling behaviours. To recognize this, the Home office has proposed the following:

"The amendment to the Serious Crime Bill will explicitly criminalise patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour where they are perpetrated against an intimate partner or family member. Like stalking this behaviour may appear innocent, but the cumulative impact on the victim's every-day life will be significant, causing the victim to feel fear, alarm or distress. The emphasis will be on the control that those in abusive intimate relationships (both partners and family members) experience."

The introduction of legislation to recognize coercive control as an illegal act in the UK offers an important potential step forward in recognising children as actively involved in domestic abuse. We argue here that the 'victim' in domestic violence is not just the adult in the intimate dyad; it is also any children within the household who are affected by the violence, either directly or indirectly. A shift to recognize children as equal victims in the crime of domestic violence and abuse has two important implications – it requires that we listen to children who experience domestic violence and abuse, and it creates space to recognize their own creative and agentic strategies in response to abuse and control within the family. It opens a different discursive space in which the child is recognized as being as important as the adult antagonists in our responses to domestic violence and abuse.

Within this general UK policy context, ten discourses position children living in situations of domestic abuse in a range of different ways: **The Victim Discourse, The Health and Safety Discourse, The Child Welfare Discourse, The Legal Discourse, The Child Needs Discourse, The Child Protection Discourse, The Therapeutic Discourse, The Managerial Discourse, The Expert Discourse, and The Psychiatric Discourse**. With the exception of therapeutic discourses these discourses construct CYP in negative, passive and disempowering ways; rendering CYP as depersonalised and invisible. As such, CYP are positioned within DVA as damaged and victimized (The Victim Discourse, The Child Needs Discourse, The Psychiatric Discourse) lacking independent agency. At a National level, CYPs are constructed as powerless victims. This powerless construction works to evoke identification and empathy amongst professional stakeholders and rallies support for political and protective interventions (The Child Welfare Discourse, The Child Protection Discourse). Opportunities for CYP and parents to be agentic and display resilience are then restricted, and simultaneously they are disempowered from taking up such opportunities as this contravenes dominant discourses of powerlessness. These discursive strategies of victimisation and disempowerment functions across organisations and agencies as an 'incitement to act' (The Health and Safety Discourse, The Managerial Discourse). Agency is therefore assumed by multiple statutory

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organisations/agencies, while the policy seems to portray a manufactured and illusory socio-political identity, and sense of democracy and inclusion, which ensures that policies are seen as pro-child and thence acceptable. Hence, the policy landscape places the loci of agency and responsibility in the domain of professional stakeholders, who then become agentic experts, guardians and saviors of CYP (The Expert Discourse). This then reinforces existing hegemonic power structures in ways which maintain the political status quo. Changing the policy context would require the development of more agentic discourses of resistance and resilience. However, this would require substantive development of The Therapeutic Discourse beyond the notion of individual agency and towards more relational, family and community notions of agency.

Regionally, local authorities have shifted from a positionality of facilitator to that of overseer of children's wellbeing and use managerial discourses to maintain *responsibility* for CYP's welfare and protection - both in terms of tangible outcomes for children and in terms of providing information. However, the actions of local authorizes can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, LA actions can be interpreted as protective of children. Alternatively, LA actions can be perceived as self-protection within a risk averse culture. When LA responsibility is located within a self-protective framework, CYP are susceptible to receiving inappropriate services or are potentially removed from homes by over-cautious authorities who value security over resilience.

5.1.3 Spain – a changing policy context

Minors who experience domestic violence are represented in the Spanish legislative and policy framework in two legislative frameworks – those focused on domestic violence and those that address gender-based violence. The term domestic violence or family refers to any type of abuse, physical, psychological or sexual among members of a family (Corsi, 1994) 4. Regarding gender-based violence, the term refers to violence based on gender; violence that is address to a woman just for being woman. Both terminologies, until the recent legal changes, differentiated between the minor being a direct or indirect victim and made reference to witness of violence and passives' subjects of violence.

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[4] *Anales de psicología 2005, vol. 21, nº 1 (junio), 11-17. "Victims of family violence: Psychological consequences to abused children and women" de Rosa Patró Hernández y Rosa María Limiñana Gras. Universidad de Murcia*

During the last decades the phenomenon of domestic violence and gender-based violence has become a key issue for institutions and society, in particular because of the high impact and the seriousness of its consequences. Women and children are the main victims of these types of violence.

In 2014 a total of 54 women in Spain died due to gender-based violence, leaving 41 orphans. Until now, in 2015 have occurred 9 mortal cases and 16 children have lost their mothers because of gender-based violence. Regarding minors' figures, the first statistics available were in 2013; year in which 6 children were killed. In 2014, a total of 4 minors were murdered in Spain due to the same problem.

Gender-based violence in the family context has become a priority for all administrations. Moreover, according the survey on gender-based violence in 2011, promoted by the National Government Delegation on Gender-based Violence

The Spanish Government developed the "Childhood and Adolescence Strategic National Plan 2013-2016" with a key objective being to make young victims visible and to extend their protection

and the Center of Sociological Research, 64,9% of the women who had suffered abuse had young children in her care. The children average for each woman is about 2. This suggests that a large number of children are likely to be exposed to gender based violence. 54,7% of women said that their children suffered directly violent situations. This means that 1.530.000 people had suffered abuses when they were minors and that around 6,2% of the children of the country. For this reason the Spanish Government developed the "Childhood and Adolescence Strategic National Plan 2013-2016" with a key objective being to make these young victims visible and to extend their protection.

As a consequence, there has been a proliferation of research on healthcare resources, victims care and intervention, as well as research on the consequences of this kind of violence on children. Historically minors had been always secondary in policy and practice in gender based and domestic violence. However due to the social warning about the lasting negative consequences of children's exposure to violence, this issue has become a primary focus. Consequently, the Fundamental Law bill modifying the Childhood and Adolescence Protection System (February 2015) recognises children as victims. This measure entails an holistic reform and places Spain as the first country in Europe to introduce the minors' high interest defence as a mandatory principle, as UN guidelines on rights and legal procedure have recommended.

The reform aims to prevent and reinforce the policy against violence address to childhood. Regarding the awareness, it goes a step forward and sets the obligation to communicate the Public Prosecutor Office any event known by a citizen.

Likewise, the modification of the Law Holistic Protection Measures against Gender-based violence establish that judges will have to pronounce themselves about precautionary measures address to children and women victims of abuses. Moreover, foresee that children could stay with their mothers. In addition, it reinforces the protection in sexual abuses felonies that entails in 2013 a total of 3.364 minors.

At present a new Childhood Protection System has come into force. For the first time in a National Law a definition of risk situations and abandonment have been added; being determined by risk to life, health and physical integrity, as well as the inducement to begging, juvenile delinquency and prostitution. By establishing abandonment, the guardianship goes to the public entity. In Spain almost 35.000 minors are under State guardianship, among them 13.400 live in shelters, waiting for a family.

5.1.4 Italy – Puglia and Umbria

In Italy, abuses of children and young people are defined as "underground phenomena" due to the great difficulties in identifying situations of domestic violence. Nevertheless over the last decades, the high percentage of turbulent separations on record in Italy, often characterized by arguments about children custody or property litigations, result in potential contexts of both direct and indirect (eg witnessing) violence against children. Moreover, in most cases, the conflicting parents are totally unaware of causing harm to their children who witness those conflicts. It is furthermore not an easy task to clearly identify whose parent is responsible for the distress caused when there is no evidence of a predominant or aggressive role in the couple. A further element, making the framework more complex, is to assess the effects of inter-family violence on the development of children as comparative research in this area is lacking in Italy.

The aim of the present study is to *investigate the legislative and policy developments* on children rights and domestic violence. This research will critically analyse the Italian policy landscape to highlight the positioning of CYP within domestic violence contexts and the related implications.

With reference to rights and policies for CYP living with domestic violence, firstly we have to refer to the regulatory Act of 1991 that ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child signed in New York in 1989. The text contains several articles specifically devoted to child protection against abuse and exploitation as well as attempts to give voice to children themselves.

Another document to take into account is the law n. 451-1997 informing the Piano Nazionale Infanzia (Children National Programme) – containing the strategic guidelines and government's pledge and engagement to guarantee appropriate policies for childhood and youth. This law establishes also the creation of the Children and Young People Observatory. A general policy law followed in 2000 with the Act n. 328 defining the LIVEAS – that is to say - the basic levels of social care and welfare in order to guarantee a harmonization of standards of service offered at national level. This law delegates to regional authorities the design and planning of services thanks to the Fondo nazionale politiche

> In Italy, abuses of children and young people are defined as "underground phenomena" due to the great difficulties in identifying situations of domestic violence

sociali (Domestic Fund for Social Policies). The successive document analysed in relation to this is the law n. 112/2011 that sets up the foundation of the Children and Young People Guarantor Authority in charge of monitoring the enactment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child[5] and article 31 of the Italian Constitution stating: "the Italian Republic protects maternity, childhood and youth, favoring the creation of specific institutions for them".

On the national level, the law n. 154 of 2001 is taken into account whose aim is to prevent physical and moral violence within the family and to try to reestablish relationships in the family; the law n.77 of 27 June 2013 ratifying the Istanbul Convention signed on 27 May 2012 by the ministry of employment and social policies in a Strasburg, on behalf of the Italian government. The convention was opened in Istanbul on the 11th of May 2011 and is due to come into force in Italy on the 1st of August 2014; the law 119/2013 regarding gender violence established an extraordinary action plan for **protection against and prevention of the phenomenon**, to strengthen **antiviolence centres,** social care services and training of operators.

At the local level, in the region Puglia, fundamental for our analysis is the regional law n.14-2014 - *"Rules for gender prevention and contrast, support to victims, promotion of women freedom and self determination".*

The second part of the present report illustrates the policy analysis at different territorial levels considering the positioning and the recognition of CYP in DVA. The laws and acts taken into account for the analysis are:

1) National Law 149 of 2001: foresees the measure of separation of the parent from the household, when their behavior causes major harm to the minor.

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[5] The articles 12 and 18 of UN Convention explicitly refer to institutions devoted to the safeguard of interests and rights of CYP in the countries signing the convention and the strategy adopted by European Council "**Building up Europe for and with children**".

2) National Law of n. 154 of 2001: family violence and protection orders, through amendments of the civil code, and the code of civil and criminal procedure. This law meets the need for *the protection of victims of family abuse .*

3) Regional Bill of Law 119 of 2013, introduces the aggravating circumstance of "witnessing violence", whereby: "*to have, in the framework of non culpable crimes against life and individual safety, against individual freedom and in the cases established by the article. 572, committed the crime in the presence or against an underage subject or a pregnant woman*" (art. 61, comma 1, n. 11-quinquies).

Thematic analysis of key policy documents highlighted relevant social and cultural aspects influencing the representation of children within domestic violence policy. Historical and cultural national backgrounds have been taken into due consideration in order to better understand the conceptualization of DVA and the positioning of CYP in Italy. Historical and cultural factors ground the evolution of the policies to contrast the phenomenon.

In Perugia, policy does not focus on children as subjects of domestic violence, although children are central within policy aimed at enhancing children's welfare and rights. Here, policy is organized around three main axes: The axis of **Promotion** in which children should be listened to and participate in society as active citizens; the **social and legal protection axis** in which families and minors are protected in respect to administrative, civil and criminal processes within the Judicial Authority and; the **axis of support for adult liability** in which parenting skills are addressed and intergenerational relations are enhanced. CYP are described as **victims** in the context of DVA and professionals are exhorted to integrate service provision in order to better coordinate and deliver a range of services within a partnership network.

Alongside administrative and legal protections, policy highlights the need to provide socio-educational resources rather than simply informational inputs. This encourages professionals and CYP to engage in discussion around the complex needs of CYP and develop healthy lifestyles so that CYP can take more control over their own health and wellbeing. Moreover, the Perugian region organizes activities, informational events and awareness raising on the theme of children's rights and respect for women.

Children are positioned largely as **non-agentic** and **in need of protection**. However, there is some recognition of their **strengths and ability to be resilient or marshal their social resources in effective and protective ways,** although this is mainly framed in the context of the family.

The legal requirement in Italy for Dual Consent for participation in research and in interventions (i.e. consent from both parents) presented barriers in both the research and intervention phase of this project. This legal problem is particularly an issue when separations and divorces had not been finalised, and custody arrangements and linked legal processes had not been settled – in these circumstances, consent from both parents was required for children to be involved in any kind of intervention. This legal requirement hampers effective intervention with children affected by domestic violence. In particular it makes it difficult to provide *early intervention* for children affected by violence. There is a need for harmonisation of Italian (and to a lesser degree Spanish) legislation with the European Commission and other member states, to ensure that children's needs are addressed in a speedy and appropriate manner, when domestic violence occurs.

5.1.5 Greece

In the Greek context, children are also not a matter of primary concern in the policy documents tackling domestic violence issues in general. In most of the cases, very few references to children are to be found, with the exception of the documents discussing issues of children's rights. The child witnessing DV is not the main issue in the Greek Policy Documents and is faced as a collateral damage in the phenomenon of Domestic Violence. In most of the texts, very little attention is dedicated to the children of violent families. On the other hand, texts emerging from the initiatives of United Nations and having to do with Children's Rights are child-centred by nature, they deal, however, with children's rights in general and with all the aspects of violence experienced by children, dedicating little space to domestic violence

In Greece, there are 2 documents in which domestic violence issues are described. The first description is given in the Law 3500/2006 (article 6) which is known as the Law for domestic violence. The second description is provided in the document entitled "Violence against women: A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures" (Tata-Arsel, 2011) published by the General Secretariat For Gender Equality. Both documents are very important in Greece. The Law represents the institutional power of what constitutes domestic violence. The "Violence against women" document is an official document used by many Counselling Centres offering services to women with problems of family/domestic violence.

It should hereby be said that the Law 3500/2006 is a very important legislation, resulted from the campaign of women's movement and of feminist organizations as well as by the directives (1582/2002) of the Council of the European Union.

The Law states that domestic violence exists when a family member causes the following criminal actsto another member of the family:

(a) Physical injury or harm in his (sic) health or not serious physical injuries systematically

(b) Serious (dangerous) physical damage

(c) Very serious physical damage

Based on the above statements, it is obvious that the Law doesn't make any explicit statement about psychological violence, but includes statements about physical violence only. However, the notion of severe psychological harm is introduced in article 4, and

> In the Greek context, children are not a matter of primary concern in the policy documents tackling domestic violence issues in general

it is viewed as a consequence of the intense physical abuse or injuries. In addition, in article 7, the Law implies some references to psychological violence by stating that when a member of the family causes worry or extreme fear to another member then this member is punished with imprisonment. The problem with these references is that psychological violence is legitimatized only by its obvious or tangible consequences, and by its severe consequences. Other forms of psychological violence such as preventing someone from meeting relatives, jealousness etc are not described. Marital rape is also penalized for the first time in Greek legislation (see article 8).Generally speaking, the existing definition is restricted, because it doesn't refer to other forms of domestic violence such as emotional, psychological, social and financial. It doesn't describe any form of stalking, which could occur in romantic relationships, in dating or intimate partner violence.

This definition is neutral, as the articles describe cases of violence *"against a member of the family"*, in general, giving thus a gender neutral connotation. Even in cases that the grammatical pronoun is used, this is of the male gender. This definition does not document offenses as sex discrimination and as a violation of the principles of equality. Only in reference to rape cases, there is a distinction regarding the use of violence against women in the family. The law does not recognize the gendered dimension of violence, as it does not mention either the fact that domestic violence primarily affects women nor the punitive/correctional role of against his wife and children (Gouliarou, 2008). In a similar vein, it doesn't recognize men or other people in need as being affected by domestic violence. It represents domestic violence as an issue that concerns only family members, ex-partners or people who are cohabiting. The law fails to recognize the violence among same sex couples and among young people. It fails to recognize the violence existing among couples who have a romantic relationship, who are dating, but they are not cohabiting.

*The second official document in Greece, is entitled "*Violence against women". In this document, the used term is that of "violence against women". It could be argued that in Greece, domestic violence is described

interchangeably with the term "violence against women". In other words, violence against women and domestic violence appear to be identical and synonyms. In the above document, violence against women is described as

> *"any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether violence occurs in public or in private"* (Tata-Arcel, 2011).

Types of violence include sexual, physical, psychological violence against both women and children as well as some forms of economic violence (Gouliarou, 2008. Tata-Arcel, 2011).

This definition, drawn from Article 1 of the Declaration of the United Nations on the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW), recognizes the gendered dimension of the phenomenon of violence(Tata-Arcel, 2011).However, it does not acknowledge that men, young people, or gay/lesbian people could experience domestic violence.

The definition used by Law has a very restricted view of what are the forms of domestic violence, as it refers to physical violence or extreme psychological harm only. Having as a primary objective to protect the institution of the family, or people who are cohabiting, it leaves unprotected group of people who are in romantic/open, dating relationships. It also excludes any consideration of children as victims of domestic violence, since it focuses only on the victim within the intimate dyad and does not take into account the broader familial patterns at play in domestic violence and coercive control.

The definition used by Law has a very restricted view of what the forms of domestic violence are, as it refers to physical violence or extreme psychological harm only

Greece recognises its obligations under the International Convention of the Right's of the Child, and it is the duty of the Children's Ombudsman to ensure these rights are upheld. According to Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children (2012) the State's obligations to the child – resulting from the International Convention–include child protection against any form of violence, such as physical, verbal, sexual, psychological (Child Protection Rights). In addition, the state must protect children from any other forms of violence such as: systemic (practised by systems, such as education, various institutions etc.), visual (exercised through exposure to violent images) and symbolic violence (like the one portrayed in many modern videogames). The Ombudsman for Children argues that according to article 19, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child *"States Parties"* are obligated:

> "to take *all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect the child from all forms of violence, insult, physical or mental violence, abandonment or neglect,*

maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual violence" (see also article 34)…to be *vigilant to ensure that no child shall be subjected to (...) degrading punishment or treatment" (article 37)*.

It is perhaps remarkable that, despite these relatively rigorous statements on children's rights, children are excluded from protections afforded by legislation on domestic violence.

The legislative framework that addresses the issue of domestic violence has only been recently developed in Greece and concerns mostly heterosexual women and children, victims or witnesses of violence. This legislation does not concern other groups of people such as men, elderly, young people, gay/lesbians. The main objective of the law is to protect the family and not women or children, men, young people, and people who are dating. Its language is gender-neutral, asexual and does not document offenses as sex discrimination and as a violation of the principles of equality or other forms of domestic violence apart from physical or extreme psychological harm. However, this legislative framework is innovative insofar it introduces the concept of domestic violence for the first time in the Greek context.

Legislation

In terms of parental care for children, the Rights for the Protection of Children seek to ensure that children are protected from exposure to any kind of abuse, including abuse occurring in the family. The violation of these rights is prosecuted by Law 3500/2006 on domestic violence.

In particular, the Law on Domestic violence (articles, 3, 4 & 9 /3500/2006) states:

> *"If the physical violence occurs in front of a minor then the act is penalized with 1 year of imprisonment at least"*

> *" the use of physical violence against children as a means of discipline constitutes a bad practice of custody and results in the removal of the custody or of the parental responsibility of the offender"*

Another provision of the law on judicial intervention dictates that family members are not examined under oath and minors are not considered witnesses in court. If, however there is a deposition, this is read in court. In any case, it leaves open the possibility that children may be called by the Court as witnesses provided this is deemed necessary (Gouliarou, 2008).

In addition, article 23 of law 3500/2006 stipulates that teachers of Primary and Secondary Education pledge, when they receive information about the exercise of domestic violence against minors, to act so as to protect them, e.g. to report to the competent public prosecutor or to the nearest police authority.

Specifically it is stated that *"A teacher of primary or secondary education who...is aware that there has been committed a crime of domestic violence against a student, he/she is obligated, without delay, to inform the*

Director of the school unit. The Director of the school unit announces, immediately, the offence to the competent prosecutor or to the nearest police authority". From the above it becomes clear that the law covers and engages teachers who obtain information about the exercise of domestic violence against minors to take an active role in the protection of children (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012). However, as the Children's Ombudsman notes, a network between schools and local services must be present, in cases in which the information that a teacher receives is not completely clear, as well as when an appeal to criminal prosecution procedures is not considered the most appropriate first step to action at the moment. It could be argued that the Law recognizes the harmful effects of witnessing physical violence in children but fails to recognize the effects of other forms of domestic violence on them. It mainly aims at protecting children from physical punishment, considering physical assault as a mean of punishment used for disciplinary reasons only. Finally it introduces protective and safety measures for children as the separation from the family context in cases of abuse, or actions that should be taken by the teachers of Primary and Secondary Education.

In sum, the issue of interconnection between children abuse and domestic violence is only superficially mentioned in the Law and children are presented as passive victims or witnesses. However, even though this approach has a lot of drawbacks, it is recognized as the first official attempt to address the issue of children experiencing domestic violence in Greece.

The policy analysis identified two main themes, divided into several sub themes. The first main theme concerns Experiencing harms where children are represented as damaged in terms of their personality, psychosocial behaviours, general development and ability to negotiate the everyday realities of life. Such harms are seen to pervade all aspects of their lives with severe short and long term negative effects. Such harms cover physical abuse, financial problems and consequent poverty, difficulties in the transition to adulthood, and the recycling of abuse as they grow up.

The second theme concerns countering harms whereby children and young people are represented as in need of state and service legal and social protection. In addition, the CYP require services which attempt to prevent them from harmful situations through protective and supportive policies. Here, schools are considered as important resources for the support of CYP. Awareness raising is an important issues which can help to protect children and counter the harms they face. Early recognition and intervention is seen as important. The only active, strength oriented and agentic representations of children are found where the voice of CYP are emphasized. Here, children are seen as having important contributions to make in

explaining their experiences. Such voice can help policy makers to frame more relevant policies which operate to more strongly protect CYP.

Within Greek policy, the concept of DV as a harmful experience represents the child as a passive witness

> The issue of interconnection between child abuse and domestic violence is only superficially mentioned in the Law

and/or a powerless victim and focuses on the deterministic impact of domestic violence leaving no room for resilience or positive ways of reacting against. This determinism is more evident where the vicious circle of violence is constructed, in the frame of a discourse that emphasises the inevitable continuation of violence and the reduced chances of escaping.

Summarizing the findings of the analysis of Greek Policy Documents, one could come to the following conclusions:

- Children are described in the documents as passive victims, vulnerable and helpless, doomed to suffer from this experience all their life long.
- In parallel with the above concept, policy documents' recommendations and initiatives are oriented towards measures and strategies that should primarily face the psychopathological symptoms observed in children with DV experience. The resilient child is described as an exception.

5.2 Focus groups with professionals – mapping the practice landscape by country

Focus groups were carried out with groups of professionals in each country. Our aim here was to provide an understanding of the practice landscape children must navigate to secure support when they experience domestic violence. In particular we were interested in how children were understood and 'read' by professionals who work with domestic violence, and what the implications of this might be for the creation of a space for agency, resistance and resilience for and by children. A summary of the points raised in focus group discussions will be provided, followed by a thematic overview, synthesizing key themes from across the partnership.

The UK practice landscape

Two focus groups were held with a range of professional who work in various capacities with CYP who have experienced situations of DVA. A thematic analysis of this dataset revealed 8 main themes: **Inter-Professional Working, Integrated Partnerships, Financial Shortcomings, Educational Imperatives, Focus on Needs, Cycling: The Next Generation, Health and Safety, and Tick Box Policy and Outcomes**. This analysis highlights the intersecting ways in which the policy discourses are conceptualised by professional stakeholders. Once again, the notion

of children as damaged, helpless and doomed to re-cycle violence and victimhood in their future lives is reified (Focus on Needs, Cycling: The Next Generation). Professional stakeholders are placed in positions of control (and education/schools are given prime responsibility for identifying CYP, raising awareness of DVA and channeling appropriate support to CYP (Educational Imperatives). However, the role of professional stakeholders is perceived to be hampered by cutbacks and restricted financial resources (Financial Shortcomings). Positive policy directives designed to support CYP were reported to be delivered in a way which resembled a mechanical tick box exercise (Tick Box Policy and Outcomes) where children themselves are made invisible and outcome measures are prioritised.

Recurrent themes in the focus groups revolved around the notion of health and safety, Inter-professional Working and Integrated Partnerships and how this underpinned policy. In terms of health and safety, school premises were seen as safe places and professionals were then cast in a protecting role. Conversely, parents, especially mothers were described as either minimising the damage to their CYP or over-emphasising it, such that they were not always capable of providing their CYP with safe environments. Refuges were seen as safe spaces, however safety in this context could come at the price of disrupting child-parent relationships

The professional stakeholders outlined several ways in which DVA interventions could be made more relevant and accessible to CYP. Here, inter-professional working was emphasized in order to bring professional knowledge bases together to better deal with the myriad of issues CYP face when living in situations of DVA. For this to work well, professional stakeholders felt there needed to be strong informal links and personal contacts rather than formalised relationships. In this way, a more integrated wrap around, personally tailored service could be offered to CYP.

Focus group participants felt that delivery of information and support to CYP should take place both in schools and community locations (Educational Imperatives). Community delivery was especially necessary to reach those CYP over school age. Moreover, focusing courses and support on the real concerns of CYP as well as talking in their language was felt to offer advantages over current more professionally oriented provisions. Attention to access barriers (such as availability of information and supports in schools and community centres) was signaled as important to ensure that CYP can use the limited resources available to them.

The Spanish Practice Landscape

According to the UNARS group of experts of the Conselleria de Gobernacion y Justicia, the new legislation will involve a change in how to approach the issue of children's exposure to violence. Consequently, the more and more attention will be paid to the minor. Their conclusions are that even if there are resources and professionals in place, much work is needed to improve the network of communication and collaboration among different services. Currently, the communication and coordination among the different areas of practice and policy is basic, and there is a need for further specific training for professionals. Training is needed to raise awareness of the problem and to build a more exhaustive knowledge of resources available to support minors.

Experts have agreed on the importance of giving proper attention and protection to minors in situations of domestic violence. This includes standing alongside them and supporting them throughout the legal process and beyond. The new Spanish policy framework guarantees homogenous protection for children in the entire Spanish territory, addressing a need to harmonise the protection of minors who are considered victims of gender based violence, regardless of the historic distinction of being designated a 'direct' or 'indirect' victim.

The Italian Practice Landscape

Generally, professionals in Italy described children and young people who live in situations of domestic violence as 'victims', suffering directly and indirectly from the conflicts they witness within their homes. They are also framed as lonely and helpless within their everyday life situations. As such, children and young people are in need of professionals to protect them, particularly in the light of parental 'failure to protect'. Children and young people are perceived as embodying the violence they have seen, whereby such violence is almost physically present. Finally, professionals see the children and young people they deal with in terms of being caught in gendered notions of intergenerational transmission of violence. Here, the boys, currently

oppressed, experiencing difficult emotions of 'rage', 'hate' and 'powerlessness' are expected to grow into male perpetrators and the girls, 'sensitive', 'frightened' and 'tender' into feminized victims of domestic violence in the future.

Professionals were wary of the concept of 'resilience', and this was an unfamiliar concept that many found problematic, and anxiety provoking. The emphasis in these organisations is on the concept of 'protection' (privacy, removal from violent relatives and parents, psychological intervention), which was seen as more important and key to children's wellbeing that concepts like "resilience" and "agency". Professionals here indicated that they rarely observed "resilience" in the children not because of an absence of resilience, but because their focus is different, prioritizing protection. This emphasis on protection may account for the discursive positioning of children as vulnerable and passive, in need of help and unable to have agency.

Alongside such representations of children and young people as vulnerable and passive, damaged and helpless, some representations of the active child are present, especially in terms of the resilient child as the carer and protector of siblings as well as their mother. In this way, children and young people are 'parentified' and positioned as survivors within adverse situations and relationships, very much out of necessity rather than choice.

Professional stakeholders working in the context of domestic abuse described an impoverished service landscape which was affected by austerity and cuts, where threats to services and increased competition to provide limited services (in regional authorities where funding is very limited) has significantly undermined collaboration and cooperation. Understaffing, service gaps and lack of integrated services (and communication across services) was identified as a key problem, underpinned by lack of coordinated action whereby a single family may be required to deal with many different agencies in order to receive the support they need. This affected the ability of authorities to progress services by learning from innovative provisions and identification of best practice that can be rolled out across regions. Moreover, professionals felt that existing services were relatively difficult to identify. This, combined with the service gaps meant that children and young people may not be unaware of services to support them. When children were aware and in touch with services, professionals felt a sense of wary distance between them and the children when children could want to protect their privacy within the service context. One of the key learnings from the UNARS project, and the Umbrian project "PIUMA" has been the importance of collaborative working to support children affected by violence. Steps have been taken to intergrate organisations and entities that work with child victims, recognizing that it is not possible to work separately to address psychological, social and educational challenges children face.

The Greek Practice Landscape

Professional stakeholders in Greece perceive children in situations of domestic abuse in a range of different ways. Primarily CYP were seen as victims of violence and damaged, people who are deeply harmed (mentally, psychologically), vulnerable and fragile. Consequently, children were deemed to be in need of protection as a fundamental right and that parents had ultimately failed in their protective duties towards them. However, there was, in parallel a view of professionals which placed children as resilient. Resilience was described in two distinct ways: as a personality trait and thereby internal to the child; and resilient in terms of marshaling and effectively using their (survival) skills. In this second understanding of resilience,

> Professionals in Greece emphasized the importance of integrated partnerships and were concerned about the lack of central coordination schemes

resilience skills have been learned through their family experiences. In both senses, the CYP are depicted as strong to face challenges, overcome adversity and find resources to help them. Such children can protect other family members and as such are empowered and empowering individuals. Despite this, an overriding representation of CYP in situations of domestic violence sees them as doomed to repeat the violence they experience through the intergenerational transmission of violence model. Gendered notions of intergenerational violence were voiced where boys become perpetrators and girls victims in their future relationships.

While professionals were passionate about their work, they recognized the limitations of finance and resources to support this. They emphasized the importance of integrated partnerships and were concerned about the lack of central coordination schemes. The good will of professionals can make a difference, but a solid effective service cannot rely on this alone. In general, professionals felt there was a lack of agencies and services, which limits and effective functioning of services to support CYP. Working in this area was described as personally dangerous when they were exposed to threats and uncertainties the work brings. Professionals did identify positive policy and legislation concerning DV to help them with their work.

5.3 Thematic Overview – Professional Focus groups

In this section, a synthesis of the major themes from the various focus groups across the partnerships is provided. Two main themes emerged from the thematic analysis: *Representations of the Child in Domestic Violence* and *Positioning Professionals.* Each one of the main themes is divided in sub-themes, as shown in Table 7 below

Focus group themes – professional focus groups

Main Theme	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3	Sub-theme 4
Representations of The Child in DV	The Child as victim	The Child in Action	The Resilient Child	The Next Generation: intergenerational transmission of violence
Positioning Professionals and Agencies	Lack of appropriate, accessible and visible support	Service fragmentation and the Importance of Integrated Partnerships		

5.3.1 Representations of the child in domestic violence

Children are represented in a range of ways in professional discourses around domestic violence. Here, we explore the construction of the Child as 'Victim', the Child in Action, The Resilient Child, and Children as the Next Generation.

Sub-theme 1: The child as victim

Professionals tend to use victim labels to describe children who experience domestic violence, reproducing an apparently deep seated belief that children are profoundly and perhaps permanently harmed by the violence that they 'witness' at home. This damage is conceptualized as primarily mental or psychological.

Professionals used terms like "lost", "scared", "innocent" to describe child victims as vulnerable and fragile. Through this choice of language, the child is constructed as a helpless, passive object whose most immediate protectors failed to provide him/her with the kind of environment psychologists regard as necessary for normal development.

> P1: *[…] if I deny completely the fact that you are a victim, it does not help (Italy, Umbria / CoHor – Professional focus group 1)*

> P3*: it is young, this creature is so innocent* (Greece - Professional focus group 2)

> P5: *the abilities of the children at that age are non-existent (Spain – Professional focus group)*

> *P3: I think of the suffering and the inability of a girl to bear the weight of the event lived. Words I would associate are: loneliness and helplessness in trying to be empowering Professional focus group, Puglia, Italy*

> P3: *it is a very, very frightened child, lost in space (Greece - Professional* focus group 3)

Professional discourses position the child victim as vulnerable and lost, and in need of protection. The entire language of safeguarding focuses on the notion of the child as vulnerable, helpless and in need of adult protection. Being protected is enshrined as one of the fundamental rights of the child, and protecting your child is seen as a basic, necessary, and highly valued part of the parental and family role. Professionals often describe the child as 'unprotected' and the parent as 'failing to protect'. In this sense the child victim comes to embody and reflect the parents' failure to meet the principal requirements of parenthood such as providing a safe environment.

> **Professional discourses position the child victim as vulnerable and lost, and in need of protection**

> *P5: I am telling her 'your parents haven't protected you*
> *(Greece – Professional focus group 1)*

> *P3: [...] a lot of the mums don't want to know the truth that it was the domestic violence that's made the impact on the child (UK Professional Focus Group 1)*

> *P4: all these children who lack the minimum of care, someone just to protect them (Greece – Professional group 4)*

> *P3: they (cases of violence) are recorded on the children we see (Greece – Professional Focus group 1)*

The child is seen here as entirely dependent on parents, and without receiving appropriate parenting practice, the child is doomed to be "damaged". This focus on the apparent rescuing power of good parenting perhaps unwittingly reproduces the kind of mother-blaming discourse that is seen in much academic literature on domestic violence. This discourse positions the child's wellbeing as the responsibility of mothers, occluding the role of the perpetrator's violence in producing developmental challenges for children (Callaghan, 2015). This mother blaming discourse is seen strongly in the following quote:

> *P3: No, no, because a lot of the mums don't want to know the truth that it was the domestic violence that's made the impact on the child (UK Professional Focus Group 1)*

The mother is represented here as being 'wilfully blind' in not admitting to the impact of violence on their children. I this sense they are positioned as complicit in offering poor care, and insufficient protection to the

'vulnerable children', whose wellbeing is often described as being entirely the responsibility of victim mothers.

Children who professionals see as 'damaged' in this way are also seen as lacking in their own capacity for healthy resilience. For this, professionals suggest they need professional intervention and support:

> *P4: They don't, they haven't got coping strategies when they come into refuge have they? (UK Professional Focus Group 1)*

Children's experience of domestic violence is broadly accepted by the professionals as having damaged extensively major domains of life. They accept the normative view that children are inevitably harmed by domestic abuse and such harm has a long-term effect.

> *P6 (Referring to advertising imagery): I don't know, because we're sitting as a bunch of professionals looking at this thinking, yeah, we KNOW that child is aware, we KNOW that that one sees violence and we KNOW that that one will learn the cycle of abuse (UK Professional Focus Group 2)*

Children are described as passive recipients of their abusive experience. They are seen as helpless in the wake of parental violence, swept along by it, choiceless and overwhelmed. The words professionals choose to describe children lack agency or the capacity to resist the impact of violence on them*:*

> *P4: the trauma is long-term and repeated and it has been established in the child's personality (Greece – Professional focus group 3)*

> *P1: [...] things that they have in common with each other, so it is things like low self esteem, lack of confidence, ((umm)) being behind at school very often, if they're school age, ((umm)) anger issues, all the doubt and confusion that comes with the situation they're in (UK – Professional focus group 1)*

> *P2: all these, neglecting, abuse, all these deprive your personality (Greece – Professional* focus group 3)

> *P3: Well some of them become quite detached with feelings (UK – Professional focus group 1)*

These images of the child-victim have two major productive effects: they reproduce normative ideals of childhood that position children who have different kinds of childhoods as deviant; and they regulate mothers to be positioned as 'responsible' for the effects of domestic violence on children. The rescuing professional's role is then to restore normative childhood by supporting mothers to heal their children, by provoking women to perform the role of 'good mother' in a manner that largely obscures their former victimization.

Sub-theme 2: The child in action

While professionals do generally position children as passive witnesses to domestic violence, there is nonetheless some discursive space to consider the *child in action.* Professionals describe the child in action as the child who recognizes and identifies the problem of domestic violence. The child has come to realize that there is a problematic situation taking place and takes action to improve the family's circumstances. Some of the actions they describe the child as taking include: urging the mother to leave or to action preventative measures against the violence; seeking help from other trustworthy adults; and behaving as adults.

> While professionals do generally position children as passive witnesses to domestic violence, there is nonetheless some discursive space to consider the *child in action*

> P1: the reaction towards his mother is 'what's going on?' and 'let's leave' (Greece – Professional focus group 3)

While it may seem that the child here is positioned as an agent, exerting an influence on the mother to end the violence, this positioning is nonetheless framed within a set of assumptions that the child is dependent on the parent for action – in other words the child remains passive in their own right. Professionals suggest that children's role is catalytic in the *mothers' choice* to seek help or take action.

> P1: the mother admits she found strength and decided to leave the abusive environment because her child told her "hey, until when is this going on? Leave it and let's go" (Greece – Professional focus group 3)

In addition, children were described as active by professionals when they engaged in *helpseeking behaviour*. The child is seen as recognizing the problems in the home, and reaching out to agencies or services to help him/ her, to step in and save him/ her.

> P6: I've worked with a child at primary school that recognised that his anger was related to what he'd witnessed, violence from dad to mum, and he started strangle holding his brother and he said he was worried about his behaviour, but he knew where it stemmed from and he highlighted the worry to me about his behaviour, now that's unusual- (UK – Professional focus group 2)

> P6: she activated a whole system, school, us, the public prosecutor's office, the police, she turned everything upside down (Greece – Professional focus group 1)

These representations of the child acting as catalyst to the parent's help seeking, and the child as asking for help position the child as relatively powerful – when they behave as children should, and help seek in ways

that are deemed appropriate. They do not function to trouble professionals' dominant construction of children as passive witnesses. The action they take is the action of a child – asking for help from their mother, or from another responsible adult. In contrast, the third representation of the child in action is somewhat different.

The third representation of child in action focuses on the child-as-adult. Here the child has been rendered so wounded by the domestic situation that they cease to be a child, and take on the mantle of adult decision making. They remove themselves from the immediate family, taking overt independent action to get away from the situation in which they have found themselves. The family environment is so problematic that the child takes a hard decision to leave the family. This child is described as mature and determined, and professionals also emphasize the organizational skills required by such an action.

> P7: [She] has been abused by [her] parents. She finally left with her sister and daughter from the home where she was. (Spain - Professional focus group)

> P1: he had his backpack with some essentials and he had left (Greece - Professional focus group 3)

> P1: He had money, took a taxi and came here (Greece – Professional focus group 3)

The child-as-adult has access to the material resources and is old enough to take the decision to move independently. They are not dependent children, but in the eyes of the professional are 'mature', responsible and adult-like.

While all three representations of the child-in-action do emphasise children's capacity to take action to bring the violence to an end, none of them trouble dominant constructions of childhood, and consequently they do not disrupt professionals' taken for granted assumptions of childhood. In the first two representations the child is represented as a passive witness, appealing to adult authorities, in the third, the child is seen as so damaged by the violence that they have ceased to be a 'proper' child. This latter construction has echoes of professional concerns about 'parentified children' or children who have 'grown up too quickly'. Rather than celebrating children's maturity and independence as a reflection of their capacity for agency, it is problematized as an expression of their damage.

Sub-theme 3: The resilient child

Another dominant category in the theme 'the child-victim' is the resilient child. Resilience in children victims of domestic violence is described by professionals in two distinct ways. In the first representation, resilience is seen as a personality trait, an inherited characteristic that is innate and internal to the child.

P2: It's down to the individual isn't it, because you get a family with exactly the same circumstances and some children manage it and other children don't within the family (UK – Professional focus group 2)

P3: How they say, the inheritance each child has, its temperament, its dynamic (Greece –Professional focus group 3)

In this construction, the child is choicelessly resilient. Their resilience is not a reflection of their own work, their own agency – rather the child is seen as 'born tough'. This kind of resilience wins the admiration of professionals:

P1: they are touchingly strong children (Greece- Professional focus group 2)

P5: [...] it's amazing how many children, I don't know, develop coping strategies. Maybe they shouldn't have to but they develop those coping strategies and they're perfectly well adjusted-Really resilient. (UK- Professional focus group 2)

The construct of the child that is 'touchingly resilient' and that 'develops coping strategies' even though 'they shouldn't have to' in some senses relies on a discourse of 'innocent childhood' which reproduces normative notions of childhood. The 'touching' nature of the resilience, its poignancy, is an expression of a childhood that is extranormative. While the child's resilience here is acknowledged, it remains problematized as something 'no child should live with'. In that sense it continues to reproduce a sense that children who experience domestic violence are necessarily damaged by it, that despite the damage, some are 'touchingly resilient'.

> Resilience in children victims of domestic violence is described by professionals in two distinct ways, as a personality trait and as a kind of 'survival skill'

In contrast, professionals identify a form of resilience that develops in children as a response to the violence they experience. This kind of resilience is read by professionals as a kind of 'survival skill'.

P2: there are many children who are 'killers', that is ready to do anything, there is no way, you see that in a child, this child will survive everywhere. (Greece – Professional focus group2)

P4: They haven't got coping strategies when they come into refuge have they?
P3: I think some of them have
P1: I suppose they've sort of got survival techniques haven't they?
P 4: Yeah, survival but that's different I think.

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> *P1: And they can't handle the hurt and the damage. (UK – Professional focus group 1)*

The kind of resilience that professionals understand as emerging in the context of domestic violence is primal one – it is a kind of resilience that really is not resilience at all. Children's capacity to 'survive' is interpreted her as a kind of feral response to their environment. Professionals recognize there is a certain raw energy and power in this kind of survival, but their language functions also to implicitly problematize it. In this sense, this form of resilience continues to identify children who experience domestic violence as 'not proper children'.

Professionals recognize certain characteristics in the resilient child. The resilient child manages to find other resources that empower them, such as academic success, or other alternatives.

> *P3: the ways of escaping a child has developed, even if it is a hobby or a talent, all these are ways of escaping (Greece – Professional focus group 4)*

> *P3: No, because some of them will perform really, really well so that they, so that when they get home they're not going to get in trouble (UK – Professional focus group 1)*

The resilient child very often adopts the role of the family carer, by protecting the other vulnerable members, or providing the necessary income. This role is acknowledged frequently by the professionals who strongly seem to agree that it acts as empowerment for children and as a factor enhancing resilience.

> *P1: they try to defend the party perceived as the weakest and they join forces with the strongest but hiding this alliance (Italy, Puglia – Professional focus group)*

> *P4: Very often when children are the breadwinners they are also the family rescuers. (Greece – Professional focus group 1)*

> *P3: -they could become young carers, we've had three year olds in refuge who make dinner for mum [...] and they look after mum and take on that role of being the carer and that's at three, but can't play, wouldn't know how to play with any toys, so totally different (UK – Professional focus group 1)*

> *P3: […] the oldest daughter had understood the dynamics of family relations and she was able to single out the typical signals of her father and tried to hold them back to defend her mother (Italy, Puglia – Professional focus group 1)*

Here again, there are traces of the problematizing discourse of the *parentified child.* The child carer is not seen simply as taking on caring responsibility, they are described as 'rescuers', as 'parents' as 'mothers'. Professional representations of children's resilience are complex. On the one hand they recognize the

'touching strength' of children who seem to remain childlike and strong despite the adversity they experience. On the other hand, they describe a feral survivalism in other children who are viewed as damaged by violence, but survivors. Both representations depend on a dominant discourse of 'normal childhood' that children who experience violence are seen as necessarily and unavoidably violating.

> Children who grow up in homes affected by domestic violence were seen as observing and repeating violence, as passively absorbing the behaviours they observe.

Sub-theme 4: The next generation: intergenerational transmission of violence

Professionals express their concern about the intergenerational transmission of violence. Children who grow up in homes affected by domestic violence were seen as observing and repeating violence, as passively absorbing the behaviours they observe. Professional knowledges of children who experience domestic violence rest heavily on the notion of intergenerational transmission. One professional, reflecting on an advertising image that shows three children who are 'marked' by domestic violence (they have its impact written across their chests), says:

> *P6 (Referring to advertising imagery): I don't know, because we're sitting as a bunch of professionals looking at this thinking, yeah, we KNOW that child is aware, we KNOW that that one sees violence and we KNOW that that one will learn the cycle of abuse (UK Professional Focus Group 2)*

Their sense of the inevitability of the intergenerational cycle is underscored by their use of the term 'we KNOW'. The professional here draws on their position as 'expert knower' to make specific truth claims about the unavoidable nature of intergenerational transmission – that children know about violence, they see it, they will learn it, they will become victims and perpetrators. This reproduces the sense of children as unavoidably damaged by the violence they experience, as

> *P10: [there is a need to prevent violence] from the very beginning, as if not when the child gets to the age of 14 years old they will also be a perpetrator. 30% of the minors hit their parents, one of the causes is the drug consumption, other reason is that the child is used to live in a violent atmosphere; there is also a lot of violence is society.(Spain – Professional focus group)*

> *P1: they will either adopt the role of the abused or the role of the abuser (Greece – professional focus group 4)*

P7: when we worked with young offenders and anti-social behaviour it was a key thing that always come through on their assessments was absolutely that domestic violence was, it was so ever present (UK – Professional focus group 2)

In this frame of reference, domestic violence is seen as a modelling context, in which children acquire a model of conflict-solving which leaves the child with no essential problem-solving skills. In this context, professionals suggest that aggressive behavior is learned as the only effective way of reacting.

P3: it's learned behaviour isn't it, if they've seen it every day and dad's talking to mum, you know, talking her down and we've had some children that have come in who don't call mum "mum", who will call her "it" or "she" because that's what dad calls her or will say, "Mum, you're stupid," all the time and, "you can't do that 'cause you're stupid," ((erm)) because that's what dad says all the time. (UK – Professional focus group 1)

P2: it cannot be otherwise. If the child has learned to live under these codes, why would he/she think there is something else besides that (Greece – Professional focus group 4)

Children are described here as reflexively reproducing the behaviours that they see at home, as choicelessly imitating their father's verbal and physical aggression. This is the route by which professionals suggest that violence becomes 'normalised' for children.

The professionals here draw on a gendered understanding of intergenerational transmission, suggesting that boys are likely to become abusers, while girls become victims. Boy victims of domestic violence are seen as more likely to engage in anti-social behavior and acting out, while girls are represented as 'vulnerable'.

P3: I think especially with some of the boys that we've had kind of come across as little tough nuts don't they, and nothing can hurt me- ((mock don't care tone)) (UK – Professional focus group 1)

P2: They (children in domestic abuse) will return either as drug users or as exhibiting delinquent behavior (Greece – Professional focus group 1)

Whereas, in the case of girls, professionals expressed concerns that girl victims of domestic violence will engage in relationships where the partner is abusive, or will 'fall prey' to other forms of abuse like child sexual exploitation.

P3: they have learned to make relationships which are masochistic, abusive, that is what they know and trust (Greece – Professional focus group 4)

P2: the mother revealed that the child follows the same path, she is involved with a much older man, she is beaten and having a hard time (Greece – Professional focus group 3)

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In these senses the constructs of intergenerational transmission in practice contexts reproduces dominant ideas about masculinity and femininity, reproducing ideas of passive feminine victims and brutal masculine aggressors. This kind of gendered construction is particularly evident in the following extract from a focus group with professionals in Puglia:

> *Alcoholic father and fragile and addicted mother; 4 children, first daughter left home for a bad marriage, two sons oppressed and with scarce social resources, and the little girl, lively and sensitive…they were subjects of domestic violence of their father against their mother. Words I would associate with this are, for the boys - disorientation, hate, powerlessness, rage. For the girls - Pity, tenderness, powerlessness.*

The gendered construction is evident in both the description of the parents – the father is 'alcholic', the mother a 'fragile addict'. The children are seen as impacted differently by the domestic violence they experience – the boys 'oppressed', experience hate, powerlessness and rage; the girl is 'sensitive' and is described as 'tender' and 'powerless'. While both genders are described as powerless to intervene (reproducing the notion of passive children who lack agency), the impact of this powerlessness is seen in gendered ways - boys are filled with rage, being positioned as potential perpetrators, the girl is sensitive and tender – an ideal feminized victim.

In this theme we have explored how professionals construct 'the child' who experiences violence. We have considered the way that professional notions of the child victim, the resilient child, and the imitating child produce the idea of children who experience domestic violence as passive recipients of violence, whose agency is highly constrained, and who are damaged by the violence they experience.

> Professionals acknowledge the impact of spending cuts and austerity measures on their work and resources available to them, and they tended to imply that need outweighed service capacity

5.3.2 The Role of Professionals and Agencies

Professionals talk passionately about their own roles and those of services and agencies involved in domestic violence. They acknowledge the impact of spending cuts and austerity measures on their work and the resources available to them and they tended to imply that need outweighed service capacity. However, they generally represent themselves as relatively resilient and adaptable to the contexts and circumstances in which they work. Although interviews involved discussions relating to staff shortages and lack of material resource, they predominantly focused on issues around service delivery and integration.

Sub-theme 1: Lack of appropriate, accessible and visible support

Professionals express their concern about the lack of continuity between services and an insufficient range of supportive and specialist services needed to support victims of domestic abuse. In each partner country, particular concerns were raised about service gaps, and professionals suggested that a better equipped system would be more functional and effective. Gaps in the system include the lack of availability of specialist local organisations (in Greece and Spain), different sheltering solutions for victims, and shelters that could include children over 18, larger families, and teenage boys.

> *P1: The investment... on prevention and taking charge of situations of psychological distress and mental health is far from being proportional to demand and need. (Italy, Umbria / CoHor – Professional focus group 1)*

> *P3: there aren't enough shelters for women (Greece – Professional focus group 2)*

In all partner countries, there were concerns about the lack of shelter for families with boys, particularly older boys, who tended to be shut out of domestic violence services because they could not be placed with their mothers in refuge.

> *P4: There are few services that can accompany the boys to autonomy: the current state at the age of 18, where the family is not a resource, they must leave the community and find themselves without reference points. (Italy, Umbria / CoHor - Professional focus group 2)*
> *P4: There aren't structures appropriate to host boys of that age, this is a very big problem in the case of domestic violence (Greece – Professional focus group 3)*

Because in so many countries, domestic violence provision is largely focused in refuges run by the voluntary sector, the service gap for older boys and young men is very significant. Not only can they often not shelter with their families, but they also often do not receive other psychosocial support, precisely because this is provided in and through shelters and refuges. This has significant implications for the recovery prospects of young men, as they are both thrust out into premature independence, and not provided with good quality support to help them recover from the domestic violence they have experience. There were additional concerns that shelter provision was not well equipped for larger families, forcing adult victims fleeing domestic violence to make difficult choices about which children they kept with them, and which had to either be placed in care, or if old enough, fend for themselves.

Professionals also expressed concerns that services were not particularly open to hearing the perspectives of children who experience domestic violence.

They feel nobody listens to their present needs (Focus group 1)

In the UK, in particular, services around domestic violence tend to rely heavily on manualized programmes and professionals here did express concerns about the adequacy of this approach, as it seemed to insufficiently address the needs of their clients:

> *P1: [...] you can repeat work with them but some people you can repeat and repeat and repeat can't you. (UK – Professional focus group 1)*

The manualized approach meant that the range of tools available to domestic violence support workers were relatively constrained to a particular set of programmes, and that they were not trained in flexible and responsive strategies for working with children. The effect is that when a child comes to the end of the programme, and is not better, the only options available to staff is to repeat the programme with them – a strategy that they do not think is ideal.

There were also concerns that the limited services that were available for children were not sufficiently visible. Professionals were concerned that children who experience domestic violence are unaware of services to support them:

> *They do not know we exist, and therefore they cannot have an opinion on us* (Italy, Puglia, Focus Group 1)

Services were also largely dependent on the referral and consent of the child's parent – a situation that was not always ideal in families affected by domestic violence. Further, professionals were concerned that children were wary of the services on offer, and might not easily avail themselves of what was available:

> *At first, the perception is of us as outsiders, who interfere with their privacy (Puglia, Italy)*

Overall, professionals were concerned that services were stretched, they were not appropriate to all families, and where services that were specifically for children did exist, they were not always responsive to children's specific needs, and were often not visible enough.

Sub-theme 2: Service fragmentation and the importance of integrated partnerships:
Professionals in all four countries expressed a strong concern about the lack, or the deterioration of some kind of coordinating or collaborative centre that could organize the action of those working to support families affected by domestic violence.

> *P4: A good organizational model, to treat all cases of abuse, has been lacking in [our locality] for these years. (Italy, Umbria / CoHor - Professional focus group 1)*

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P1: ((Umm)) even if many of the mentioned services are activated, there is a lot of confusion and lack of dialogue (.) everyone of us starts with the best of intentions, that is to say to help victims of violence…but each present service does not communicate with the other! ((shouts)) […] Everybody [wants] to be the "number one", but, at the end of the day, they are just cultivating their own little garden (Italy, Puglia – Professional focus group 1)

P3: that´s the problem each one has their own protocol, there isn´t coordination (Spain – Professional focus group)

P2: I also agree that the most important thing, apart from understaffing, is the lack of coordination (Greece – Professional Focus group 1)

P3: Since there was a split between Social and Health a problem has emerged and internal divisions... one hand does not know what the other is doing and the staff does not want to intervene because they defend themselves. (Italy, Umbria / CoHor - Professional focus group 1)

This lack of coordination and collaboration presents problems in dealing with serious cases and diminishes the quality of service provision. Professionals feel that people affected by domestic violence do not get the help they need due to these deficiencies. In the UK, competitive commissioning practices in the charitable sector is seen as actively breaking down partnership working, making it more challenging for organizations to work together. Added to this is a concern about the privatization and closure of many state and local authority organisations, which in turn places greater service demands on charitable sector organisations.

Many professionals suggested that working with children affected by domestic violence was something that needed to be embedded in schools, and that educational professionals needed to take some responsibility for what was described largely as prevention work.

P10: The educational community has to be aware that it is up to them… but they are not prepared to do it. (Spain – Professional focus group)

P3: Because it's domestic abuse and they don't want us in there. [...] They'd rather not know it's happening and a lot of schools will say they don't have domestic abuse in their school. (UK-Professional focus group 1)

P1: I was invited to do a session at a secondary school in [name of town omitted] and it had to be entitled 'Healthy Relationships', wasn't allowed to call it 'domestic abuse', even though the subject matter was domestic abuse. (UK- Professional focus group 1)

These participants were concerned about what they saw as a lack of engagement with issues relating to domestic violence in schools, and saw this as a direct obstacle to working to raise awareness and ensure

good quality prevention and intervention for children and young people. They see the resistance offered by schools as undermining integrated working and preventing good services for children who experience domestic violence.

Generally, professionals described an impoverished service landscape, impacted by austerity and cuts, where threats to services, and increased competition to provide limited services in regional authorities where funding is very limited, has significantly undermined collaboration and cooperation.

> *P5: I know one size doesn't fit all ((erm)) but there does need to be a restructure and streamlining around, and I think that is going to be happening around the commissioning. Money's a lot tighter, but it should be an opportunity to make it more effective and ((err)) ((.)) I don't know, there's got to be some improvement there (UK - Professional focus group 2)*

> *P3: we just need some money and some tools (UK - Professional focus group 2)*

> *P1: (Families) won't see an improvement if they don't stick with the course (psycho-educational programme), so we do try to arrange transport when we can but it's all down to, in my opinion, it's down to money. (UK - Professional focus group 1)*

> *P3: And actually these children are the next generation and we need to get in there don't we and help them-*

> *P4: -Unfortunately it all does come down to money at the end of the day. You know, everybody in the county is fighting for survival at the minute, to find out, you know, if domestic abuse services are going to be carried on and ((erm)) you know, who's going to be cut and we've only got this amount of money for this project and only this amount of money for that project and until that changes, and there's, you know, people recognise that it's, there is this massive need then we can only do our best. (UK - Professional focus group 1)*

Professionals in Greece mentioned the difficulties they had to services' provision due to austerity and cuts.

> *P4...then, in the old times, then in ours years (laughs)*

> *P3: then we had money (laughs)*

P4: was much more easier. (Greece – Professional Focus group 3)

Policy and Practice Comparison

In the UK, Italy, Greece and Spain, the UNARS policy analyses highlighted the need for greater recognition in policy of the place of children in families affected by domestic violence and abuse. The policy documents on domestic violence in all four participating countries generally omits children altogether, entrenching a view that children are not victims of domestic violence, but witnesses to it. We argue that this produces a service landscape in which the needs of children are portrayed as *additional* in domestic violence support.

Our research has evidenced that children are not mere witnesses to violence, and they are not 'collateral damage' in violent adult interactions. We argue that national and European policy must shift to a place where the impact of domestic violence on children is recognised in policy and law, and that children are seen as *victims* of domestic violence, not just as witnesses. Our work (see Workstream 1) has also highlighted that children are not passive in relation to domestic violence and abuse. Rather they are active in making sense of the violence, responding to it, coping with it and resisting it. Children are conscious, active beings who experience domestic violence and its impact just as much as adult victims do. Policy representations of children as passive and silent witnesses to abuse regard children as collateral damage in adult violence, and

> In the UK, Italy, Greece and Spain, the UNARS policy analyses highlighted the need for greater recognition in policy of the place of children in families affected by domestic violence and abuse

this is not an adequate framework within which to make sense of children's lives, or from which to intervene properly with children who experience domestic violence. A policy framework that discounts children as mere witnesses rather than victims enables a practice landscape in which children are treated as additional in domestic violence services, in social care, criminal justice and mental health. [6]

There are many areas of similarity across the 4 participating European countries in

- the lack of visibility of children in policy
- children's representation in some policy as damaged and in need of professional support (in terms of legal and social protections as well as therapeutic interventions)

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[6] The policy framework in each country is only briefly presented here. For a fuller treatment of policy in each country, please go to http://www.unars.co.uk/policy-analysis.php

- children's their representation as passive, non-agentic and lacking voice, and unable to help themselves

There is some evidence of children being seen as empowered and resilient, but this is minimal in comparison to the overriding discourses of passivity and damage. Not only are children's present day lives seen as problematic, but future relationships are also called into question when the gendered transmission of cyclical violence is implicated across generations.

In relation to the practice landscape, representations of children largely parallel those found in policy documents. Narratives of strength and resilience can be found, but these are the exception rather than the rule. Most countries call for more developed, specialist, responsive and more accessible services (in schools and community settings). Professionals in this study agreed that financial and resource limitations hindered their efforts to support children and that integrated service provision driven by a commitment to strong partnership working is a requirement of effective service delivery.

5.4 Focus groups with parents / carers

Focus groups were conducted with parents / carers, to build an understanding of their perceptions of their children's needs, and their experiences of services available to support their children. Two major themes emerged from focus groups conducted with parents and carers: *The Child Victim of Domestic Violence* and *The Role of Agencies and Professionals.*

Themes emergent from parent / carer focus groups

Main Theme	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3
The Child Victim of Domestic Violence	The Child-victim	Mother's role: resisting victim blaming	Child's voice
The Role of Agencies and Professionals.	Supportive services	Support as threat	

5.4.1 The child victim of domestic violence

This main theme includes the carers' / parents'[7] accounts of children's experience of Domestic violence. It includes 3 sub-themes: *The Child-victim, The Child's voice* and *Mother's Role.* These themes do echo, reproduce, and in some senses resist the representations of children's experiences of domestic violence that the professional groups produced.

Sub-theme 1: The Child-Victim

Parents tend to reproduce professional discourses that position the child as a 'victim', as 'vulnerable' and 'damaged'. They express regret at all that their children have been through, and express a deep-seated conviction that their children have been profoundly psychologically harmed by the domestic violence they have experienced.

> Themes in carers' accounts echo, reproduce, and in some senses resist the representations of children's experiences of domestic violence that the professional groups produced

> *P1: What he has been through, only his soul knows and god.(Greece – Parent focus group 2)*

> *P1: This is very heavy for his little soul. – (Greece – Parent focus group 2)*

> *P1: I know it's affecting my kids, it's affecting me (UK – Parent focus group 1)*

The experience of domestic violence is described here as an unbearable burden, and the quite hyperbolic language around the children's 'little soul' and 'tender age' suggests that parents are positioning their children's experiences violating the norms of a 'good childhood', and highlighting the way that the family affected by domestic violence does not provide a 'proper' parenting environment for children to be raised in. The image of the 'little soul' is one that represents the supposedly innocent child as tainted, corrupted by the violence they have 'witnessed'. This sense of the child's vulnerability extends into a sense of the child as damaged, vulnerable to future difficulties, and likely to repeat violence themselves:

> *P1: Some of them are very weak and easily influenced by their peer group so they can repeat the violence (Spain – Parent focus group)*

The child-victim is described as affected by violence in a very dramatic way. The child-victim is described in relation to the consequences the DVA has on his/her personality and mental health. The consequences appear to be very serious and are demonstrated mainly in the child's internalizing and externalizing

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[7] From this point forward in this section of the report, the term 'parent' will be assumed to refer to both carers and parents.

behaviors. This was a remarkably consistent construction of the child who has experienced domestic violence, across all the parent focus groups.

P2: He was a very good child, clever. And he reached a point where he didn't want to do anything, even eating. He became a monster. He was harming himself, he put on the diaper. (Greece – parent focus group 2)

P2: deep down, they won't be fine, they're incomplete, so no they're never gonna be fine (UK – Parent focus group 1)

P3: The thing is, me, I feel, if the kids face the domestic violence with the mother, definitely it crushes their personality, they are mentally disordered in the end. (UK- Parent focus group 1)

P1: My two girls have taken, my two youngest have taken it very, very well, and I'm not just saying that. But I've noticed, if they're playing a game, it's a game playing like mums and dads or something like that. I can see it, my 6 year old playing like "your dad's just hit mum, quick phone the Police" [...] Instead of playing "the baby needs feeding" [...] they're role playing is "quick phone the Police" (UK – Parent focus group 1)

The impact of domestic violence on the child's developing mental health and personality is described in extreme terms. They are seen as tainted, 'monstrous', irretrievably damaged. The parents here suggest that theirs are not 'normal' children, that they *cannot* be normal after their experience of violence.

Subtheme 2: Mother's role: Resisting Victim-blaming

In this theme, we explore the way that mothers in particular made sense of their role in their children's experiences of domestic violence and recovery from domestic violence. The mothers who participated in focus groups seemed very aware of dominant mother blaming representations of women victims in understanding children's recovery from domestic violence. They described their own role in terms of protecting their children, presenting themselves as naturally and inherently concerned with the protection and nurturing of their children.

P3: I want to her help her so it's like we have to work together, to get through all those experiences (UK – Parent focus group 2)

P1: I was saying I would enjoy being with her (the daughter), I may be crying on my own ((.)) but with the child I would manage to have a good time. (Greece – Parent focus group 2)

P2: you're not taken seriously (by professionals), like they think that they know better than me, but I'm her mum, and I've had her since she was a baby (UK – Parent focus group 1)

P1: You put your role as mother first. (Greece – Parent focus group 1)

They position themselves as good mothers, mothering well despite their own experiences of victimization, despite their own distress and feelings of guilt. Despite the challenging experiences they have had, they draw on the popular discourse of the 'mother as expert on her own children' to ratify their sense that they know what is best for their children. They are 'mothers first' and 'victims second'.

> The mothers who participated in focus groups seemed very aware of dominant mother blaming representations of women victims

Within the logic of the professional landscape that mothers perceive, the mother's ability to present herself as a 'good mother' is dependent on her decision to take action or seek help. The good mother is one who recognises the damaging effect of domestic violence on their children's life, and who takes action to prevent that damaging impact. In interview, many women emphasized the lengths they went to and obstacles they faced in trying to ensure their children's well-being:

P2: *I struggled a lot, I turned everywhere, (agencies) so that he (the child's father) wouldn't see them alone but always with a third person present (Greece – Parent* focus group 2)

P1: You have to go through Social Services to access this like place of health […] It's like you HAVE to be referred by your Social Worker, or you HAVE to be referred by your Doctor", well some people haven't got Social Worker's in their lives (UK – Parent focus group 1)

P2: I don't see any of the help, because whenever I've said that my daughter's upset, I know she's young and she can't do counselling 'cause she's 4, but I've seen certain things that are okay, but no-one takes you seriously (UK - Parent focus group 1)

The 'evidence' of their good mother status is seen in their appeal for help and support: in turning to professionals for support, they are seen as 'rescuing' and 'protecting' their own children, thereby living up to agreed social ideas about what makes 'good mothers'. In this respect, the women reflect therapeutic and professional discourses which centre on the importance of disclosure, and the implicit notion that in DV one can only really be a 'good mother' by proxy through the intervention of professional others. Given that, in professional discourses, their rehabilitation as 'good mothers' depends on the recognition of the damage domestic violence does to children, their descriptions of their children as inevitably and irretrievably damaged might function in part as a 'confessional practice', as part of their rehabilitation as good parents – perhaps a defence against the dominant victim blaming representation of mothers in academic literature and professional practice around the impact of domestic violence on children.

Seemingly aware of the way that their children's experiences exceed notions of normative childhood, mothers in these groups are concerned that their own experiences of domestic violence may have damaged their children, and they are at pains to position themselves as 'good parents' in relation to the 'bad influence' of the perpetrator. Some parents position themselves as *choosing* to protect their children, with leaving the perpetrator being described as something they did *for the sake of their children*, not for their own good. In this sense, they defend against potential accusations of bad parenting, positioning themselves as responsible parents, who care, nurture and protect.

> *P2: It was us who wanted the children to be ok, we were interested in their soul, above everything. (Greece – Parent focus group 2)*

> *P1: I signed myself out of hospital after the operation the next day to get back to my girls (UK – Parent focus group)*

In these extracts, the parents represent themselves as making choices to leave violence *for the sake of their children.* Their choice to end the abusive relationship is also framed as a positive choice to protect their children, and to realign themselves with a dominant social narrative of what it means to be a good mother.

Sub-theme 3: Child's Voice

In contrast to the 'monstrous' and 'damaged' child victim, parents also described a different kind of child – an agentic one, who speaks their mind, and who sees themselves as protecting the family. This child is more active, expressing needs and wishes, and their point of view on the violence that they experienced. Parents describe a mature, hands-on child who wishes to improve his/her circumstances.

In contrast to the 'damaged' child victim, parents also described a different kind of child – an agentic one, who speaks their mind, and who sees themselves as protecting the family

> *P2: She thinks about it herself and she speaks for herself (Greece – Parent focus group 1)*

> *P2: I think these children were mature (Greece – Parent focus group 2)*

The more agentic child represented here is described as a rational spokesperson in the family, who speaks up for the adult victim and reacts against the adult perpetrator. In some senses this construction seems to be a play on the notion of the 'innocent child who speaks without guile' – the child who lacks the inner censor that we learn as we mature, and who is often portrayed in popular consciousness as speaking the truth (consider the idiom 'out of the mouths of babes and innocents...').

P2: And sometimes she says, "Can you take the phone and can you call the police, Mummy?" (UK – Parent focus group 2)

P2: She (the daughter) is the one who tells it. When she is alone with him (father) (she says) "Why do you hit mum? (Greece – Parent focus group 1)

P2: Amanda (daughter) she get really angry with me and say, "Mummy, you're confusing me, I don't know why you're doing these things, being nice to this man and he keep on treating you bad, he's never going to change, it's only just going to get worse and worse." That's what she keep on saying. (UK – Parent focus group 2)

P2: and that child after two months said 'I am not talking on the phone with dad again because he is bad, he hit mum. (Greece – Parent focus group 2)

P1: when I move into the [shelter] first time, I remember my daughter holding me and she squeezed me and said, "Thank you, Mummy" and she'd been crying for around two minutes, nonstop. And then every, [inaudible] being here, every single morning, they will, and night when they're going to bed, they will say, "Mummy, you should have done this years ago." Sometimes I'm amazed at the things that come out of their mouth as a little kid (UK – Parent focus group 2)

Their position as innocent children is seen by the adults as enabling them to see things more clearly. The child here is seen as ratifying the adult victim's post-abuse view of the perpetrator's violent and harmful behavior. In this sense they are not seen as violating the norms of 'proper childhood', rather they are represented as a wounded innocent, appealing to the adults in their lives to prevent the violence.

5.4.2 Role of agencies and professionals

This main theme includes references discussing the Role of Agencies and Professionals in DVA. It is divided in 2 sub themes – supportive services and unsupportive services.

Sub-theme 1: Supportive services

Parents discussed the support they received from agencies and professionals. Aside from the provision of shelter, the most frequently discussed support was that of a psychological nature.

P2: You start a struggle, and with the psychological support, I can't deny it, you get stronger. (Greece – Parent focus group 2)

P1: [...] me and Ben (son) started having counselling [...] it was to help both of us. I was already doing 12 weeks of my own counselling with somebody else and I felt that I done okay, but this counselling

that me and Ben were doing, it was to get us closer together because that bond between [us] had

just gone (UK – Parent focus group 1)

The women portrayed a sense that good therapeutic support facilitates the restoration of personal well-being and helps to re-establish family attachment and bonding. Parents often framed their primary concern and their primary support need as being for their children. They express worries about whether their child is receiving sufficient support, the detrimental impact of drawn out court proceedings, and the impact of contact and contact disputes on their children. They sometimes recognize their own need for support, counselling, etc, but often reframe this in terms of their need for support so that they can be a 'better mother'. They consult experts about their children's difficulties and make efforts to refer their children in order to receive support.

P1: *I referred (daughter) to a psychologist (Greece – Parent focus* group 1)

P3: I am taking my kids to Children's Centre (UK – Parent focus group 1)

P1: *I made sure I was consulting some experts* (Greece – Parent focus group 2)

P1: I start my wellbeing group tomorrow (UK – Parent focus group 1)

Mothers in the UK in particular struggled to self-refer to support agencies, experiencing barriers to accessing support for themselves and their children – especially emotional and psychological support (as noted above in 'The Mother's Role'). They often had to seek 'permission' from multiple agencies before they could be considered as a suitable candidate for support or were turned away because they were not in receipt of statutory support.

Sub-theme 2: Support as threat

In contrast to the supportive services, parents feel unprotected and unsupported by the authorities such as the legal system (legislation, public prosecutor), the police and statutory agencies. They firmly emphasize poor support, a lack of understanding and empathy, inadequate responsiveness, and bureaucratic concerns, that make the system sluggish, unresponsive and inappropriate. They express their disappointment and their despair in the authorities' apparent inability to protect them.

> Parents often expressed feeling unprotected and unsupported by the authorities such as the legal system (legislation, public prosecutor), the police and statutory agencies

P1: You don't feel secure in the police (Greece – Parent focus group 2)

P2: in law, it is scheduled to receive a network of resources, but in practice children are still the invisible part of the family violence (Spain – Parent focus group)

P2: After the (DVA) events they (police) told me that I have to have evidence against him. So he has to kill me first to have evidence (Greece – Parent focus group 2)

P2: I was telling them 'Check what is legal, take him in to prove that this man is a drug user, he is not functioning properly'. They told me I had to take these actions when I was still living with him. How was I supposed to know? (Greece – Parent focus group 3)

Echoing the kinds of concerns discussed by Marianne Hester (2011), they express worry and dissatisfaction about the lack of joined-up working between courts of protection, domestic violence courts and child custody judgments. They also voice frustration around a lack of understanding and awareness of how to intervene to prevent and protect against domestic violence.

They were left with a sense that there was no real help or support for their children.

P3: But in reality there are no support services for children. (Puglia, Italy, parents focus group, P3)

P2: I can't do anything because I've been to a Children's Centre and they [say] "oh it's normal", it's not normal" (daughter's anxiety) (UK - Parent focus group 1)

Parents reported a sense of frustration that, when they were trying to be 'good mothers' or 'good parents' they were unsupported, and that there was little or no relevant support for children who were struggling with their experiences of domestic violence.

When support is available it is often seen as lacking in nuance, as not tailored to the specific needs of their particular children:

I wish that you would continue to support the woman beyond the initial separation, because even after legal separation, we still have many problems and difficult times and there is a vacuum in services at that time. Puglia, Italy, parents focus group 2, P2

P1: help should have been put in place before it came to this (UK – Parent focus group 1)

They didn't want to help me with the emotions. If I didn't want to do a star chart for her behavior, they weren't interested in helping. They said that was refusing service. (UK Parent focus group 3)

It was common for parents to report that support was not 'on time', that it was not offered at the time that it was needed. Because the limited support that is available to children is often attached to refuge or shelter provision, or to the legal processes underpinning separation, it is often not available when children most need it. Children often begin to process the after effects of violence once they are re-settled post-separation, but it is at this time that they typically experience a service gap. In the UK, one parent (focus group 3) noted that support was only available to her child while her child was designated as a Child in Need. However, this seems to suggest that children only have emotional support needs when they are under child protection – a view that is clearly out of keeping with our understanding of children's experiences of mental distress following their experiences of domestic violence. Parents' talk about getting support is often characterised by 'battle metaphors' – they describe the 'struggle' to gain support, how they had to 'fight' to get the help they needed. This does not suggest a supportive service landscape that meets the needs of children and families.

The support that is offered is often understood by parents to be threatening and coercive. Some parents reflected feeling forced to leave by authorities, feeling that their hands were tied, and that they were pressured to make a decision either to stay and lose their children or to leave and keep their children. In these cases, parents expressed a sense of powerlessness, oppression, and a loss of control over their and their children's lives:

> P1: I mean I had Social Services involved with mine, [...] I had it put to me as, if I don't leave, I'm gonna get my kids taken off me [...] To me that's blackmail, that doesn't show any, that's not showing me any help (UK – Parent focus group 1)

> P2: Yeah, I feel powerless [...] I feel like I'm sitting in a classroom with the head teacher looking over me (UK – Parent focus group 1)

In these cases, the involvement of the authorities tended to be viewed with suspicion, as a threat to their ability to mother their children and as an unwanted intrusion on the family system. The notion that children are 'damaged' by violence is the catalyst for involvement from the authorities – and used as leverage to facilitate a change in circumstances, but is perceived as a threat by some mothers who may minimize the potential impact on their children.

5.5 Culture and context as an explanatory framework for children's experiences of domestic violence

Culture and context seemed to play some role in explanations of children's experiences of domestic violence, and was also reflected on in parent and professional focus groups. As we have already noted, professionals expressed concerns about the impact of recession on services for victims of domestic violence, but they also felt that the economic context played a role in producing conditions that were supportive of violence in the family. For example, in Greece, a professional argued that the current recession resulted in an increase of incidents of violence against children.

> 1S2: it is like there is a revival of… how can I say it? Of corporal punishment but with acceptance, eeer.. Like how can I say it… it is like there is a return to traditional values. And I am relating it with the situation we going through the last years… (438 -441)

 In the above extract, the participant suggested that the current recession resulted in the re-appearance of old disciplinary values, such as of physical abuse. At the same time, this disciplinary practise is prevalent and is normalised. In Spain, a professional focus group participant also suggested that culture and class play a role in determining the form of violence experienced in families:

> Participant 2: [...] it is also important to bear in mind the cultural and socio-economical levels, as well as the immigration factor […] in lower classes the violence normally is physical, and in higher ones it is verbal, they are more sophisticated. Those behaviours are learnt [...] (Spain – Professional focus group)

The participant suggest here that overt expressions of violence are more common in poorer families, or in straightened economic circumstances, seeming to suggest that difficult economic circumstances result in normalisation of violence, and create the kind of environment in which violence can be learned in the family. Deploying a clear, class based discourse, the participant from Spain uses quite broad strokes to portray physical domestic violence as an issue for poorer families, while middle and professional class families are seen as engaged in more subtle forms of verbal violence. In this sense, context is seen as producing a vulnerability to violence. This construction has two effects, rendering domestic violence as an increasingly stigmatising problem of 'the poor', whilst obscuring its operation in wealthier families. The participant suggests these patterns of behaviour are 'passed on' – presumably making it more likely that domestic violence will be perpetuated in poorer families. This kind of reading of culture as *normalising violence* for specific groups has the unfortunate effect of, on the one hand, recognising the role that context can play in the production and maintainance of violence, whilst at the same time maintaining it as something that is primarily re-read as passed on through interpersonal and individual processes.

In Umbria / CoHor, Italy, a participant in the professional focus group identifies families' religious values as a cultural underpinning to domestic violence:

> *Participant 4: It was very clear thinking "how bad the parents are," but now I see […] it is an institutional disease […]... It is Catholic thinking and judgmentalism...(Italy, Umbria / CoHor – Professional focus group 1)*

Here, religious values are seen as shaping parenting practice in problematic ways, that are seen as fostering violence in the home. In the UK, another professional focus group participant suggested that the culture within the family itself normalized violence.

> *Participant 3: But we would see them weekly anyway and monitor what was happening because a lot of the time mums would say "there's no issues" or that, we either get them saying, "Perfect children," or, "Oh my God, you need to help me because his behaviour's out of control." (UK – Professional focus group 1)*

In this extract, Ayisha makes sense of her own experience of violence as being 'transmitted' from her family of origin, where she suggests it was seen as a normal part of domestic life, to her own experience, and suggests that expectations of family differed because of her family's culture.

> *Int: So do you think that those kind of cultural issues aren't kind of picked up within the services that you've had experience in?*
>
> *Suzy: No definitely not*
>
> *Ayisha: They're not picked up, it's like most people don't get it. I got married 'cause I wanted my family 'cause I wasn't feeling well, but my family done me up. It wasn't, it's like, it wasn't my mum's fault what happened the day I got married, for three days I came back, I had a ((cries)) my back was ruined, everything was ruined. I didn't go to the GP, I didn't do nothing and my mum was just like "It's normal". I came back and there was no "Ayisha I love you" she was like "Go, go get a job and work" ((cries)). My mum's never loved me, she's always just wanted respect and d'you know what, I'm starting to hate my own culture because of that. (UK, Parent Focus Group 1)*

She sees a lack of concern in her parents' choice of arranged family. However, more significant for her was their lack of action when the violence in her marriage was made known to them. Rather, her mother normalised the violence, and advised her daughter to simply get on with things.

Professionals and parents reflected on the role of growing up in contexts where violence in the family was relatively normalised.   For example, one participant in a UK professional focus group noted:

P1: [...] it seems to be what they're used to, normal, so there's lots of relearning to be done. (UK – Professional focus group 1)

P3: the problem is the normalisation of the situation (Spain - Professional focus group)

> Participants draw on a notion that the family functions as a cultural context in which violence is normalised

Here, participants are drawing on a notion that the family functions as a cultural context in which violence is normalised –that there is an expectation that violence will occur, and that that violence is seen as part of everyday experience for children growing up in such families. They suggest that the best intervention in such families would be to challenge the normalisation of violence, particularly amongst children, and to encourage children and young people to see it as wrong, and to press charges against perpetrators. In this sense, whilst referring to an issue that they see as cultural and contextual (the normalisation of violence) the solution offered is an individualising one. 'Normalisation' is seen as internal to the individual – an attitude that needs to be shifted. This kind of explanatory framework perhaps neglects the range of socioeconomic conditions that might underpin such normalisation.

Migrant and Refugee Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence

A small number of children in our interviews came from migrant and refugee families. Culture seemed to occupy a particular place in these children's narratives. In particular, cultural differences were often used as a way of making sense of violence in the family, and to justify violent family practices.

In Greece, a participant suggested that his culture of origin resulted in not getting the help and the protection he was needed.

> *Nikos: Many people could do something but they didn't ... …because we were from Albania and we would speak Albanian and my parents would be fighting over there ((eh)) others would say «((Eh)), these people are Albanian, and that's how their culture is» they would think, ((eh)) «and, logically, that's how they speak or that's how they fight». (Greece, Int: 11)*

In the above extract the participant suggested that family violence is widely accepted in his culture of origin. This attitude about DV was taken for granted among people in his family and in other Greek people. As a result Greek citizens didn't provide any help to protect mother and children from abuse.

> Culture seemed to occupy a particular place in the narratives of children from migrant and refugee families

In these accounts there sometimes emerged a kind of hierarchy of acceptable violence – that some violence was culturally normal (like a slap), but some was not (like a punch).

Disciplinarian parenting and marital practices were normalised as ordinary assertions of authority, but other forms of violence were viewed as extreme and extra-normative. This could make it quite challenging for children to identify what was, and what was not domestic violence, as they viewed this as occurring on a continuum of acceptable through to unacceptable violence.

This perception of cultural difference often functioned as a barrier to help seeking. Children suggested that neighbours were less likely to intervene because 'culture x is like that'. There was also greater potential for social isolation for children who experience domestic violence and who come from migrant backgrounds. This is because they feel themselves to be doubly different, as both survivors of violence, and as migrant children.

> Natalia (Greece): But all this at home I don't like ((.)) I mean, when we go to Albania there I have fun because there we don't argue, we don't ((.))

In addition, it became clear that, when the mother lacked official migration status, this could make them more vulnerable. A lack of recourse to public funds often meant that they were unable to make use of the limited public services available to support victims of domestic violence. Further, women's uncertain immigration status sometimes prevented them from seeking help, because of a reluctance to draw down the attention of the state. Ayisha, a 24 year old mum from the UK shares her feelings of frustration and isolation which specifically arise from a lack of specialist support and understanding around her experiences of violence in a forced marriage:

> Int: (...) So you think services are particularly difficult to access (...)

> Ayisha: They're difficult to access, and I've noticed that the workers that work here, they don't, well, in my opinion, I don't think they know much about forced marriages or anything, so I just sit there, I get on with whatever I'm doing, I drop my kids off, come back, cook, I go out. I don't even bother coming in anymore ((to see Support Worker in office)) because I don't think anyone can help me. And one, I've got a problem where I can't ((erm)) open up (...) communicate my feelings. I can with individuals in the flat, but I can't do it with a professional ((cries)) so I, I, I, I'm never gonna get the help, 'cause I can't do it

All partner countries reported a lack, or a significant shortage of specialist services for specific migrant populations to support victims of domestic violence, particularly as a consequence of austerity politics and the attendant cuts that have significantly affected state and charitable sector provision of domestic violence services. However, it should be noted that in Spain, the migrant families who were interviewed were longer

term migrants, who had been settled in the country for longer, and the issues that they reported were somewhat different. In particular, in Spain had fewer difficulties accessing the services that were available, because they were able to speak Spanish, and so experienced fewer barriers. This perhaps underscores the importance of the availability of translation services, or specialist language services, for migrant groups (particularly larger migrant populations), to offset some of the isolation and alienation from services and support that participants in other countries have noted.

5.6 Training Professionals Who Work with Domestic Violence

As we have seen from the discussion of the policy and practice landscape, professionals often have a desire to provide better support for children and young people, but reproduce quite problematic and pathologising understandings of children who experience domestic violence. It was therefore important, as part of this project, to intervene in this arena, by sharing the insights of our work with children, with professionals who work with them. Drawing on the insights built up throughout the programme, a training was offered to professionals and voluntary sector workers who supported families who had experienced domestic violence. In particular, our focus was on communicating to professionals the importance of treating children who experience domestic violence as individuals with agency, as meaning making beings who were just as much the victims as the adult targets of domestic violence.

A range of professionals were trained, including social services staff, psychologists, teachers, police officers, GPs, nurses, domestic violence support workers and family support workers. The training structure generally involved one training day, with varying patterns of follow up training. Northampton had one

> Our focus was on communicating to professionals the importance of treating children who experience domestic violence as individuals with agency

training day, and four follow ups, which allowed some facilitation of integration of acquired material. Some partners (Thessaloniki, Northampton and Puglia) had arranged for ongoing support for contact between the research team and trainees, to ensure follow through of the project in each site. Training was well received, and there was a strong perception of a need for more training in all regions.

In the **United Kingdom** trainees generally reported that they found the training helpful and supportive, and that they had learned a great deal that they could apply in practice. In particular, they felt they had acquired new skills and tools to assist them in their work with children and young people who have experienced domestic violence. They were enthusiastic about applying techniques, with one respondent saying *"The ecomap I will be able to use and effectiveness I have already started using."*, and another saying *"I can't wait*

to use the materials!”. Some trainees had secured institutional support for adopting new ways of working based on the training, saying *“Our work place environment want to us to use the training in our every day work”*, *“I have shared my experience with my manager who has supported me integrating skills learnt into my practice”* and *“My workplace are embracing my need to apply principles of the training to my practice.”* While only a small number of trainees were able to attend the full set of training workshops, those that did reported that they had applied the techniques, and received support in this application in the training context: *“I have used skills learnt productively in sessions with effective outcomes for clients”,* and noting that *“I feel I am more confident to help children and young people”.*

UK Questionnaire Responses – End of first session

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of CYP who experience DV	22	6	10	8.41	1.436
Training will enhance my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with CYP	22	5	10	8.32	1.427
I have experienced obstacles and barriers in applying knowledge from training	20	1	9	4.70	2.975
I have felt supported at work, in applying training principles to practice	20	1	10	5.30	3.326
I have the necessary <u>resources</u> I require to implement my training	21	1	10	7.19	2.502
I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice	20	4	10	8.15	1.461
I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.	21	5	10	8.57	1.326
I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.	21	5	10	8.38	1.203
Overall the programme was <u>useful</u> to me in my professional role.	21	6	10	8.76	1.044

Quantitative course evaluation questionnaire data from the UK supports the conclusion that the training was very successful. Trainees felt that their understanding and effectiveness in supporting children who experience domestic violence was enhanced through their participation in the programme. They also felt that they had the confidence to apply the training in practice, and that the programme was relevant to their professional role. They were less confident that they would be supported in applying their knowledge and skills at work.

In the UK, trainees felt that their understanding and effectiveness in supporting children who experience domestic violence was enhanced through participation in the programme

UK Questionnaire Responses – End of final session

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training has enhanced my understandings of CYP who experience DV	6	9	10	9.50	.548
Training will enhance my effectiveness in working with CYP	6	8	10	9.33	.816
I have experienced obstacles and barriers in applying knowledge from training	6	1	7	2.83	2.563
I have felt supported at work, in applying training principles to practice	6	5	10	8.50	1.975
I have the necessary resources I require to implement my training	6	5	10	7.33	2.338
Since the programme started there has been a positive change in my practice	6	5	10	8.67	1.966
Since the programme began, there has been a negative change in my practice	5	0	2	1.00	.707
I feel confident in applying UNARS training to my practice	6	5	10	8.17	2.229
I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.	6	9	10	9.50	.548
I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.	6	9	10	9.67	.516
Overall the programme was useful to me in my professional role.	6	9	10	9.67	.516

At the end of their final session, responses to the training were still very positive. The trainees also felt that their practice have changed in a positive way since participating in the training. (It should be noted that the

reduced numbers from session 1 to session 5 was planned – many participants signed up for the training knowing they could only attend the first whole day.)

In Puglia, Italy, trainees valued ***collaborative working,*** and the provision of a quiet working environment in which they could build and develop networking opportunities with other professionals. In terms of ***knowledge and skills acquired***, trainees reported that they found the emphasis on listening to the child, and giving proper attention and priority to their needs, rather than just focusing on the involved adults, very important. However, this needed to be balanced by appropriate, child friendly listening. As one trainee commented: *"I need to show I am available to listen, reassuring them but not pressuring them to tell their accounts"*. They highlighted the focus on the importance of avoiding re-traumatisation, whilst at the same time providing space for children to express their experiences and to reflect. The training emphasised a range of techniques to enable this – particularly using creative and embodied approaches – that participants found useful.

> In Puglia, Italy, trainees valued *collaborative working,* and the provision of a quiet working environment in which they could build and develop networking opportunities with other professionals

They also offered useful insights into ***perceived barriers*** to working in a way that listens to children, takes them seriously as victims of domestic violence, and enables their agency to be recognised. They note that institutional models of practice were hardy, and often resistant to change. This interpretation was also extended to them as individuals, as they emphasised that they too had their own 'cognitive categories' that could box children in, and that needed to be challenged. They also highlighted the lack of adequate organisations to respond to children's needs. Further, they noted that much younger children might face communication challenges in expressing their experiences. They also noted that policy and legal frameworks present a barrier in taking children seriously: *"The law safeguards and implements intervention addressed to women, but not to children or any other victim of domestic violence."* They feel that those on the frontline who work children who experience violence often lack the skills to listen to children's accounts, and that while they recognise the violence directed to women, often do not see its effect on children.

In Puglia quantitative data also generally supports the view that the training was positively received and had enhanced participants' perceptions of knowledge, confidence and skills.

Puglia Questionnaire Responses – End of final session

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of CYP who experience DV	8	7	10	8.25	1.035
Training will enhance my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with CYP	8	5	9	7.38	1.188
I have experienced obstacles and barriers in applying knowledge from training	8	5	8	6.50	1.069
I have felt supported at work, in applying training principles to practice	8	6	8	7.38	.744
I have the necessary <u>resources</u> I require to implement my training	8	5	8	6.63	1.188
Since the programme started there has been a positive change in my practice	3	6	7	6.67	.577
Since the programme began, there has been a negative change in my practice	3	6	7	6.67	.577
I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice	8	6	9	7.63	.916
I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.	8	6	8	7.50	.756
I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.	8	6	8	7.63	.744
Overall the programme was <u>useful</u> to me in my professional role.	8	6	9	7.75	.886

Trainees in **Umbria / CoHor, Italy**, echoed many of these points. Funding was a key element for more appropriate interventions with children. They felt that further training and support was needed. They valued seeing children's experiences 'from a new angle', and felt that these new insights prepared them better to work with families affected by domestic violence.

In Umbria / CoHor, there was a general positive perception of the programme, and its impact on knowledge, confidence and skills. Most staff felt that there had been a positive impact on their practice. Staff here felt there was some support in implementing the principles.

Umbria / CoHor Questionnaire Responses – End of final session

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of CYP who experience DV	16	6	10	8.37	1.258
Training will enhance my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with CYP	16	5	10	8.31	1.448
I have experienced obstacles and barriers in applying knowledge from training	16	1	8	3.44	2.220
I have felt supported at work, in applying training principles to practice	16	2	8	5.69	1.621
I have the necessary <u>resources</u> I require to implement my training	16	3	10	7.44	2.220
Since the programme started there has been a positive change in my practice	16	6	10	8.44	1.365
Since the programme began, there has been a negative change in my practice	15	1	10	3.40	2.823
I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice	16	3	10	7.75	2.113
I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.	16	4	10	9.25	1.528
I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.	16	8	10	9.19	.911
Overall the programme was <u>useful</u> to me in my professional role.	14	7	10	9.29	.994

In Spain, trainees particularly valued the opportunity to ***work together collaboratively***. They felt that this collaboration between institutions is a necessary corrective to a current lack of effective communication and decentralization of the different authorities and institutions related to this matter. Contradictory practice and protocols in different government agencies make effective cooperation impossible. Trainees also emphasized the importance of creating a specialist protocol and unified database to enable professionals to access to updated minors information. Networking offered a space to share points of view and better communication between professionals from different fields.

Spanish trainees – evaluation questionnaires

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

Training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of CYP who experience DV	55	1	10	6.80	2.022
Training will enhance my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with CYP	55	1	9	6.47	1.971
I have the necessary <u>resources</u> I require to implement my training	54	1	10	4.78	2.416
I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice	48	1	9	5.40	2.304
I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.	47	1	10	6.60	2.102

They also ***valued the knowledge and skills acquired*** through training. Knowing how to deal with the problem and the ability to take assertive decisions was considered important. Therefore, the training focused on improving their understanding of young people's responses to domestic violence and their capacity for resilience, as well as technical training in mediation and jurisprudence, was highly valued. They felt that understanding young people's lived experiences of domestic violence can be helpful.

All these topics have been considered as relevant to protect minors, on the one hand, when detecting child vulnerability and on the other hand, when starting prevention or intervention programs that includes cooperation with local schools. Furthermore, the creation of a "tutor" inside the local police, the school and in the social field in order to offer support. Finally, it is important to know more deeply the duties and competences of each institution both public and private.

In **Thessaloniki, Greece,** participants felt that the knowledge shared had enhanced their skills and enabled a deeper understanding of children who experience domestic violence. One participant felt that the training had particularly enabled a connection of theory to practice, which she valued highly, while

> In Thessaloniki, Greece, participants felt that the knowledge shared had enhanced their skills and enabled a deeper understanding of children who experience domestic violence

another noted "my perspective has changed. I have become able to see things from the position of the child or the young person". Several participants worked in contexts where their job was to support mothers affected by domestic violence, and felt they could apply what they had learned to support improved more- child relationships. In common with Italian participants, Greek trainees valued the emphasis on embodiment and subjectivity. In responses to follow up sessions, participants also talked about their application of some of the techniques learned in the sessions, for instance recognizing that *"it's not always verbal intervention*

needed, but physical contact", while another participant noted that, because of the experiential nature of the training, and the emphasis on children's own accounts *"I could hear their voices."*

Thessaloniki Questionnaire Responses – End of first session

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of CYP who experience DV	13	7	10	8.69	.947
Training will enhance my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with CYP	13	6	10	7.92	1.320
I have experienced obstacles and barriers in applying knowledge from training	13	1	10	5.92	3.068
I have felt supported at work, in applying training principles to practice	13	2	10	7.08	2.722
I have the necessary <u>resources</u> I require to implement my training	12	1	9	5.00	2.000
I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice	13	4	10	6.62	1.710
I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.	13	4	10	7.38	2.468
I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.	13	4	10	6.92	1.754
Overall the programme was <u>useful</u> to me in my professional role.	13	7	10	9.00	1.155

However, participants were particularly concerned about barriers to the application of the skills they learned perceiving many structural and systemic barriers to good working with children. They suggested that the systems within which they work were particularly rigid, and resistant to new knowledge and ways of working, with some participants noting that in their domestic violence work, they were not permitted to work with children. Services for children affected by domestic violence were also very few, and interventions were generally very short term, making sustained and meaningful work with children difficult to achieve. This is an issue, not just in Thessaloniki, but in all partner countries, where austerity measures have meant significant cuts to services for families generally, and particularly for vulnerable families.

Thessaloniki Questionnaire Responses – End of final session

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of CYP who experience DV	6	7	10	8.00	1.095
Training will enhance my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with CYP	6	7	8	7.50	.548
I have experienced obstacles and barriers in applying knowledge from training	5	1	8	4.60	2.702
I have felt supported at work, in applying training principles to practice	6	1	10	5.33	4.131
I have the necessary <u>resources</u> I require to implement my training	6	1	8	4.00	3.098
Since the programme started there has been a positive change in my practice	1	9	9	9.00	.
Since the programme began, there has been a negative change in my practice	4	1	6	2.25	2.500
I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice	6	4	8	6.00	1.673
I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.	6	4	9	6.33	1.633
I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.	5	7	8	7.60	.548
Overall the programme was <u>useful</u> to me in my professional role.	6	7	10	8.33	1.211

Summary: Chapter 5

This chapter has explored the policy and practice context children who experience domestic violence navigate. We have considered how policy and practice frameworks construct the child who experiences domestic violence. In policy contexts, we have identified that children are largely absent from legal and policy frameworks that describe domestic violence, and that provide guidelines for support and intervention. Children are largely positioned in policy as collateral damage, or perhaps as indirect victims, but are generally described as 'witnesses', as 'exposed to' or 'impacted' by violence. These frameworks obscure children's experiences of domestic violence, which is largely seen as an event that occurs between two adults in an intimate dyad, between an adult perpetrator and an adult victim. Framing violence in this manner ignores the way that violence is experienced within families, the way that controlling and abusive behavior permeates all elements of family life.

Because of the emphasis on children as 'witnesses', policy and professional talk about children who experience domestic violence tends to represent them as passive and dependent, in need of protection. They are also described as vulnerable and 'damaged' by the violence that they have 'witnessed'. This kind of framing of children leaves little space for children to articulate a sense of self that has agency, is conscious of the experience of violence, makes sense of it, and finds ways to resist it. It leaves little scope for the development of a located, contextual reading of children's capacity for resilience in situations of domestic violence.

This policy framing has consequences for the way that services are provided (or more typically, not provided) for children who experience domestic violence. Because of this positioning children as additional to domestic violence, the focus of service provision becomes the adult victim (typically the mother), and any support for children is typically as a bolt on to services provided for the adult victim. This means that largely children's experiences are overlooked, or are reduced to 'behavioural problems'. It also means that services generally stop at the time that support services for women victims stop. Because support services for women are heavily focused on risk management (on getting her to a place of safety, and managing her 'risk' of violence) this means that the limited services that are available for children usually disappear once the family is deemed to be 'safe'.

We have argued that it is important to recognize the other victims of domestic violence – children who experience domestic violence are also its victims. They are conscious, meaning making and agentic beings, who do not 'witness' domestic violence, but rather experience it. By recognizing that they too are victims when adults engage in violence in their intimate relationships, we are able to make space for children's experience to be heard, for their needs to be taken seriously. A shift in their legal status would create a policy impetus that would pressure statutory and voluntary organisations to provide more fulsome, appropriate and accessible services for children who experience domestic violence.

Chapter 5: Policy and Practice in work with children who experience domestic violence - Key Points

- Focus groups were carried out with groups of professionals in each country. Our aim was to provide an understanding of the practice landscape children must navigate to secure support when they experience domestic violence

- In focus groups, professionals expressed concerns about the lack of continuity between services and an insufficient range of supportive and specialist services needed to support victims of domestic abuse. In each partner country, particular concerns were raised about service gaps, and professionals suggested that a better equipped system would be more functional and effective. Gaps in the system include the lack of availability of specialist local organisations (in Greece and Spain), different sheltering solutions for victims, and shelters that could include children over 18, larger families, and teenage boys.

- Professionals often describe the child as 'unprotected' and the parent as 'failing to protect'. In this sense the child victim comes to embody and reflect the parents' failure to meet the principal requirements of parenthood such as providing a safe environment.

- Professional stakeholders are placed in positions of control (and educators/schools are given prime responsibility for identifying CYP, raising awareness of DVA and channeling appropriate support to CYP). However, the role of professional stakeholders is perceived to be hampered by cutbacks and restricted financial resources. Positive policy directives designed to support CYP were reported, by professionals in focus groups, to be delivered in a way which resembled a mechanical tick box exercise where children themselves are made invisible and outcome measures are prioritised.

- In focus groups with carers, the *child-victim* was described as affected by violence in dramatic ways. The child-victim is described in relation to the consequences the DVA has on his/her personality and mental health. The consequences appear to be serious and are demonstrated mainly in the child's internalizing and externalizing behaviors. This was a remarkably consistent construction of the child who has experienced domestic violence, across all the parent focus groups.

- Our project highlights the implications of policy frameworks that do not include children as victims who experience domestic violence, but that instead represent them as passive witnesses. Such frameworks erode children's representation and voice in professional and policy discourses.

- The policy documents on domestic violence in all four participating countries generally omit children altogether, entrenching a view that children are not victims of domestic violence, but rather are 'collateral damage' or 'witnesses' to it. We argue that this produces a service landscape in which the needs of children are portrayed as *additional* in domestic violence support, and that consequently children's needs are often overlooked

- A range of professionals were trained, including social services staff, psychologists, teachers, police officers, GPs, nurses, domestic violence support workers and family support workers. Training was well received, and there was a strong perception of a need for more training in all regions. Quantitative and qualitative course evaluation questionnaire data supports the conclusion that the training was very successful.

Chapter 6 Summary, discussion and conclusions

6 Conclusions

The UNARS project has sought to explore children's experiences of domestic violence, with a particular focus on children's capacity for agency, resistance and resilience. The aim of the project was to disrupt dominant discourses of domestic violence that represent children as passive witnesses to domestic violence, exposed to domestic violence, and damaged by it. In contrast we sought to explore how children understand, make sense of and experience domestic violence, as conscious, meaning making beings whose capacity to resist, have agency and be resilient is intricately linked to the context in which such resistance is made necessary. In other words, our key argument is that it is important to explore how children give voice to their own experiences, if we are to avoid the risk of oversimplifying their responses, and reducing their experience to pathology and damage. By facilitating children's articulation of their experiences, we are able to see how the damaging impact of domestic violence intertwines with complex coping and resistance strategies, which children are able to use to build their own sense of resilience.

> The aim of the project was to disrupt dominant discourses of domestic violence that represent children as passive witnesses to domestic violence, exposed to domestic violence, and damaged by it

We have mapped out an academic, policy and professional discursive landscape, which positions children as helpless and overwhelmed by domestic violence, and as tainted and damaged by their 'exposure' to it. We have explored how this produced in the policy domain, where children are largely constituted as an absence. They are not legally defined as victims of domestic violence, instead being seen as collateral damage to violence in the adult intimate dyad, and as passive witnesses to domestic abuse. This has consequences for how they are understood in policy guidelines on responses to family violence, and how services are (or more typically are not) provided to support children who experience domestic violence. These dominant discourses of passivity, exposure and damage have consequences for how professionals see children, and even for how parents see their children, and their parenting role.

Our work has provided a more subtle and nuanced reading of children's experiences of domestic violence that centres on children's voice, and that prioritises children's own accounts of their lived experience of violence and of coping with violence. This enabled us to articulate the many creative and highly contextualised ways that children found to resist and to maintain an agentic sense of self, in the face of violence, psychological abuse and coercive and controlling behaviours that typically permeated family interactions. While it is unquestionable that children experience domestic violence as painful, difficult and harmful, they also demonstrate very specific, contextually shaped ways of coping with that experience. Children's ways of maintaining an agentic sense of self, and their capacity for resistance and resilience is

> When children live in conflict laden environments, they have to find complex ways of coping and managing themselves and their relationships

expressed in ways that, read superficially, may seem pathological or problematic. However, a closer exploration of their lived experience, focused on what they say about their lives, not just measuring outcomes or describing behaviour, shows that their behaviour is meaningful and purposeful: they behave and interact in ways that enable them to cope in the specific context they are in. In understanding how children are able to resist and have agency in situations of domestic violence and abuse, we suggest that what characterises children's experiences of violence is a kind of paradoxical resilience. When children live in conflict laden environments, they have to find complex ways of coping and managing themselves and their relationships. What may appear as 'dysfunctional' and difficult in the eyes of clinically trained adults, is often the way that children have found to cope in highly located, creative and agentic ways.

Recognising the importance of children's voice and children's lived experiences enabled us to develop a creative and relationally oriented group based intervention that built on children's existing strengths to further develop their capacity for resistance and resilience. Children experienced this intervention as a positive context in which they could talk about their experiences, and work them through, in a manner that enabled them to feel that they were growing in strength and capacity.

This insight into children's experiences of both the impact of coercive control, and of their capacity to resist such control has significant implications for practice in supporting families affected by domestic violence. The analysis of interviews with children who experience domestic violence suggests that the 'victim' in domestic violence is not just the adult in the intimate dyad; it is also any children within the household who are affected by the violence, either directly or indirectly. We have argued that it is important that children's capacity to make meaning of their experiences of domestic violence, to be harmed by it, and to have a sense of agency and resistance to it underscores the importance of a shift in legal definitions and policy around domestic violence. The absence of children from legal definitions of domestic violence, and the tendency to describe them as 'passive witnesses to' or 'exposed to / damaged by' domestic violence does not accord with children's lived experiences of domestic violence. We argue that children's experiences of violence would be better recognised, and better support provided, if law and policy shifted to recognise that they are also *victims* of domestic violence. A shift to recognise children as equal victims in the crime of domestic violence and abuse has two important implications – it requires that we listen to children who experience domestic violence and abuse, and it creates space to recognise their own creative and agentic strategies in response to abuse and control within the family. It opens a different discursive space in which the child is recognised as being as important as the adult antagonists in our responses to domestic violence and abuse.

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It would increase the pressure for children to be supported appropriately as their families flee, and as they recover from domestic violence. It would enable the provision of better and more appropriate services for children by recognising both the wounds that domestic violence inflicts, and the personhood and agency of the children who experience it.

Recommendations

The UNARS project has highlighted how the way children are typically 'read' and 'represented' in the law and in policy, professional discourse, parenting discourse, and in academic writing can function to pathologise children and limit their capacity to voice their experience. In contrast, by exploring with children their capacity for agency, resilience and resistance, we are able to create a discursive space in which children can be considered as agentic, meaning making beings who experience, cope with and resist domestic violence. Our research has highlighted how changes in policy, practice and interventions with children and families, might improve the lives of children and young people who live (or have lived) in situations of domestic violence.

Legal Status and Protection: The Istanbul Convention refers to 'all victims' of domestic violence, however children are not explicitly defined as victims either in the Istanbul convention, or the national and regional legal and policy frameworks that implement it. In this sense, children are absent from legal definitions (except as victims of dating violence). Children who 'witness' domestic violence do not have a legal status as 'victim'. (This is changing in Spain, where the distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' victims is being removed from Spanish statutes). Children are therefore

> By focusing on children's capacity for conscious meaning making and agency, we highlight the importance of recognising the impact domestic violence has on children

constructed in law and policy as an absence, as 'collateral damage' to adult domestic violence, and this has consequences for how they are understood and treated in criminal justice, social services and voluntary sector organisations. The UNARS project has highlighted that children experience domestic violence, and cope with domestic violence, in much the same way that adult victims do, and that the distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' victim, or between 'adult victim' and 'child witness' is not sustainable. When policy frameworks do not include children as victims, this contributes to the erosion of children's representation and voice in professional and policy discourses. By focusing on children's capacity for conscious meaning making and agency in relation to their experiences of domestic violence, we highlight the importance of recognising the impact domestic violence has on children, and their right to representation as victims in the context of domestic violence.

Representation and Voice: The UNARS project has demonstrated the importance and value of listening to children's voice. This facilitates children's recognition of their own strengths, and should be a key element of therapeutic work with children and young people who experience domestic violence. In addition, fostering a context in which children feel empowered to speak about their experiences creates space for professionals to better understand children's experiences, and to respond more appropriately to their needs. It also creates opportunities for the co-production of more relevant policy and service provisions. In policy and legislative frameworks, we need to extend and strengthen the requirement to listen to the child's voice. Children who experience domestic violence are often framed by professionals as 'vulnerable' and unable to cope with talking about their experiences. This kind of gatekeeping effectively blocks children from access to representation, and prevents them from articulating their experiences of domestic violence, perpetuating the view of them as 'silent witnesses', and occluding their experiences as victims, and their capacity to cope.

Language: There needs to be a concerted attempt to change the language in national and regional policy to one which more actively advocates the recognition of CYP experiences and strengths such that interventions more closely align with their needs and place them in more privileged positions as experts on their own situations. In addition, the development of a common language across professionals (create a glossary of terms) should be encouraged so that jargon does not get in the way of helping children and young people.

Training: Many professionals reflected that they lacked the skills to support them in talking to children about their experiences of domestic violence. To create a service and criminal justice culture in which children are able to voice their experiences and seek the help and support they need, professionals need to be skilled in responding to children. This requires further training to empower those who work with children and families who experience domestic violence to hear what children have to say. In addition, there is a clear need to support criminal justice and policing professionals to provide more effective responses to children who experience domestic violence.

Services: In all partner countries, there were concerns about the availability of services for children who experience domestic violence. Parents, professionals and children all noted that there are very few (or no) services available for children that enable children to talk about their experiences. Where services are available, they are often difficult to access, and not provided 'on time' for children, in a manner that is responsive to children's needs. Most support for children affected by domestic violence are offered within domestic violence shelters and services, which typically only work with families at the point of fleeing. Many of the children and parents we talked to noted that they only started to process their experiences some time after the violence had ended, once they were in an environment that seemed 'safe'. Services for children are

often centred on those in need of 'protection' (i.e. those in immediate risk). But this is not the ideal space in which supportive and particularly therapeutic services should be provided. Services need to be more accessible (e.g. in community contexts, in school, in youth centres) and to be offered in a more flexible way, to enable children to use them when *they need to,* not when the service feels that they should.

> **More resources should be devoted to promote inter-professional and integrated services which are child oriented rather than service oriented**

Working 'with' not 'for' children and young people: Regional statutory organisations should develop their policies to emphasize "working with" and not "working for" CYP. In this way, DVA can be conceptualised within policy as a shared and preventable social issue between the child and professionals. In this way, CYP are likelier to develop a sense of control and build on existing personal, relational family and community resilience.

Collaborative and partnership working: It is important to recognise the impact of austerity and recession on the European service landscape. Collaborative working has been undermined by service cuts, and by competitive commissioning arrangements. There is an urgent need to strengthen partnership and multi agency working in the domestic violence field, to enable families to receive an appropriate range of support in fleeing and in recovery from domestic violence. In addition, there is a need to address directly the impact of budgetary constraints on the potential support available for children and families who experience domestic violence: there remains an urgent need for an influx of f**inance and resource.** We suggest that the need to develop and ring fence dedicated social funding to ensure the sustainability and adequate funding for the provision of child-oriented services in community settings.

Awareness raising campaigns: Dedicated efforts are required to raise awareness of the needs and impacts on quality of life for children living in situations of domestic violence. While effective campaigns have been constructed in the past and continue to run successfully, there is a need to target campaigns in places such as community venues, such as sports venues and shopping centres. Campaigning in places which parents and children access freely could broaden to audiences of such campaigns. Such campaigns have typically dwelt on the negative aspects of damage and victimization where children are featured. More positive images of empowered children and young people are called for, alongside more nuanced aspects of the impact of gender and culture. Aside from the specific focus on DV and children and young people within DV, campaigns should aim to improve the image of women in society and the citizenship rights of children.

Chapter 6: Summary, discussion and conclusions – Key Points

➢ We have mapped out an academic, policy and professional discursive landscape, which largely positions children as helpless and overwhelmed by domestic violence, and as tainted and damaged by their 'exposure' to it.

➢ Children are not legally defined as victims of domestic violence, instead they are seen as collateral damage to violence in the adult intimate dyad, and as passive witnesses to domestic abuse. This has consequences for how they are understood in policy guidelines on responses to family violence, and how services are (or more typically are not) provided to support children who experience domestic violence.

➢ While it is unquestionable that children experience domestic violence as painful, difficult and harmful, they also demonstrate very specific, contextually shaped ways of coping with that experience.

➢ A closer exploration of their lived experience focused on what children say about their lives, shows that their behaviour is meaningful and purposeful: they behave and interact in ways that enable them to cope in the specific context they are in.

➢ What may appear as 'dysfunctional' and difficult in the eyes of clinically trained adults, is often the way that children have found to cope in highly located, creative and agentic ways. Recognising the importance of children's voice and children's lived experiences enabled us to develop a creative and relationally oriented group based intervention that built on children's existing strengths to further develop their capacity for resistance and resilience.

➢ The analysis of interviews with children who experience domestic violence suggests that the 'victim' in domestic violence is not just the adult in the intimate dyad; it is also any children within the household who are affected by the violence, either directly or indirectly.

➢ We have argued that it is important that children's capacity to make meaning of their experiences of domestic violence, to be harmed by it, and to have a sense of agency and resistance to it underscores the importance of a shift in legal definitions and policy around domestic violence.

➢ We consider that children's experiences of violence would be better recognised, and better support provided, if law and policy shifted to recognise that they are also *victims* of domestic violence.

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TABLES

Table 1: Overview of the project workstreams

Summary of workstreams	
Workstream (WS) No.	**Summary**
1 **Understanding children's experiences of domestic violence**	WS 1 centred on developing a detailed **understanding of young people's experiences of domestic violence**, focusing specifically on agency, resilience and resistance as well as their experiences of constriction and constraint. **This was achieved through 1:1 semi-structured interviews with children (including the use of graphic elicitation techniques), and photo elicitation techniques.** Several methods of researcher training were structured into the project. Researchers attended training workshops in data collection provided by the research team from the University of Northampton who also developed researcher training manuals which provided the basis for supporting researchers through the required processes of data collection and analysis and acted as reference for researchers across the partnerships. Interviews were designed to enable young people to articulate their experiences of domestic violence in a manner that recognised and facilitated an articulation of their capacity to cope with, manage and resist the power imbalances inherent in situations of domestic violence. Children and young people's accounts helped researchers to develop an understanding of what enables resilience and resistance in these circumstances, and how they might be further empowered to cope during and after living in contexts of conflict and violence. In each partnership, approximately 5 young people were selected from interviewees and invited to participate in a photo elicitation or photo-voice diary activity. Children took photographs of the personal, material or relational things they felt helped them cope with domestic violence, participants then verbally or non-verbally reflected on each photograph, expressing how and why it had helped or supported them. Within each of the participating countries, an Open Access Exhibition was created which showed (anonymised) photographs, drawings and words produced by children and young people as part of their semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation activities. The exhibitions were implemented to encourage public engagement and provide young people with a public voice, and to facilitate the production of their own stories of domestic violence in an empowering manner. On the completion of data collection,

	representatives from each European partnership gathered at a Knowledge Café, to share insights, experiences and knowledges drawn from data collection, and to consider how insights might inform intervention and training programmes.
2 **Mapping the Service Landscape**	The key priorities of WS 2 were **to explore the dominant representations of domestic** violence in policy for families living with violence, and to critically consider the implications of these for our understanding of young people as 'victims' and as 'agents'. The aim was to explore how young people are viewed by professionals, other stakeholders and organisations they work with and how they are supported to explore how their agency and capacity for empowerment, resilience and resistance is, or is not, acknowledged and enabled in these contexts. Researchers conducted focus groups with professionals and carers with the aim of developing a detailed understanding of their perceptions of children and young people living in situations of domestic violence and especially of their capacity for agency and resilience. To build a critical understanding of the policy context in which domestic violence is lived by young people, and consider critically the implications of these for young peoples' lives, researchers conducted a desk based anlysis of the policy context in each of their countries. This enabled the research team to develop an understanding of current policy contexts and how they work to create opportunities and constraints for different populations (e.g. for boys and girls, for ethnic or sexual minority groups, for migrant families, etc.), and to consider how particular policies can achieve the goals of promoting a more agentic understanding of young peoples' experiences of situations of violence and provide equitable support environments.
3 **Developing an intervention for children who experience domestic violence**	Drawing on the insights of WS1 and 2, WS 3 centred designing and implementing a manualised **therapeutic group-based intervention programme** aimed at facilitating children and young people's exploration of experiences of constraint, empowerment, resilience and agency, with a view to enhancing a sense of the agentic self and promoting their capacity for resilience and coping. The intervention incorporated elements of creative therapies (art, drama, music), and elements of systemic and social therapies. The intervention manual was developed in collaboration with partners through face-to-face and virtual meetings collaboration with partners, and enabled flexibility for its adaptation and tailoring to each specific context of the four partnership countries. A pilot of the intervention was run in the UK before being

	rolled out to other partnerships in the consortium. A quantitative evaluation was conducted to assess the impact of the intervention in relation to pre- and post-intervention wellbeing. To qualitatively evaluate the intervention, young people were invited to reflect on their experiences of the programme by taking part in 1:1 semi-structured interviews with researchers towards the end of the intervention.
4 **Training intervention for professionals**	A manualised programme specifically aimed at professionals working with children and young people affected by domestic violence to promote an awareness of the potential mental health and social implications of positioning young people as 'victims'. Drawing on WS 1 and 2, the training provided professionals with materials, resources and techniques to work with children and young people in a safe way which would empower positive self-identities and enhance their capacity for resilience and resistance. A quantitative evaluation was conducted to assess the impact of the training on professionals' perceptions and working practices.

Table 2: Participant information – Individual Interviews and photo elicitation with children and young people

No.	Location	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Interview participant	Photovoice participant
1	UK	George	M	11	Y	Y
2		Paul	M	9	Y	Y
3		Bethany	F	10	Y	
4		Rachel	F	11	Y	Y
5		Emma	F	16	Y	Y
6		Lizzy	F	14	Y	
7		Kate	F	8	Y	
8		Ben	M	8	Y	
9		Harry	M	9	Y	
10		Josh	M	9	Y	
11		Oliver	M	12	Y	Y
12		Dylan	M	15	Y	
13		Lotty	F	9	Y	
14		Jess	F	18	Y	
15		Sophia	F	15	Y	
16		Isabel	F	13	Y	
17		Lucy	F	13	Y	
18		Alison	F	15	Y	
19		Nancy	F	9	Y	
20		Andy	M	12	Y	Y
21		Mark	M	13	Y	
22	Greece	Lydia	F	14	Y	
23		Natalia	F	15	Y	Y
24		Lina	F	15	Y	
25		Matina	F	11	Y	Y
26		Maria	F	18	Y	
27		Eirini	F	20	Y	
28		Markos	M	10	Y	Y
29		Anna	F	12	Y	Y
30		Kostas	M	14	Y	Y
31		Petros	M	16	Y	
32		Nikos	M	15	Y	
33		Miltos	M	15	Y	
34		Pavlos	M	15	Y	
35		Fotis	M	17	Y	
36		Stefanos	M	13	Y	
37		Simos	M	16	Y	
38		Marios	M	14	Y	
39		Elpida	F	15	Y	
40		Christina	F	12	Y	
41		Stella	F	12	Y	
42	Italy, Perugia - CoHor	Giacomo	M	12	Y	
43		Anna	F	18	Y	
44		Lally	F	16	Y	
45		Abraham	M	16	Y	
46		Sophie	F	17	Y	
47		Yve	F	18	Y	
48		Andrea	F	14	Y	
49		Angelo	M	15	Y	
50		Naomi	F	14	Y	
51		Amy	F	14	Y	
52		Emily	F	16	Y	
53		Laura	F	14	Y	
54		Maria	F	15	Y	
55		Santo	M	18	Y	
56		Mariam	F	17	Y	
57		Sissy	F	16	Y	
58		Filo	M	13	Y	
59		Miriam	F	15	Y	
60		Franci	M	15	Y	
61		Luca	M	17	Y	
62		Nicoletta	F	NA	N	Y
63		Fabio	M	NA	N	Y

#	Location	Name	Sex	Age		
64		Giulio	M	NA	N	Y
65		Caterina	F	NA	N	Y
66		Rodolfo	M	NA	N	Y
67		Antonio	M	NA	N	Y
68	Italy,	Dalia	F	8	Y	
69	Puglia - Il	Edera	F	17	Y	
70	Meridiano	Giulia	F	18	Y	
71		Jordan	M	13	Y	
72		Maddog	M	13	Y	
73		Margherita	F	9	Y	
74		Mauro	M	10	Y	
75		Rosa	F	23	Y	
76		Donatello	M	24	Y	
77		Emanuele	F	16	Y	
78		Fabio	M	16	Y	
79		Gabriele	F	10	Y	
80		Sara	F	18	Y	
81		Tini	F		Y	
82		Ajane	F		Y	
83		Marino	M	9	N	Y
84		Marta	F	15	N	Y
85		Rosa	F	16	N	Y
86		Lino	M	17	N	Y
87	Spain	Amaya	F	17	Y	
88		Maria	F	17	Y	
89		Carla	F	13	Y	
90		Gina	F	17	Y	
91		Alberto	M	15	Y	
92		Nacho	M	13	Y	
93		Melani	F	15	Y	
94		Nadia	F	12	Y	
95		Amalia	F	14	Y	
96		Beatriz	F	11	Y	
97		Nicolas	M	17	Y	
98		Juan	M	15	Y	
99		Ana	F	16	Y	
100		Oscar	M	15	Y	
101		Rosa	F	15	Y	
102		Marta	F	17	Y	
103		Carlos	M	16	Y	
104		Alicia	F	12	Y	
105		Helena	F	16	Y	
106		Lucia	F	14	Y	
107		Azul	M	16	N	Y
108		Lila	F	11	N	Y
109		Verde	M	14	N	Y
110		Rosa	F	12	N	Y

Table 3: Intervention Participants

No.	Location	Pseudonym	Age	Gender M/F
Intervention Participants				
1	**UK**	Kevin	13	**M**
2		Lenny	12	M
3		Ed	11	M
4		Ruby	11	F
5		Hannah	11	F
6		Caroline	13	F
7		Melanie	14	F
8		Rob	15	M
9		Delia	17	F
10		Leo	17	M
11		Leanne	15	F
Total No. of Participants = 11				
1	**Greece**	Artemis	12	F
2		Alexia	17	F
3		Photene	17	F
4		Calliope	12	F
5		Amalia	12	F
6		Ismini	17	F
7		Melina	17	F
8		Isidora	14	F
9		Tassos	17	M
10		Antonis	14	M
11		Orestis	15	M
12		Clio	12	F
13		Kosmas	12	M
14		Nephele	15	F
15		Iro	12	F
16		Lazaros	15	M
17		Savvas	12	M
18		Stavros	12	M
19		Olga	13	F
20		Chara	16	F
21		Stathis	11	M
22		Fanis	12	M
23		Penelope	14	F
24		Stelios	11	M
25		Georgia	13	F
Total = 25				
1	**Italy, Umbria / CoHor - CoHor**	Franca	21	M
2		Luciana	19	F

#		Name	Age	Sex
3		Rosaria	18	F
4		Antonia	19	F
5		Martina	19	F
6		Luca	19	M
7		Teresa	18	F
Total = 7				
1	**Italy, Puglia - Il Meridiano**	Sabrina	16	F
2		Arturo	13	M
3		Patrizia	11	F
4		Sara	14	M
5		Tito	11	F
6		Pero	11	M
7		Teodora	14	F
Total = 7				
1	**Spain**	Beatriz	11	F
2		Amalia	14	F
3		Rosa	15	F
4		Martina	14	F
5		Pablo	12	M
6		Samuel	11	M
7		Victoria	13	F
8		Lucia	15	F
9		Helena	17	F
10				
Total = 10				

Table 4: Children interviewed about their experiences of the group based therapeutic intervention

No.	Location	Pseudonym	Age
1	UK	Kevin	13
2		Ruby	11
3		Hannah	11
4		Delia	17
5		Leo	17
6		Leanne	15
7	Greece	Artemis	12
8		Alexia	17
9		Melina	17
10		Isidora	14
11		Orestis	15
12		Clio	12
13	Italy, Umbria / CoHor - CoHor	Antonia	19
14		Rosaria	18
15	Italy, Puglia - Il Meridiano	Tina	14
16		Valerio	13
17		Sabrina	16
18	Spain	Rosa	16
19		Beatriz	11
20		Martina	14
21		Victoria	13

Table 5: Professionals participating in focus groups

No.	Location	Pseudonym	Profession/Role	Age	Duration of Interview
Focus Groups: Professionals					
1	UK –FG 1	Mandy	School & Education Liaison Worker	50+	71
2		Sophie	Refuge Support Worker	30+	
3		Alice	Targeted Support Worker	37	
4		Barbara	Support Worker	40+	
5	UK – FG 2	Helen	School Family Support Worker	40+	69
6		Sue	School Family Support Worker	50+	
7		Karen	Support Worker	40+	
8		Rose	Children's Worker	40+	
9		Paul	Police Sergeant	30+	
10		Rebecca	Family & Pastoral Officer	40+	
11		Louise	Director & Youth Worker	30+	
12	Greece – FG 1	1S1	Social worker	59	105
13		1S2	Child psychiatrist	51	
14		1S3	Psychologist	42	
15		1S4	Philologist	41	
16		1S5	Psychologist	53	
17		1S6	Psychologist	44	
18	Greece – FG 2	2S1	Psychologist	34	74
19		2S2	Social worker	34	
20		2S3	Social worker, Family therapist	35	
21	Greece – FG 3	3S1	Social worker	46	96
22		3S2	Early childhood educator	37	
23		3S3	Early childhood educator	39	
24		3S4	Psychologist	42	
25		3S5	Social worker	30	
26	Greece – FG 4	4S1	Psychologist	45	91
27		4S2	Psychologist, Psychotherapist	40	
28		4S3	Child psychiatrist		
29		4S4	Child psychiatrist	40	
30	Italy, Umbria / CoHor CoHor FG 1	Giovanni	Project Coordinator	53	40
31		Debora	Psychologist	33	
32		Antonello	Psychologist	31	
33		Giulia	Psychologist	37	
34		Roberta	Psychologist	55	
35		Annarita	Psychologist		
36	Italy, Umbria / CoHor CoHor FG 2	Marianna	Psychologist		45
37		Ada	Project Coordinator		

38		Sofia	Project Coordinator		
39		Silvia	Educator		
40		Stefania	Educator		
41		Martina	Educator		
42		Marianna	Social worker		
43		Loredana	Social worker		
44	Italy, Puglia, Il Meridiano – FG 1	Anita	social worker	45	180
45		Eva	social worker	32	
46		Flora	lawyer	54	
47		Vito	psychologist	48	
48		Carlo	police man	50	
49		Lucio	police woman	48	
50		Nadia	social worker	43	
51		Alessa	criminologist	45	
52		Marta	social worker	46	
53		Milena	social worker	58	
54	Italy, Puglia - Il Meridiano – FG 2	Rigina	Doctor	57	120
55		Pippa	Social worker	55	
56		Ester	Social worker	46	
57			Social worker	55	
58			Social worker	42	
59			Social worker	48	
60	Spain	Sabah	Family Mediator - lawyer	All professionals aged 40-60	120
61		Pablo (	Public Prosecutor - Minors		
62		Dado	Judge - Minors		
63		Mia	Local Policeman, expert on gender-based violence		
64		Ivan	Local Policeman, expert on minors		
65		Javier	Professor expert on the topic		
66		Olivia	Institute of Security and Emergencies		
67		Jorge	Local Social Services		
68		Ruben	Home Office Regional Department		
69		Abigail	National Government Representative for Gender-based Violence		
70		Raul	Office of Victims of Crime		
71		Joel	Welfare Regional Department – family		
72		Nicolas	Health Regional Department		
73		Hector	Local Police - doctor		
74		Bruno	Judge – Gender-based violence		

Table 7: Professionals attending the training programme

Training programme for Professionals			
No.	Location	Profession/Role	Number of sessions Attended
1	UK	DV Programme Coordinator	3
2		Domestic Abuse Practitioner	3
3		Children & Young People's Practitioner (mental health)	4
4		Sessional Worker (mental health)	4
5		Trauma Therapist	5
6		Domestic Abuse Trainer	3
7		Student Social Worker	1
8		Domestic Abuse Prevention Practitioner	1
9		Counsellor	1
10		Child protection specialist (social work)	1
11		Chief Executive (domestic violence)	1
12		Assistant Family Welfare Co-ordinator (social work)	1
13		Life Story Writer	3
14		Life Story Worker	1
15		Domestic Abuse Prevention Worker	1
16		Domestic Abuse Prevention Worker	1
17		Training Therapist	1
18		Participation Worker (domestic violence)	1
19		Prevention Team (social work)	1
20		FNP Supervisor	1
21		Domestic Abuse Prevention Worker	1
22		Therapist	3
23		Home School Partnership Co-ordinator	1
24		Educational Psychologist	1
25		Team Manager (social work)	1
26		Targeted Prevention Practitioner	1
27		Support Worker (domestic abuse)	1
28		Domestic Abuse Prevention Worker	2
29		Support Worker (domestic abuse)	2
30		Domestic Abuse Prevention Worker	2
31		Domestic Abuse Prevention Worker	1
32		Life Story Worker	1
33	Greece	Social worker	3
34		Psychologist	3
35		Social worker	1
36		Psychologist	2
37		Psychologist	2
38		Psychologist	2
39		Psychologist	3

40		Sociologist	3
41		Teacher	2
42		Psychologist	3
43		Social Worker	3
44		Psychologist	3
45		Psychologist	3
46		Social worker	2
47		Social worker	1
48	Italy, Umbria / CoHor - CoHor	Psychologist and psychotherapist	5
49		President of Charity	5
50		Cooperative worker (social, rehabilitation)	5
51		Psychologist and psychotherapist	5
52		Psychologist and psychotherapist	5
53		Cooperative worker (social)	5
54		Therapeutic rehabilitation	5
55		President of cooperative (social)	5
56		Cooperative worker (Social)	5
57		President of cooperative (social)	5
58		Cooperative worker (Training)	5
59		Cooperative worker (Sport)	5
60		Cooperative worker (education, culture and employment)	5
61		Cooperative worker (Therapeutic)	5
62		Social Coordinator	5
63	Italy, Puglia - Il Meridiano	Social Worker	Training over one session
64		Honorary Judge	1
65		Social Worker	1
66		Trainee Social Worker	1
67		Trainee Psychologist	1
68		Counsellor	1
69		Educator	1
70		Psychologist	1
71		Psychologist	1
72		Psychologist	1
73		Trainee Psychologist	1
74		Psychologist	1
75		Psychologist	1
76		Psychologist	1
77		Psychologist	1
78		Psychologist	1
79		Psychologist	1
80		Psychologist	1
81		Social Worker	1
82		Trainee Social Worker	1

83		Private Assistant	1
84		Social Worker	1
85		Trainee Psychologist	1
86		Social Worker	1
87		Social Worker	1
88		Social Worker	1
89		Pediatrician / Medical Manager	1
90		Criminologist	1
91		Psychologist	1
92		Social Worker	1
93		Trainee Psychologist	1
94		Social Worker	1
95		Social Worker	1
96		Social Worker	1
97		Psychologist	1
98		Educator	1
99		Psychologist	1
100		Social Worker	1
101		Psychologist	1
102		Social Worker	1
103		Social Worker	1
104		Psychotherapist	1
105		Educator	1
106		Trainee Psychologist	1
107		Trainee Social Worker	1
108		Social Worker	1
109		Social Worker	1
110		Director/ Psychologist	1
111		Psychologist	1
112		Psychologist	1
113		Psychologist	1
114		Educator	1
115		Lawyer	1
116		Social Worker	1
117		Nursery Worker	1
118		Social Worker	1
119		Psychologist	1
120		Social Worker	1
121		Social Worker	1
122		Psychologist	1
123		Social Worker	1
124		Social worker/ Professional Educator	1
125		Social Worker	1
126		Psychotherapist	1
127		Psychologist	1
128		Social Worker	1

129		Social Worker	1
130		Psychologist	1
131		Psychologist	1
132		Psychologist	1
133		Educator	1
134		Trainee Psychologist	1
135		Psychologist	1
136		Psychologist	1
137		Psychologist	1
138		Medical Director	1
139		Social Worker	1
140		Psychologist	1
141	Spain	72 Mixed Professionals	2

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of workstreams

Summary of workstreams	
Workstream (WS) No.	**Summary**
1 **Understanding children's experiences of domestic violence**	WS 1 centred on developing a detailed **understanding of young people's experiences of domestic violence**, focusing specifically on agency, resilience and resistance as well as their experiences of constriction and constraint. **This was achieved through 1:1 semi-structured interviews with children (including the use of graphic elicitation techniques), and photo elicitation techniques.** Several methods of researcher training were structured into the project. Researchers attended training workshops in data collection provided by the research team from the University of Northampton who also developed researcher training manuals which provided the basis for supporting researchers through the required processes of data collection and analysis and acted as reference for researchers across the partnerships. Interviews were designed to enable young people to articulate their experiences of domestic violence in a manner that recognised and facilitated an articulation of their capacity to cope with, manage and resist the power imbalances inherent in situations of domestic violence. Children and young people's accounts helped researchers to develop an understanding of what enables resilience and resistance in these circumstances, and how they might be further empowered to cope during and after living in contexts of conflict and violence. In each partnership, approximately 5 young people were selected from interviewees and invited to participate in a photo elicitation or photo-voice diary activity. Children took photographs of the personal, material or relational things they felt helped them cope with domestic violence, participants then verbally or non-verbally reflected on each photograph, expressing how and why it had helped or supported them. Within each of the participating countries, an Open Access Exhibition was created which showed (anonymised) photographs, drawings and words produced by children and young people as part of their semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation activities. The exhibitions were implemented to encourage public engagement and provide young people with a public voice, and to facilitate the production of their own stories of domestic violence in an empowering manner. On the completion of data collection, representatives from each European partnership gathered at a Knowledge Café, to

	share insights, experiences and knowledges drawn from data collection, and to consider how insights might inform intervention and training programmes.
2 **Mapping the Service Landscape**	The key priorities of WS 2 were **to explore the dominant representations of domestic** violence in policy for families living with violence, and to critically consider the implications of these for our understanding of young people as 'victims' and as 'agents'. The aim was to explore how young people are viewed by professionals, other stakeholders and organisations they work with and how they are supported to explore how their agency and capacity for empowerment, resilience and resistance is, or is not, acknowledged and enabled in these contexts. Researchers conducted focus groups with professionals and carers with the aim of developing a detailed understanding of their perceptions of children and young people living in situations of domestic violence and especially of their capacity for agency and resilience. To build a critical understanding of the policy context in which domestic violence is lived by young people, and consider critically the implications of these for young peoples' lives, researchers conducted a desk based anlysis of the policy context in each of their countries. This enabled the research team to develop an understanding of current policy contexts and how they work to create opportunities and constraints for different populations (e.g. for boys and girls, for ethnic or sexual minority groups, for migrant families, etc.), and to consider how particular policies can achieve the goals of promoting a more agentic understanding of young peoples' experiences of situations of violence and provide equitable support environments.
3 **Developing an intervention for children who experience domestic violence**	Drawing on the insights of WS1 and 2, WS 3 centred designing and implementing a manualised **therapeutic group-based intervention programme** aimed at facilitating children and young people's exploration of experiences of constraint, empowerment, resilience and agency, with a view to enhancing a sense of the agentic self and promoting their capacity for resilience and coping. The intervention incorporated elements of creative therapies (art, drama, music), and elements of systemic and social therapies. The intervention manual was developed in collaboration with partners through face-to-face and virtual meetings collaboration with partners, and enabled flexibility for its adaptation and tailoring to each specific context of the four partnership countries. A pilot of the intervention was run in the UK before being rolled out to other partnerships in the consortium. A quantitative evaluation was

	conducted to assess the impact of the intervention in relation to pre- and post-intervention wellbeing. To qualitatively evaluate the intervention, young people were invited to reflect on their experiences of the programme by taking part in 1:1 semi-structured interviews with researchers towards the end of the intervention.
4 **Training intervention for professionals**	A manualised programme specifically aimed at professionals working with children and young people affected by domestic violence to promote an awareness of the potential mental health and social implications of positioning young people as 'victims'. Drawing on WS 1 and 2, the training provided professionals with materials, resources and techniques to work with children and young people in a safe way which would empower positive self-identities and enhance their capacity for resilience and resistance. A quantitative evaluation was conducted to assess the impact of the training on professionals' perceptions and working practices.

Interview Schedule

Could you tell me a little bit about yourself? Where you come from, any brothers and sisters, where you live now, and with who?

How would you describe your family? If you had to tell the story of you and your family, what would it be?

Who are you closest to in your family? What is your relationship with this person like? Why do you see them as the person you're closest to?

Who are you least close to? What kind of relationship do you have with them? Why do you think you're least close to them?

This project is about children growing up with domestic violence – with lots of fighting and maybe hitting in their home. Do you think of yourself as growing up in that kind of situation? What is that like for you?

When there were bad times at home, when people were fighting or getting angry with each other, what was that like for you?

How do/did you cope with those kinds of situations?

Is there anything you did that made you feel better, when bad things were happening at home? What did you do / say? How did it help?

Is there someone you can talk to about the things that happen or have happened at home?

What do you think needed to change to make things better at home?
What could other people have done to change things?
How do you think you could have changed things?

Appendix 3: Participants

					Individual Interviews and photo elicitation with children & young people	
No.	Location	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Interview participant	Photo elicitation participant
1	UK	George	M	11	Y	Y
2		Paul	M	9	Y	Y
3		Bethany	F	10	Y	
4		Rachel	F	11	Y	Y
5		Emma	F	16	Y	Y
6		Lizzy	F	14	Y	
7		Kate	F	8	Y	
8		Ben	M	8	Y	
9		Harry	M	9	Y	
10		Josh	M	9	Y	
11		Oliver	M	12	Y	Y
12		Dylan	M	15	Y	
13		Lotty	F	9	Y	
14		Jess	F	18	Y	
15		Sophia	F	15	Y	
16		Isabel	F	13	Y	
17		Lucy	F	13	Y	
18		Alison	F	15	Y	
19		Nancy	F	9	Y	
20		Andy	M	12	Y	Y
21		Mark	M	13	Y	
22	Greece	Lydia	F	14	Y	

23		Natalia	F	15	Y	Y
24		Lina	F	15	Y	
25		Matina	F	11	Y	Y
26		Maria	F	18	Y	
27		Eirini	F	20	Y	
28		Markos	M	10	Y	Y
29		Anna	F	12	Y	Y
30		Kostas	M	14	Y	Y
31		Petros	M	16	Y	
32		Nikos	M	15	Y	
33		Miltos	M	15	Y	
34		Pavlos	M	15	Y	
35		Fotis	M	17	Y	
36		Stefanos	M	13	Y	
37		Simos	M	16	Y	
38		Marios	M	14	Y	
39		Elpida	F	15	Y	
40		Christina	F	12	Y	
41		Stella	F	12	Y	
42	Italy, Perugia - CoHor	Giacomo	M	12	Y	
43		Anna	F	18	Y	
44		Lally	F	16	Y	
45		Abraham	M	16	Y	
46		Sophie	F	17	Y	
47		Yve	F	18	Y	
48		Andrea	F	14	Y	
49		Angelo	M	15	Y	

50		Naomi	F	14	Y	
51		Amy	F	14	Y	
52		Emily	F	16	Y	
53		Laura	F	14	Y	
54		Maria	F	15	Y	
55		Santo	M	18	Y	
56		Mariam	F	17	Y	
57		Sissy	F	16	Y	
58		Filo	M	13	Y	
59		Miriam	F	15	Y	
60		Franci	M	15	Y	
61		Luca	M	17	Y	
62		Nicoletta	F	NA	N	Y
63		Fabio	M	NA	N	Y
64		Giulio	M	NA	N	Y
65		Caterina	F	NA	N	Y
66		Rodolfo	M	NA	N	Y
67		Antonio	M	NA	N	Y
68	Italy, Puglia - Il Meridiano	Dalia	F	8	Y	
69		Edera	F	17	Y	
70		Giulia	F	18	Y	
71		Jordan	M	13	Y	
72		Maddog	M	13	Y	
73		Margherita	F	9	Y	
74		Mauro	M	10	Y	
75		Rosa	F	23	Y	
76		Donatello	M	24	Y	

77		Emanuele	F	16	Y	
78		Fabio	M	16	Y	
79		Gabriele	F	10	Y	
80		Sara	F	18	Y	
81		Tini	F		Y	
82		Ajane	F		Y	
83		Marino	M	9	N	Y
84		Marta	F	15	N	Y
85		Rosa	F	16	N	Y
86		Lino	M	17	N	Y
87	Spain	Amaya	F	17	Y	
88		Maria	F	17	Y	
89		Carla	F	13	Y	
90		Gina	F	17	Y	
91		Alberto	M	15	Y	
92		Nacho	M	13	Y	
93		Melani	F	15	Y	
94		Nadia	F	12	Y	
95		Amalia	F	14	Y	
96		Beatriz	F	11	Y	
97		Nicolas	M	17	Y	
98		Juan	M	15	Y	
99		Ana	F	16	Y	
100		Oscar	M	15	Y	
101		Rosa	F	15	Y	
102		Marta	F	17	Y	

103		Carlos	M	16	Y	
104		Alicia	F	12	Y	
105		Helena	F	16	Y	
106		Lucia	F	14	Y	
107		Azul	M	16	N	Y
108		Lila	F	11	N	Y
109		Verde	M	14	N	Y
110		Rosa	F	12	N	Y

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule - Focus groups with Professionals

Schedule for Interviews with Professionals and Voluntary Sector Workers

Opening Question:

Could you tell us a little bit about your experiences of working with children who have experienced domestic violence?

What sorts of services are available for young people affected by domestic violence in this area?

- o What sorts of services do you think should be available?
- o How do you think young people see the services available to them?
- o What sorts of obstacles do you think there might be to young people using these services?

What other help and support do young people you work with draw on?

A lot of the literature and policy talk about young people affected by domestic violence focuses on the damage done to them in these situations. Do you think this tells the full story of young people affected by DV?

- How do you think young people are able to cope with domestic violence?
- What strategies do they use to manage the situation when they are in it?
- How do they cope afterwards?
- Do you think that the focus on negative experiences in professional and popular images of DV might have an impact on young people?
- Stimulus materials: 2 images from local domestic violence campaigns, focused on children, will be used. Ask participants to look at the images and think about the words that they associate with these images. As them to think about the implication of these kinds of images for young people's capacity to be resilient / resistant, for their capacity to take action, for their capacity to build a positive sense of themselves.

What do you think are some of the challenges involved in working with children affected by domestic violence?

What policies inform your work with children in situations of domestic violence? How does policy help or hinder you in your work?

Are there any issues you'd like to raise that we haven't spoken about so far?

Summary

Comments / questions on the summary

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule - Focus groups with Parents and Carers

Focus group interviews with carers

Opening Question:

Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and why you felt you wanted to participate in this group today?

When professionals think about domestic violence, a lot of the focus is on the way it hurts young people. Do you think this tells the full story of young people affected by DV?

- How do you think young people you care for were able to cope with domestic violence?
- What things did they do to make themselves feel better?
- To keep themselves out of harm's way?
- How do they cope afterwards?

- Stimulus materials: Choose a couple of LOCAL campaigns that feature children and domestic violence. Ask participants to look at the images and think about the words that they associate with these images. Ask them to think about the implication of these kinds of images for young people's capacity to be resilient / resistant, for their capacity to take action, for their capacity to build a positive sense of themselves.

Who did the young people you care for turn to when times were particularly hard? Where did they get their support?

One of the things we wanted to talk to you about was the kind of help that's available to young people in situations of domestic violence. Could you tell us a bit about your experiences of getting help for your child or the child you cared for?

- o What sort of help did you feel you needed?
- o What sort of help was on offer?
- o How easy was it for you to access help?
- o What sorts of services do you think should be available?
- o How do you think young people see the services available to them?
- o What sorts of obstacles do you think there might be to young people using these services?

Are there any issues you'd like to raise that we haven't spoken about so far?

Summary

Comments / questions on the summary

Appendix 6: Interview schedule – Evaluation of Therapeutic Intervention

Interview Schedule
(Evaluation of UNARS MPower Programme)

What were your experiences of participating in the activities?

What have you enjoyed most about the programme?
- What were some of your favourite activities

What activity did you find most helpful in understanding and making sense of domestic violence?

Was there anything you didn't enjoy about the programme?

Are there any ways that the programme could be improved?
You may want to consider:
- Days & times
- Location/ room
- Size of group
- Activities
- Duration of programme & sessions
- Things you think could be included / removed

What is the biggest thing you learned from the programme? What message will you take away with you?

The aim of a programme like this is to help young people better understand, make sense of, and cope with difficult experiences of domestic violence.
Do you think that taking part in this programme has had any effect or helped you in any way?

Do you think this programme would be helpful for other young people who have experienced domestic violence? Why do you think this?

Appendix 7: Consent forms – Interviews with Children & Young People (Carer & Child consent)

Parental / Carer Consent form:
Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence

Please tick to show your consent in participating in this study.

I have read and understood the information sheet for the project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies'. I acknowledge that:

The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me	
My son / daughter / the young person I care for has the right to withdraw at any point during the interview, and up to four weeks after by contacting the researcher	
My son / daughter / the young person I care for has the right to not answer any question if they so wish	
I understand that the interview will be recorded	
All interviews will be transcribed word for word, but that the young person's name and other identifying information will be removed from the transcripts to protect anonymity.	
Anonymised quotes from the interview will be used in the report and any subsequent scholarly publication, as well as for teaching and training purposes.	
My son / daughter / the young person I care for is able to contact the researcher if I have any queries. I can also contact the researchers if I have queries, but understand that the researchers will not be able to give out details of what the young person has said to them.	

I give my permission for my child …………………………………… (child's name) to participate in the study 'Understanding Resistance and Agency'

Signed : ………………………………………………………………………….

Print name (parent) : …………………………………………………………

Print young person's name: ……………………………………………………

Date : ………………………………………………………………………

Consent form for young people

Understanding Agency and Resilience Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence

<u>**Consent Form**</u>

The researcher has explained the project to me and I have agreed to participate in this research.

I understand that:

1	I can stop the interview if I want to, at any time during the interview. I don't have to give a reason for this, if I don't want to.	
2	If I don't want to answer a particular question, I can just say so and the researcher will move on to the next question.	
3	The interviews will be voice-recorded.	
4	My interviews will be written out word for word, and some of the things I say may be quoted in research reports and published. However, my name will be changed, and the researchers will do their best to make sure that I cannot be identified from the things I've said	
5	I can read the written version of my interview, if I want to. (I will email the researchers to ask for a copy of the interview.)	
6	I can contact the researchers if I have questions.	
7	The researcher will not tell anyone anything I have said unless I have told them something that makes them worry that I (or someone else) might be in danger. If this happens, the researcher will tell me first, before they tell anyone else.	

I understand what the research is about, and would like to take part in the study you can contact:
Email: unars@northampton.ac.uk
Phone: 07738 738002

I have decided that I would like to talk to Jo about the project: Yes ( ) No ( )
I am 14, or older: Yes (   )   No (   )
I am under 14, and understand that my parent or carer will also be asked for their consent to me taking part in this study: Yes (   )   No (   )
Signed……………………………………………

Please print your name…………………………

Appendix 8: Consent forms – Focus Groups with Professionals

Consent form:
Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence
Please tick to show your consent in participating in this study.

I have read and understood the information sheet for the project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies'. I acknowledge that:

The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me	
I have the right to withdraw at any point during the focus group, and up to four weeks after by contacting the researcher	
I have the right to not answer any question if I so wish	
I understand that the focus group will be digitally recorded	
All interviews will be transcribed word for word, but that my name and other identifying information will be removed from the transcripts to protect my anonymity.	
Anonymised quotes from my interview will be used within the report and any subsequent scholarly publication	
I am able to contact the researcher if I have any queries	

Signed : ....
Print name : ....
Date : ....

Appendix 9: Consent forms – Focus Groups with Carers

Consent form:
Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence

Please tick to show your consent in participating in this study.

I have read and understood the information sheet for the project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies'. I acknowledge that:

The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me	
I have the right to withdraw at any point during the focus group, and up to four weeks after by contacting the researcher	
I have the right to not answer any question if I so wish	
I understand that the focus group will be recorded	
All interviews will be transcribed word for word, but that my name and other identifying information will be removed from the transcripts to protect my anonymity.	
Anonymised quotes from my interview will be used within the report and any subsequent scholarly publication	
I am able to contact the researcher if I have any queries	

Signed : ....
Print name : ....
Date : ....

Appendix 10: Consent Forms - Photovoice (Child & Carer Consent)

Young Person's Assent form:
Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence - **photovoice project**
Please tick to show your consent in participating in this study.

I have read and understood the information sheet for the project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies'. I acknowledge that:

The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me	
I have the right to withdraw particular photos or stories (or all of my photos and stories) at any point during the photovoice project, up to (date)	
In discussions about the photos, I have the right to not answer any question if I so wish	
I understand that individual and group discussions about the photos will be recorded	
The things I say in the photovoice project will be written down word for word, but my name and other identifying information will be removed from the written version, so that no-one will know it is me who has said particular things.	
Some of the things I have said, and my photos will be used in the photovoice exhibit, and in articles the researchers write about the project, but my name will not be used.	
In the photos I take, I will respect other peoples' privacy as well as my own.	
I am able to contact the researcher if I have any questions	

Signed : ....
Print name : ....
Date : ....

Parent / Carer Consent form:
Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence - **photovoice project**
Please tick to show your consent in participating in this study.

I have read and understood the information sheet for the project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies'. I acknowledge that:

The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me	
My son / daughter / young person I care for has the right to withdraw particular photos or stories (or all of their photos and stories) at any point during the photovoice project, up to (date)	
In discussions about the photos, my son / daughter / young person I care for have the right to not answer any question if they so wish	
I understand that individual and group discussions about the photos will be recorded	
The things my son / daughter / young person I care for says in the photovoice project will be written down word for word, but their name and other identifying information will be removed from the written version, so that no-one will know it is them who said particular things.	
Some of the things my son / daughter / young person I care for have said, and their photos will be used in the photovoice exhibit, and in articles the researchers write about the project, but their name will not be used.	
In the photos my son / daughter / young person I care for takes, they will respect other peoples' privacy as well as their own.	
I am able to contact the researcher if I have any questions, as does my son / daughter / young person I care for	

Signed : ....
Print name : ....
Print young person's name: ....
Date : ....

Photovoice participant's agreement

Participant's Name:

_____

As part of this project, you are being asked to take photos and tell stories about your experiences of coping with difficulties at home.
This will give you an opportunity to have your story be heard, and to teach others about your life – maybe even in a way that will help other young people who are facing difficult circumstances too.
Taking photos can be a sensitive thing, and by signing this form you are saying that you understand that, and that you agree to follow the ethics of photovoice.

Please read each statement, and put your initials next to it, to say you have read and understood it.

_____ I will not intrude into an individual's personal space either publicly and privately.

_____ I will not disclose embarrassing facts about individuals unless they have given me permission to do so.

_____ I will not place individuals in false light with my photographs.

_____ I will respect the confidentiality of the stories we discuss in our photovoice group

_____ If I take photos of people, I will ask their permission to use those photos, and if I intend to use a photo which includes their face, I will get their signed consent.

I have read this statement. I understand and agree to respect the ethics of this photovoice project. I understand that if I break this agreement, my photos won't be used, and I won't be able to take part in the project.

_____   _____
  Print Your Name Here   Date of Birth

_____   _____
  Sign Your Name Here   Today's Date

Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence - photovoice project

Consent Form for People Who May Appear in Photographs
This will be used when children and young people wish to include a photograph in which the individual being photographed is recognisable. (Generally we will encourage young people not to include identifiable images, but this form must be completed if they do decide they need to include such a photo.)

Project Title: Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies
Introduction
Understanding Agency and Resistance is a project that aims to understand how young people cope with and manage difficult situations at home, including situations of violence. The project aims to help young people identify their difficulties and their strengths in coping with these situations.
If you are asked to have your photograph taken as part of the project and agree to do so, please read the following:

- *What is the purpose of the photographs?* Your pictures may be used as part of the Understanding Agency and Resistance Project, through photo exhibits and presentations.
- *What is involved?* The photographer may take pictures that include images of you. You have the right to see the images and to either agree to the use of particular pictures, or not.
- Your name or any other identifying information will not be included with photos, and will not appear in any of the project reports. However, it is possible that you might be recognised from the photo.
- Your willingness to be photographed is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, you can contact:
_____
Agreement Statement:
I understand that, in signing this form, I give consent for my, or my child's photograph to be taken as part of the Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies (UNARS) project.
I understand that I am also giving permission for these photos to be used as part of exhibits, presentations and publications of the UNARS project, and for other educational purposes
I understand my participation is voluntary.
I understand that my name and other identifying features will not be kept with the photograph, or used in any publications or exhibits, but that my picture may be recognised by others.
If the individual being photographed is a minor (under age 18), parental or guardian permission must be provided
Child Consent:

Child's Name: _____ Child's Age: _____
Print Parent/Guardian's Name: _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Adult Consent:

Print Adult's Name: _____
Adult's Signature: _____ Date: _____
Photographer's Name:
_____
Thanks for your time and help!

Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence - Photovoice project

Photo Release Form for Photographers

_____ Yes, I agree that you can use any of the photos I took as part of the photovoice project in books, chapters, articles, exhibits and for educational purposes.
_____ Yes, you may use SOME of the photos I took as part of the photovoice project in books, chapters, articles, exhibits and for educational purposes.
 (Please enter photo number for each photo that you do NOT want to be used below.)

_____ No, do not use any of the photos I took as part of the photovoice project

Your Name: _____
Your Signature: _____

Appendix 11: Consent Forms – Participation in Therapeutic Intervention (Carer & Child)

Parental / Carer Consent form

MPower

A Domestic Abuse Programme for Young People Aged 11-16

I have read and understood the information sheet for the MPower intervention programme. I acknowledge that:

I understand that the programme is designed for young people who have experienced fighting, aggression and violence in their homes	
I understand that the programme will run for 10 sessions	
To ensure young people's safety is maintained, I understand that only those who are now safe and living in a violent-free home can take part in the programme	
My son/ daughter/ the young person I care for can stop attending the programme at any time if they want to. They don't have to give a reason for this, if they don't want to.	
My son/ daughter/ the young person I care for can opt out of a particular activity if they so wish. They don't have to give a reason for this, if they don't want to.	
I understand that all young people attending the programme will be invited to complete a short questionnaire during each session to help evaluate the programme.	
I understand that towards the end of the 10 week programme, my son/ daughter/ young person I care for will be invited to talk in a private and confidential interview about their experiences on the programme to help evaluate the course. There is no obligation for them to take part in this and they don't have to provide a reason if they don't want to.	
My son / daughter / the young person I care for is able to contact	

Mary (Children & Young People's Practitioner) at NVCFR if they have any queries or require some support between sessions. I can also contact Mary if I have queries, but understand that she will not be able to give out details of what the young person has said within the sessions.	
My son/ daughter/ young person I care for will respect the confidentiality of other participants in the group.	

I give my permission for my child …………………………………. (child's name) to participate in the MPower Programme

Signed : ....

Print name (parent): ....

Print young person's name: ………………………………………….

Date : ....

If you have any questions or queries about the programme, please contact:

Email: unars@northampton.ac.uk   **Phone:** 07738 738002

To speak to **(ENTER NAME)** for between-sessions support contact: **(CONTACT DETAILS)**

Consent form for young people

MPower

A Domestic Abuse Programme for Young People Aged 11-16

The MPower programme has been explained to me and I have decided that I would like to attend the programme.

I understand that:

1	I understand that the programme is designed for young people who have experienced fighting, aggression and violence in their homes	
2	I understand that the programme will run for 10 sessions	
3	I can stop attending the programme at any time if I want to. I don't have to give a reason for this, if I don't want to.	
4	If I don't want to join in with a particular activity, I can just say so.	
5	I understand that all young people attending the programme will be invited to complete a short questionnaire during each session to help evaluate the programme.	
6	I understand that towards the end of the 10 week programme, I will be invited to talk in a private and confidential interview about my experiences on the programme. I don't have to take part in this if I don't want to and I don't have to give a reason for this, if I don't want to.	
7	I can contact Mary (Children & Young People's Practitioner at NVCFR) if there is anything I need to talk about or need support with.	
8	The therapists will not tell anyone anything I have said unless I have told them something that makes them worry that I (or someone else) might be in danger. If this happens, the therapist will tell me first, before they tell anyone else.	
9	I will respect the confidentiality of other participants in the group.	

I understand what the MPower programme will involve, and would like to take

part: Yes (   )   No (   )

I am 14, or older: Yes (   )   No (   )

I am under 14, and understand that my parent or carer will also be asked for their consent to me taking part in the programme: Yes (   )   No (   )

Signed………………………………………

Please print your name…………………………………………..

If you have any questions or queries about the programme, please contact:

Email: unars@northampton.ac.uk   **Phone:** 07738 738002

To speak to **Mary** at NVCFR for between-sessions support contact: 01604 230588

Appendix 12: Consent Forms – Therapeutic Intervention Evaluation (Carer & Child consent)

Parental / Carer Consent form

Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence

(Evaluation of UNARS MPower Programme)

Please tick to show your consent in participating in this study.

I have read and understood the information sheet for the project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies'. I acknowledge that:

The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me	
My son / daughter / the young person I care for has the right to withdraw at any point during the interview, and up to four weeks after by contacting the researcher	
My son / daughter / the young person I care for has the right to not answer any question if they so wish	
I understand that the interview will be voice-recorded	
All interviews will be transcribed word for word, but the young person's name and other identifying information will be removed from the transcripts to protect anonymity.	
Anonymised quotes from the interview will be used in the report and any subsequent scholarly publication and conferences, as well as for teaching and training purposes.	
My son / daughter / the young person I care for is able to contact the researcher if they have any queries. I can also contact the researchers if I have queries, but understand that the researchers will not be able to give out details of what the young person has said to them.	

I give my permission for my child ………………………………… (child's name) to participate in the study 'Understanding Resistance and Agency'

Signed : …………………………………………………………………………

Print name (parent): …………………………………………………………

Print young person's name: …………………………………………………

Date : …………………………………………………………………

Consent form for young people

Understanding Agency and Resilience Strategies: Young People Living with Domestic Violence

(Evaluation of UNARS MPower Programme)

The researcher has explained the project to me and I have agreed to participate in this research.
I understand that:

1	I can stop the interview at any time during the interview if I want to. I don't have to give a reason for this, if I don't want to.	
2	If I don't want to answer a particular question, I can just say so and the researcher will move on to the next question.	
3	The interviews will be voice-recorded.	
4	My interviews will be written out word for word, and some of the things I say may be quoted in conferences, research reports, and published. However, my name will be changed, and the researchers will do their best to make sure that I cannot be identified from the things I've said	
5	I can read the written version of my interview, if I want to. (I will email the researchers to ask for a copy of the interview.)	
6	I can contact the researchers if I have questions.	
7	The researcher will not tell anyone anything I have said unless I have told them something that makes them worry that I (or someone else) might be in danger. If this happens, the researcher will tell me first, before they tell anyone else.	

I understand what the research is about, and would like to take part in the study you can contact:
Email: unars@northampton.ac.uk
Phone: 07738 738002

I have decided that I would like to talk to the ……………………… about the project:
Yes ( )   No ( )
I am 14, or older: Yes (   )   No (   )
I am under 14, and understand that my parent or carer will also be asked for their consent to me taking part in this study: Yes (   )   No (   )
Signed………………………………………………
Please print your name…………………………

Appendix 13: Consent Forms – Training Evaluation

Evaluation of UNARS Training: Consent form

Please tick to show your consent in participating in this evaluation study.

I have read and understood the information sheet for the project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies'. I acknowledge that:

The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me.	
I understand that participation in the evaluation is voluntary.	
I retain the right to withdraw from the evaluation at any point during the training programme, and up to three weeks after submitting the final questionnaire. To withdraw I can contact the unars email address.	
I have the right to refrain from answering particular questions if I so wish.	
The information I include on my questionnaires will be anonymised and any identifying information and characteristics (such as names, organisations, etc) will be suitably obscured or removed to protect mine and (where applicable) others' anonymity.	
Anonymised quotes and statistical information will be shared between the UNARS partnerships and will be used in UNARS reports and other subsequent scholarly publication and conferences, as well as for teaching and training purposes.	
I understand that the data I provide will be stored on a password protected device. Consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet, and stored separately from my questionnaires.	
I can contact the facilitators/researchers if I have queries.	

Date : ....

Signed..

Please print your name............................

Appendix 14: Outcomes measures - Children's Groups

Outcome Rating Scale (CORS)

Name:_____   Age (Yrs):_____

Date:_____

Who is filling out this form? Please tick one: Child_____   Caretaker_____

> How are you doing? How are things going in your life? Please make a mark on the scale to let us know. The closer to the smiley face, the better things are. The closer to the frowny face, things are not so good. *If you are a caretaker filling out this form, please fill out according to how you think the child is doing.*

Me
(How am I doing?)

Family
(How are things in my family?)

School
(How am I doing at school?)

Everything
(How is everything going?)

_____
(_____?)

Group Session Rating Scale (CGSRS)

Name:_____   Age (Yrs):_____

Session #:_____   Date:_____

How was our group today? Please put a mark on the lines below to let us know how you feel.

| The leader or group did not listen to me or like me. | Listening | The leader and group listened to me and liked me. |

| We did not talk about or do important things. | How Important | We talked about and did important things. |

| I did not like what we did today. | What we Did | I liked what we did today. |

| Today was not good for me – I did not feel like a part of this group | Overall | Today was good for me – I felt like a part of this group. |

Appendix 16a UNARS: Training Questionnaire (Getting to Know You) (Session 1)

Name:		Date:	
Gender:		Role	
County your work is based in:		Client Group:	

In what ways does your role involve working with children & young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse?

What have your experiences of working with children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse been? (please provide a summary)

What knowledge do you hope to gain from the UNARS training programme?

What skills do you hope to gain from the UNARS training programme?

How will you identify that the training has been _effective_?
Any other comments:

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON

nene valley
christian family refuge

Appendix 16b UNARS: Training Questionnaire 2 (Training Evaluation & Feedback) (End of Session 1)

Name:		Date:	
Gender:		Role:	
County your work is based in:		Client Group:	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire which explores the impact of the UNARS training on your knowledge of enhancing resilience and agency in children & young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. When completing this questionnaire, please reflect on your experiences of the first day of your training.

Please circle the number you feel best matches your agreement to the following statement, with 1 being 'not at all', 5 being 'somewhat', and 10 'very much'.

1. **I feel that the training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of children & young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse.**

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

2. **I feel that information and ideas conveyed in training will improve my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with children & young people who have experienced domestic.**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

3. **I envisage <u>obstacles and barriers</u> to applying the first session of training to practice.**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please describe any obstacles and/or barriers you envisage here:

4. To apply principles of the training to my practice, I would require support in my work environment

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

In what ways would you require support?:

5. I have the necessary <u>resources</u> (skills, people, institutional, material) I require to implement my training.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please identify the most useful skills you have gained on day one of the training:

6. I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

7. I found all aspects of session one to be relevant to me in my professional role.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Which aspects were <u>most</u> relevant to you:

8. I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

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9. Overall session one was <u>useful</u> to me in my professional role.

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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│ Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this   │
│ rating:                                                          │
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│ Any other comments:                                              │
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Appendix 16c UNARS: Training Questionnaire 3 (Training Evaluation & Feedback) (Final Session)

Name:		Date:	
Gender:		Role:	
County your work is based in:		Client Group:	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire which explores the impact of the UNARS training on your knowledge and practice of enhancing resilience and agency in children & young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. When completing this questionnaire, please reflect on your experiences of undertaking the training and how they have affected you professionally and personally.

Please circle the number you feel best matches your agreement to the following statement, with 1 being 'not at all', 5 being 'somewhat', and 10 'very much'.

1. **I feel that the training has enhanced my <u>understandings</u> of children & young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse.**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

2. **I feel that information and ideas conveyed in training will improve my <u>effectiveness</u> in working with children & young people who have experienced domestic.**

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

3. **During the course of the programme I have experienced <u>obstacles and barriers</u> to applying training to practice.**

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please describe any obstacles and/or barriers you have experienced here:

4. **I have felt <u>supported</u> in my work environment to apply principles of the training to my practice**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

In what ways do you feel supported, who/what supports you?:

5. **I have the necessary <u>resources</u> (skills, people, institutional, material) I require to implement my training.**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Please identify the most useful skills you have gained through training:

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6. **Throughout the duration of the 5 week training programme I have seen a <u>positive change</u> to the ways I work with and think about children who have experienced domestic violence and abuse**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Please explain any positive changes:                              │
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7. **Throughout the duration of the 5 week training programme I have seen a <u>negative change</u> to the ways I work with and think about children who have experienced domestic violence and abuse**

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Please explain any negative changes:                              │
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8. I feel <u>confident</u> in applying UNARS training to my practice.

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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│ Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating: │
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│   │
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9. I found all aspects of the programme to be relevant to me in my professional role.

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

┌───┐
│ Which aspects/sessions were <u>most</u> relevant to you: │
│   │
│   │
│   │
│   │
└───┘

10. I am confident that I will continue to put principles of the UNARS training into practice in my role.

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

11. Overall the programme was <u>useful</u> to me in my professional role.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Please state as fully as possible your reasons for giving this rating:

Any other comments:

Appendix 17 – Ethical clearance