

What Works: how children's services practice can effectively address domestic abuse workshop

Cordis Bright

Thursday 13th October 2016



Team facilitating today



Yvette King

- **Head of Safeguarding at Cordis Bright**
- Support to over 48 local authorities on children's services through leadership and management support, coaching and mentoring, advanced training, quality assurance, auditing, service reviews
- Former interim Assistant Director of Safeguarding and HMI Inspector



Steve Boxford

- **Head of Research at Cordis Bright**
- **Recently led high profile research, evaluation and needs assessments for a range of statutory sector, VCS and private sector clients with a specific focus on domestic abuse and children and young people**



Meera Spillett

- **Former Director of Children's Services at Oxfordshire**
- Formerly: Deputy Director of Prevention, Early Intervention and Specialist Services at Norfolk. Former HMI Inspector. Associate of the Staff College (previously known as the Virtual Staff College).



Kam Kaur

- **Principle Consultant at Cordis Bright**
- Kam is a former HMI Inspector.
- Projects include leading on outcomes-focused change management within local authorities; undertaking case file audits; supporting pre- and post-inspection work; providing coaching and mentoring; and facilitating training (especially on audit, oversight and performance management).



Sarah Barker

- **Researcher at Cordis Bright**
- Recently conducted an evaluation of a regional model of VAWG services.
- Previously delivered frontline services, training, including a national domestic and sexual violence/abuse training qualification, and consultancy in the specialist VAWG sector.



How it will work

Expectations of the workshop:

- Structure
- We are *keen* to hear your views
- Chatham house rules
- Safe space

Introductions:

- Please introduce yourself and your role.



Agenda

Presentation	Time
Introductions	9.45 – 10.15
State of the sector: overview	10.15 – 10.45
State of the sector: group discussion	10.45 – 11.15
<i>Break for refreshments</i>	11.15 – 11.30
'Top tips' part one: overview	11.30 – 12.15
'Top tips' part two: group discussion	12.15 – 12.55
Thank you and close	12.55 – 13.00
Lunch	13.00 – 13.30



State of the sector: the current approach to addressing domestic abuse in children's services practice

Discussion group one



What we will cover

- The current policy and strategy landscape
- Domestic abuse as the new 'deep dive' theme for Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)
- Current landscape of quality of children's services practice in relation to addressing domestic abuse

Policy and strategy landscape

- The VAWG strategy (2016) follows on from the *‘Our Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls’* strategy published by the coalition Government in 2010. It adopts the four pillars of approach set out in 2010:
 - Prevention
 - Provision of services
 - Partnership working
 - Pursuing perpetrators.
- The Putting Children First strategy (2016) aims to set out the approach to reform the children’s social care system. It is structured around the three areas of:
 - People and leadership
 - Practice and systems
 - Governance and Accountability

A shift in focus

- **Local commissioning:** devolved responsibility for local service provision to local commissioners

*‘This shift recognises that local areas are best placed to assess local need, to design comprehensive and good quality interventions, and to be held to account through improved local democratic accountability’
(VAWG strategy, p: 28)*

- **Partnership and multi-agency working**
- **Early intervention and prevention**
- **An integrated family model of support**

Domestic abuse as the new JTAI 'deep dive' theme

Category	Specific area of focus
Local partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well local partners see domestic abuse through the eyes of the child
Leaders and managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The understanding of the experiences of children living with domestic abuse and the prevalence in their area • The recognition of the challenges of working with domestic abuse and the provision of appropriate support, training and challenge to practitioners
Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The training, confidence, knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse by practitioners
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing and responding to risks to children and their needs through a child-centred approach • Application of thresholds and information sharing • Multi-agency working, including MARACs • The effectiveness of interventions for the child, non-abusive parent and perpetrator

Children's social care case file audit research: key issues and gaps

Sarah Barker & Yvette King

13th October, 2016



About the evidence base

Sample:

- Based on 331 social care files
- Four different Local Authorities

	North East LA	Midlands LA	London LA	North West LA	Total
Number of case files	28	66	131	106	331

Analytic approach:

- Thematic matrix analysis

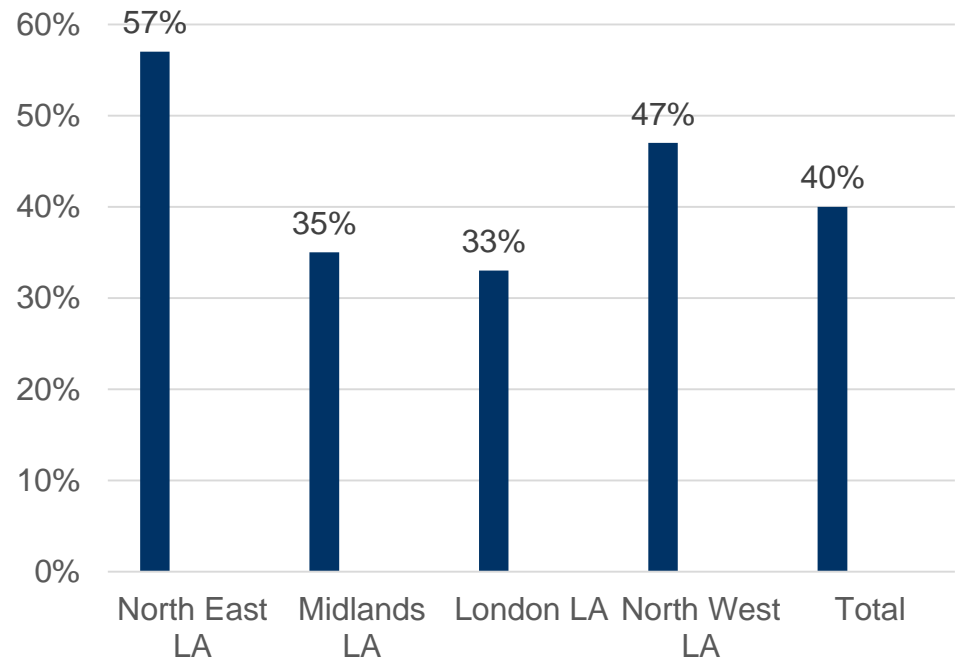
Limitations:

- Recording system of presence of domestic abuse
- Representativeness of sample

Prevalence of domestic abuse



IPV
Sibling abuse
APVA
Family member



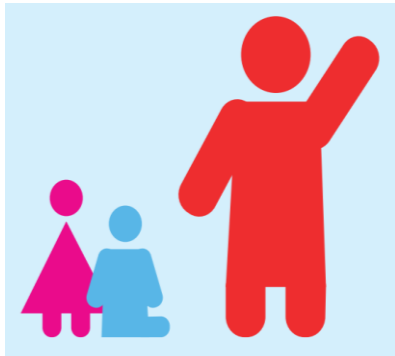
Key theme 1: Understanding and assessment of risk



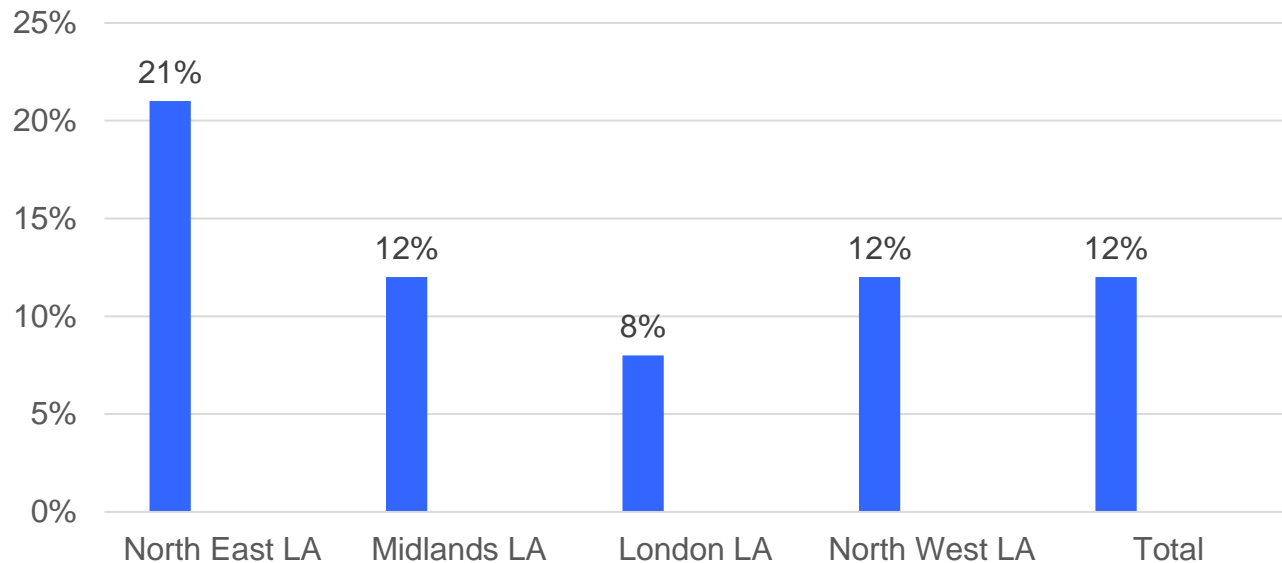
In nearly **1 in 5 cases** there was lack of assessment of risk



Key theme 2: The nature and impact of domestic abuse



In more than **1 in 10 cases** there was a lack of understanding of the impacts of domestic abuse on children and young people



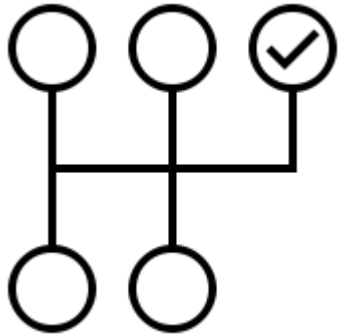
Key theme 3: Multi-agency working and referrals



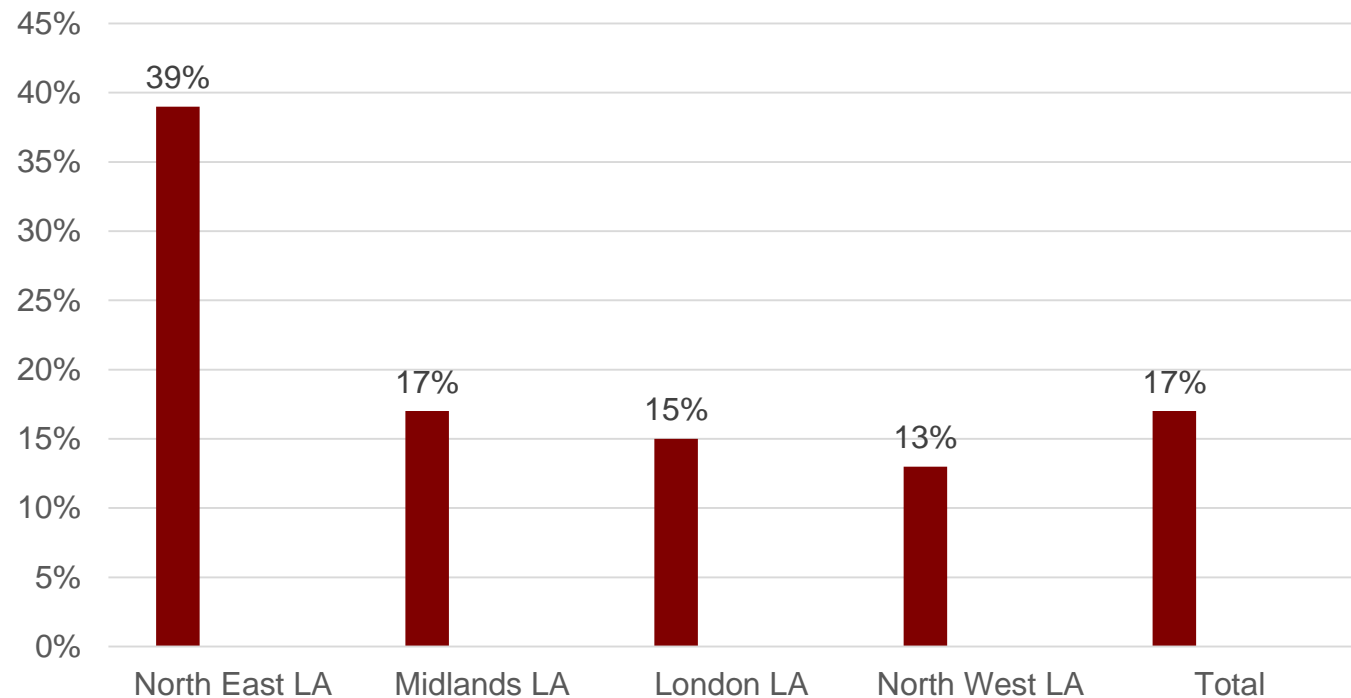
Overall in **8%** of cases there was a lack of evidence around multi-agency working and appropriate referrals



Key theme 4: Involvement and assessment of fathers



In nearly **one fifth** of cases there was limited involvement or assessment of the father and his behaviour

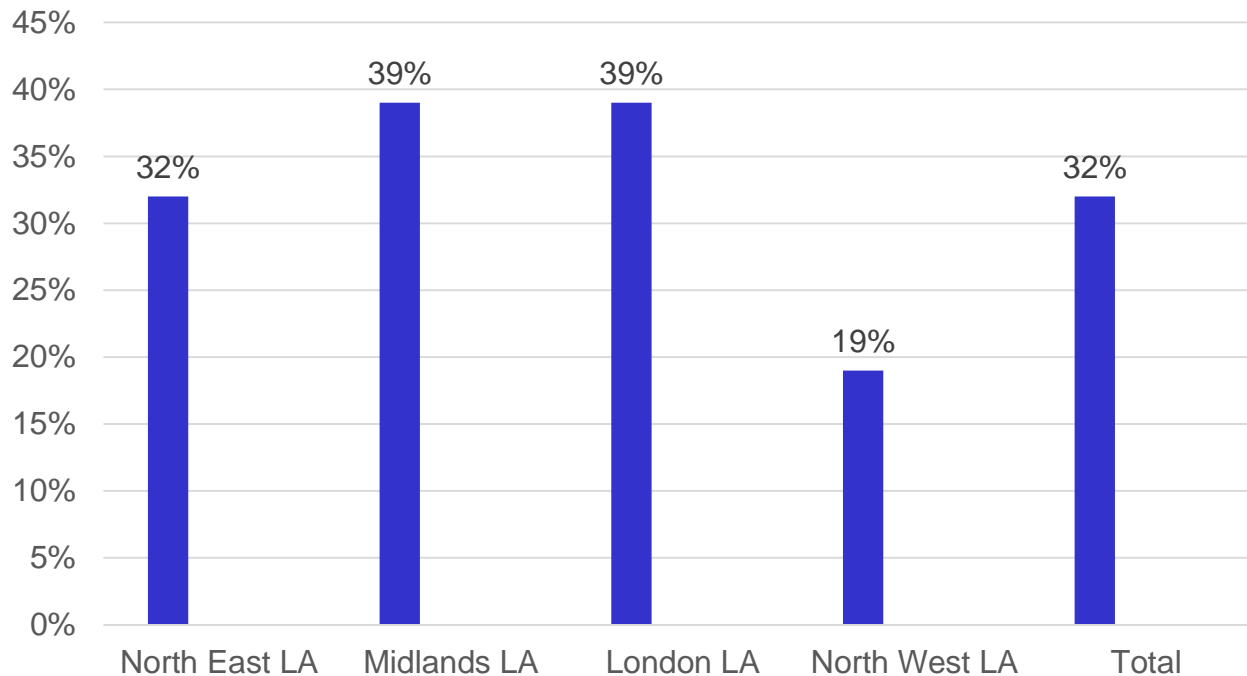


Key theme 5: Voice of the child



32%

Percentage of cases that did not sufficiently include the voice of the child.





Over to you

Key themes:

1. Understanding and assessment of risk
2. The nature and impact of domestic abuse
3. Multi-agency working and appropriate referrals
4. Involvement and assessment of fathers
5. Voice of the child

Questions:

- A. Any key issues and gaps that are missing?
- B. Any key issues and gaps that you are surprised to see?
- C. What particular issues and gaps have you found?



Break

11.15 am to 11.30 am



‘Top tips’: part one overview

Discussion group two

Our 'top tips' for ensuring that children's services practice effectively addresses domestic abuse

Andy Dempsey, Meera Spillett and Yvette King

13th October, 2016



A quick sanity check



There is no single magic solution that will transform children's services practice.

Rather, what is required is...



A range/spectrum of different actions.



Implemented with ongoing, long-range focus.



With some 'heavy lifting' to create momentum and get partners on-board.



Our 8 top tips

1. Ensure the voice of the child is loud and clear
2. Ensure fathers are fully involved in the process and work effectively with perpetrators
3. Invest in prevention and early intervention
4. Establish a clear, shared model/framework of risk
5. Recognise and respond to diversity of need
6. Boost understanding, skills and confidence of practitioners
7. Invest time in partnership working and multi-agency responses
8. Ensure domestic abuse is a core element of quality assurance and management oversight



1. Ensure that the voice of the child is loud and clear

- Children need to know that there are adults who will listen to them, believe them and help keep them safe
- Need adults to speak out and break the silence
- Children need practitioners to take into account their wishes and feelings which are often not included in assessments
- Chronologies are important to gain a full picture of a child's life and not to see each referral as a single event. Cases which are stuck can benefit from an integrated chronology so all professionals can take full ownership of next steps.
- The voice of the child helps to re-sensitise social workers and partners to the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse.
- In our experience, it prompts quicker, more focussed action to address concerns.



2. Ensure fathers are fully involved in the process and work effectively with perpetrators

Involvement of fathers:

- Frequently don't take part in the assessment process
- Absence of responsibility for parenting. Mother seen as the key person responsible for change

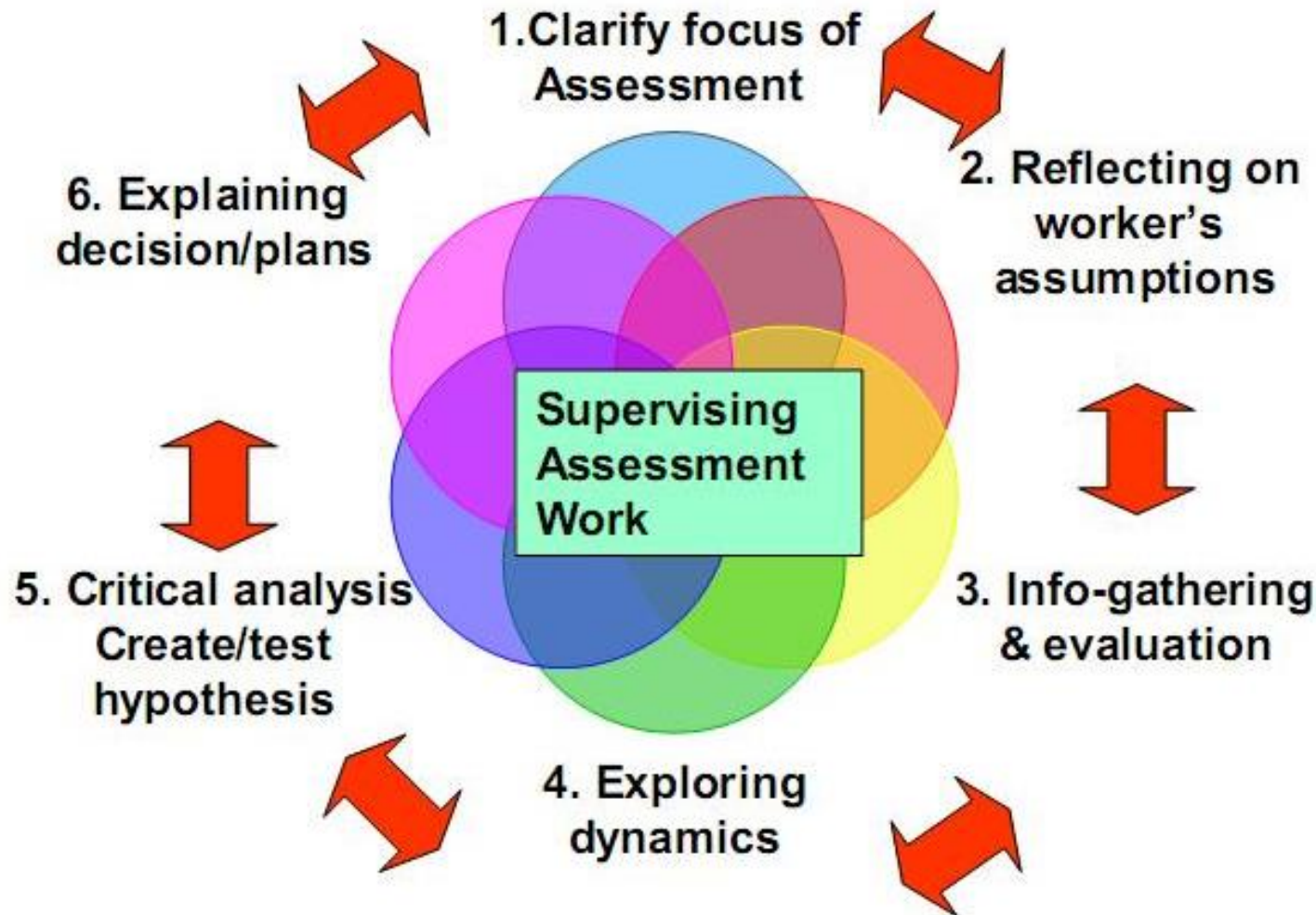
Involvement of fathers who are perpetrators:

- Direct work with perpetrators around safety planning needs to acknowledge:
 - The impacts of domestic abuse on children and young people
 - How children might value their fathers
 - Strengths as well as behaviours
- Identify and ensure access to well-resourced and evidence based perpetrator programmes

3. Invest in prevention and early intervention

- We recognise that with austerity this is increasingly difficult.
- However, there is strong evidence to support the idea that effective prevention and early intervention can reduce harm and reduce demand.
- In line with the VAWG strategy, we recommend three priorities:
 - All services are able to spot the signs of abuse in all family members and intervene early.
 - Signposting and referrals to appropriate services with the right degree of urgency.
 - Safe information sharing.

4. Establish a clear, shared model/framework of risk





5. Recognise and respond to diversity of need

- The vast majority of perpetrators are heterosexual adult males, but it is important to recognise the diversity within this group
- It is also important to recognise and be sensitised to other forms of abuse:
 - Young people abusing other young people/children
 - Young people perpetrating abuse against a parent/carer
- This requires:
 - Good staff training
 - Awareness raising
 - Ongoing vigilance
 - A nuanced commissioning strategy, maybe with regional cooperation to cater for smaller numbers or specialist requirements



Resources that might be helpful

- **Gay & Bi perpetrators**
 - Respect booklet specifically for men in relationships with other men
- **Transgender perpetrators**
- **Female Domestic Violence perpetrators**
 - Women in relationships with other women or men
- **Female Genital Mutilation**
 - Importance of supporting women & men across cultural communities
- **Young people as perpetrators**
 - Home Office information guide: adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA)
 - Also teenage relationship domestic violence
- **Professionals who are Domestically Violent**
 - Statistically there will be professionals who are victims or perpetrators of DV
 - Importance of Local Authority Designated Officer and system for handling sensitive cases
- **Personal Social Health Economic (PSHE) education**
 - Strong commitment to reflect diversity from Schools as part of tackling DV

6. Boost understanding, skills & confidence of practitioners

Our research on case file audits highlighted the following priorities:

- Comprehensive understanding of domestic abuse (including theories of domestic abuse and challenging common myths and stereotypes, e.g. victim blaming and mother's responsibility for parenting)
- Explore short and long-term physical, emotional, psychosocial and behavioural impacts of domestic abuse on children and young people of all ages
- Familiarise participants with common risks associated with domestic abuse and risk assessment tools and how these inter-relate with other issues through a whole family approach
- Expand knowledge of specialist domestic abuse support services (for men, women and children and young people), appropriate referral pathways and multi-agency working around risk and domestic abuse

7. Invest time on partnership working & multi-agency responses

- This requires activity at three different levels:
 - Strategic: ensuring that all relevant partners are on-board, **invest time in shared understanding**, have domestic abuse as a priority, have common understanding of the challenges, and know how they contribute to tackling it.
 - Management: strong working links between managers of different agencies, open communication, with mutual challenge, **establish multi-agency training**.
 - Practice: shared models of risk and practice, common frameworks for action, a good understanding of what each other do and where to go to for further advice/support. **Social workers shouldn't cover for poor multi-agency working**.



8. Ensure domestic abuse is a core element of quality assurance and management oversight

- Case reviews have an acute focus on effective practice in relation to domestic abuse:
 - Child and family views
 - Robust assessment
 - Appropriate response to domestic abuse
- Reflective supervision practice is in place
- Group supervision that encourages multi-agency practice
- Gathering intelligence about commissioning gaps/priorities and potential areas for de-commissioning
- Advocate for strong training and development, especially joint approaches
- Multi-agency case audit



‘Top tips’: part two

Discussion group two

Over to you

1. Ensure the voice of the child is loud and clear
2. Ensure fathers are fully involved in the process and work effectively with perpetrators
3. Invest in prevention and early intervention
4. Establish a clear, shared model/framework of risk
5. Recognise and respond to diversity of need
6. Boost understanding, skills and confidence of practitioners
7. Invest time in partnership working and multi-agency responses
8. Ensure domestic abuse is a core element of quality assurance and management oversight

Questions:

- A. Any top tips that are missing?
- B. Any top tips that you are surprised to see?
- C. What would your top tips be?



Thank you and close

A summary of our discussions



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