Non Violent Resistance Handbook for Practitioners

Responding to Child to Parent Violence in Practice

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Section A
Introduction to Child to Parent Violence and the Non Violent Resistance (NVR) Programme

Our experience in practice with parents and families and conversations with other practitioners suggests that the aggressive behaviour and controlling behaviour of children and adolescents towards their parents is an increasing concern. The initial referral for assessment and intervention may be related to concerns about ADHD, depression, out of control behaviours, youth crime or school attendance issues. But more and more parents are beginning to talk about their experiences of being the target of their child's physical and emotional aggression and violence in their homes. Child to parent violence has yet to feature in policy and practice guidance in Ireland and the UK. Child to parent violence however is a feature of daily life for some families and is an issue with which practitioners are all too familiar (Coogan 2011; Wilcox 2012). In recent years, more and more parents are challenging practitioners with questions about how best to address this type of family violence (Coogan & Lauster 2014). Similar to the experiences of those living with domestic violence, it seems that many parents living with child to parent violence may deny or minimise the violence they experience. They also may often blame themselves for the abusive behaviour and struggle in silence (Cottrell & Monk 2004; Gallagher 2004; Edenborough et al 2008).

This handbook is designed for the practitioner who would like to have some useful starting points in understanding and responding to child to parent violence. The handbook will also provide practitioners with guidelines about how to implement the Non Violent Resistance Programme in their work with parents in families where child to parent violence takes place. This is an evidence influenced, short –term, systemic and effective intervention that builds on the existing skills, knowledge and values of practitioners and enhances the protection and safety of all family members.

"Child to parent violence however is a feature of daily life for some families and is an issue with which practitioners are all too familiar."

Silence and Child to Parent Violence

The veil of silence that surrounds child to parent violence is partly due to the fact that research into child to parent violence is still in its early stages of development (Holt 2012). There are few statistics on incidents reported to police, social workers and family support services. Those incidents that are reported, for example, to police services and judiciary are likely to reflect only a small minority of cases, given the difficulties a parent may have in reporting their own child to the police (Condry & Miles 2012; Ibabe et al 2013). This makes it difficult for us to develop a clear picture about how many cases of child to parent violence take place, when and where it occurs and what are the ways in which social work and social care practitioners are responding to this emergent problem.

The lack of information about child to parent violence across Europe led to the development of the Responding to Child to Parent Violence (RCPV) project, co-financed by the Daphne fund of the European Union. Involving a partnership between practitioners and academics in England, Ireland, Spain, Sweden and Bulgaria over two years (2013-15), the project aims to develop a deeper understanding of child to parent violence in these countries. The RCPV Project also hopes to increase awareness about this problem and to implement and research two intervention programmes - the Break4Change and Non Violent Resistance Programmes. Break4Change works with young people and their parents in parallel groups. (More information about the RCPV Project is available at www.rcpv.eu and in the helpful links section of this handbook).

What is Child to Parent Violence?

Many families manage to find ways to resolve conflict without the development of abusive behaviour, but some parents find themselves in need of help and support from outside the family. We need to mark a clear boundary between child to parent violence and troublesome behaviours that could be seen as falling within "normal" adolescent

behaviour. Child to parent violence is a harmful act carried out by a child with the intention to cause physical, psychological, or financial pain or to exert power and control over a parent (Cottrell 2001; Calvette et al 2013). Although other terms, such as child to mother violence, child to father violence, parent abuse can be used to describe this kind of behaviour, we prefer to use the term "child to parent violence" throughout this handbook for a number of reasons:

(a) it encompasses a wide range of abusive behaviours, including aggression, intimidation, acts of physical violence and controlling tactics, such as psychological and financial abuse. It also includes threats of self-harm where these threats are used as ways of exercising power and control over parents.

(b) it indicates that it is the parent (a mother or father or a person acting in the role of a parent, such as a step-parent or foster-carer, for example) who is the target of the abusive behaviour by the child under the age of eighteen years of age,

(c) the term clarifies that it is the child who uses violence, or the threat of abuse or violence to dis-empower the parent/ carer.

In practice it can be helpful to think in terms of a self-defining approach to a definition of child to parent violence. In other words, a child or adolescent's behaviour should be considered violent and abusive if family members feel controlled, intimidated or threatened by it. If they feel they must adapt their own behaviour because of threats or use of abuse or violence, then we are talking about child to parent violence (Paterson et al 2002; Wilcox 2012). Such coercive behaviour could also include for example a child threatening to self-harm when this behaviour is not associated with a mental health difficulty.

"A child or adolescent's behaviour is violent and abusive if parents feel controlled, intimidated or threatened by it. If parents feel they must adapt their own behaviour because of threats or use of abuse or violence, then we are talking about child to parent violence."

What is the NVR Programme?

The goal of the Non Violent Resistance Programme, adapted for use in Ireland, is to assist practitioners to provide parents with the skills to use when they experience child to parent violence in their home. It is a brief, systemic and cognitive behavioural response to child to parent violence. The NVR Programme is another tool in the practitioner's tool box in their work with families and parents that complements their already existing skills, values and knowledge. Working through the practitioner, the NVR Programme aims to empower & support parents/ carers in preventing & responding to the controlling and violent behaviour of children and teenagers.

What was the background to the development of the NVR Programme in Ireland?

While working as part of a multi-disciplinary out-patient Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) in Dublin in 2008, Declan Coogan and other members of the team noticed that some parents were beginning to talk about their experiences of living in fear of their child due to their son or daughter's controlling behaviour. Some of these families had attended family counselling, parenting courses or individual counselling for their children. But some parents reported that these did not seem to help. With the support of the CAMHS team and of Haim Omer (who first developed the Non Violent Resistance Programme with his colleagues in Tel Aviv, Israel: see Omer 2004, Weinblatt & Omer 2008), Declan Coogan adapted the Non Violent Resistance programme for use in Ireland with promising and positive responses from families.

The positive experiences of the CAMHS team members and of the families in North Dublin who had used the NVR Programme over an 18 month period between 2008 and the end of 2009, led to an appreciation of the potential. It seemed to offer opportunities to enhance the safety of children and parents, to end violence and to improve family relationships. Following a presentation outlining the key elements of

the NVR Programme by Declan at the annual conference of the Irish Association of Social Workers in 2009, some practitioners suggested the development of a training programme to assist them and their colleagues in responding to the emerging problem of child and parent violence.

A chance arose for the development of such a training course when Declan commenced employment as a social work educator and researcher at the National University of Ireland Galway in late 2009. As part of a PhD research project, the 2 day training programme in Non Violent Resistance was developed, piloted and delivered to practitioners in different voluntary and statutory child and family services in Ireland. This led to involvement of NUI Galway in the EU Daphne funded Responding to Child to Parent Violence Project. In August 2013, Eileen Lauster joined the project and began work on awareness raising, training delivery and research.

Two day training events on the Non Violent Resistance Programme and research on child to parent violence have been taking place throughout 2013-14 with, for example,

- Members of CAMHS teams (including social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists)
- Members of Child Protection and Welfare teams (including Family Support Workers, Social Care Workers and Social Workers)
- Probation Officers,
- National Family Support Network members (who work with families with drug and alcohol abuse problems),
- Staff and volunteers of Parentline (a national telephone support service for parents in Ireland)
- Children and Family Voluntary Services and
- Domestic Violence Refuge Practitioners.

"That was one of the main things that stood out for me about NVR, that it was more kind of co-operative and open and with dialogue ... People feel more listened to you know"

(Practitioner, Statutory Service).

Common themes during the training have included its positive relevance to practice, a welcome for its practical approach to working with families and the need for a Non Violent Resistance handbook. This led to the development of the handbook you now hold in your hands.

What are the Core Elements of the NVR Programme?

The Core Elements of the Non Violent Resistance Programme will be described in more detail in Section D. They are summarised here:

- Parental Commitment to Non Violent Resistance: parents commit to resisting violence and to avoiding violence when responding to their child, regardless of the provocation. This includes parents committing to avoiding verbal as well as physical aggression.
- De-escalation Skills: the development of parental self-management and self-calming skills to de-escalate and avoid unnecessary confrontations.
- Increased Parental Presence: changing the ways in which a parent is present in their child's life and re-focusing interactions away from persistent conflict.
- The Support Network: the parents' disclosure about the extent of the problem of violence with a number of significant people who they also invite to be part of a support network, such as grand-parents, aunts and/or

uncles, or friends.

- Family Announcement: an announcement to the family that violence at home will no longer be tolerated (during the announcement, the type of violence is clearly specified)

- Acts of Reconciliation: spontaneous unearned treats and/ or gestures of encouragement (words/ actions/ events) offered by parents to the child.

- Refusing Orders & Breaking Taboos: reinstating activities that parents have felt they could not do such as visiting the child's room, talking with friends who visit or watching the television in the sitting room.

- The Sit-In: a dramatic break with habits of the past and a clear demonstration of parental commitment to non-violent resistance.

How is NVR different from other parenting programmes?

One of the important distinctive factors of the Non Violent Resistance Programme as a response to child to parent violence is the focus on therapeutic support and on psycho-educational intervention which involves the parents only, without the necessity to work directly with the child. It can also neatly side-steps a dilemma that can present itself early in work with children and families. When a practitioner begins to search for a way to work effectively with parents who talk about their experiences of child to parent violence, they can encounter what could be a significant obstacle to positive change. The son or daughter might either refuse to attend the service or agrees to attend only an occasional session. With a focus on direct engagement with the parents only, the NVR Programme described in this handbook offers the practitioner and parents a way around a potential barrier to intervention as the agreement and attendance of the son or daughter is simply not an issue. Although the parents are encouraged to seek the views of the son or daughter on what might resolve the problems of violence with which the family is living, there is no expectation that the practitioner needs to meet with the son or daughter as part of the NVR programme. Significantly, a re-assertion of parental control or changing the behaviour of the son or daughter is NOT the primary goal of the NVR programme (although positive changes in the child's behaviour are a secondary gain of the parent's commitment to NVR). But instead, there is a shift in emphasis to influencing a change in the relationship between the parent and the child, on the behaviour of the parent and on increasing positive parental presence in the child's life.

"There is an emphasis on influencing a change in the relationship between the parent and the child, on the behaviour of the parent and on increasing positive parental presence in the child's life. "

How can practitioners use this NVR handbook?

It seems that the best practitioners are approachable and willing to be part of collaborative discussions that can take place in a group or individual / family therapy session. Although there are some evidence based suggestions that are part of the programme, the NVR Programme is not an exercise through which practitioners are teachers and parents are pupils attending parenting classes. It is important that the practitioner takes an approach that respects the experiences and views of the parents and recognises that parents are the experts on how the principles of Non Violent Resistance might be worked out in the realities of their lives. While practitioners have something distinctive and valuable to offer due to their training and professional experiences, parents will have a better sense about how the principles of NVR could apply in their daily lives.

The NVR Programme is adaptable and responds to the needs of parents and practitioners. It is suitable for use in a variety of contexts (such as group or individual sessions) and a variety of settings (voluntary or statutory services). Throughout this handbook wherever we use the term "individual sessions" we are referring to sessions that involve the practitioner and one parent, or two parents or a meeting that involves the parent(s) of a child and members of the support network, as distinct from "group

work sessions". The programme is designed for a wide range of practitioners such as social care workers, family support workers, social workers, psychotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, probation officers or any other practitioner working in child care, family support or community settings. As a group work intervention, it can also be co-facilitated by parents who have completed a previous NVR Programme or who have special training.

We hope to continue to offer practitioner training to practitioners who would like to avail of training in running a Non Violent Resistance Programme. Practitioners are strongly advised to complete this training in advance of starting to use the Non Violent Resistance Programme. For up to date information on training, please see **www.cpvireland.ie** and **www.rcpv.eu**

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What do we mean by "parent" and "families"?

Throughout this handbook we are using the terms "parents" and "families"; we are conscious of using the term in an inclusive way reflecting the diversity of family life in contemporary Ireland. When we use these terms, we mean to include all types of parents and families such as married, co-habiting, single, step and foster parents and families with two parents living together or apart and families living with Mums or Dads, including families in which there are gay or lesbian parents/ carers. We also mean to include all types of other carers in a parenting role such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and adult brothers and sisters.

Who are the authors?

Declan Coogan is a lecturer in the Masters of Arts in Social Work Programme in the School of Political Science and Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway. He was awarded a Masters in Social Work from the Queens University of Belfast before practising as a social worker in child protection and welfare and in child and adolescent mental health services for fourteen years. He is also a registered family therapist (Family Therapy Association of Ireland). He began to work with parents and the Non Violent Resistance Programme in 2008 and developed the two day training programme in the Non Violent Resistance Programme for Practitioners for the EU funded Responding to Child to Parent Violence Project. He is the NUI Galway lead for the RCPV Project in Ireland and is a Research Fellow with the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway.

Eileen Lauster is a Research Assistant for the RCPV Project in Ireland at the School of Political Science and Sociology at NUI Galway and is a Research Assistant Fellow with the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway. She was awarded a Masters in Social Work, majoring in Administration and Community Organisation, from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan before practising as a social worker in child protection and welfare in the United States and in adult mental health services in Ireland. Eileen co-facilitated the Peaceful Parenting Programme and developed a new prevention programme for adolescent girls at risk for anti-social behaviours. She presently works with Declan on the Responding to Child to Parent Violence Project at NUI Galway and the two day NVR practitioner training programme.

Section B
Key Facts

This section provides some important background information about child to parent violence that might be helpful in responding to any questions parents might have. It also provides some of the evidence that supports the use of NVR as a response to child to parent violence.

Different ways of thinking about violence in the family

The ways in which we understand violence within the family has shifted over the last few decades. Legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act (1996) and new practice responses such as the HSE Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2010) to protect individuals within the family home in Ireland have emerged, which reflect changes in social values and a growing public awareness of abuse and violence within the family (Kearns et al 2008; Cosc 2010). Women's Aid together with other voluntary and statutory agencies have raised awareness throughout Ireland about the impact of domestic violence and have co-operated in the development of support and other services for victims (Cosc 2010).

The increased attention on domestic violence throughout Europe has had a significant impact on public perceptions of the complexities of domestic violence. Across the European Union, the vast majority of citizens (98%) are aware of domestic violence; one in four people across the EU know a woman among friends or in the family circle who is a victim of domestic violence. There has also been a hardening of attitudes in the EU towards perpetrators of domestic violence, with 86% of citizens believing that domestic violence is unacceptable and should always be punishable by law (Eurobarometer 73.2, 2010).

The recognition of additional forms of violence such as elder abuse, sibling violence and violence within gay and lesbian relationships as themes in family violence literature represents a similar emergence of a broader understanding of violence within the family (Cottrell & Monk 2004; Hoffman & Edwards 2004; DHSSPS 2005; Walsh & Krienert 2009; Cosc 2010). However, the attention has been focused on adult-initiated violence such as violence within intimate adult relationships and violence by parents towards their children. This largely ignores a major type of under-reported family violence: child to parent violence (Agnew & Huguley 1989; Walsh & Krienert 2009; Tew & Nixon 2010). One of the aims of the Responding to Child to Parent Violence Project (**www.rcpv.eu**) and of this handbook is to increase awareness about the problem of child to parent violence and to increase practitioner competence and confidence in addressing this frequently hidden form of family violence.

"I'm very excited by the possibilities, given the level of violence we're working with. I think NVR is great potentially...particularly in the kinds of cases where there is violence by the children towards the parents and parents really have lost, you know, their own sense of their own power and are feeling a sense of helplessness and hopelessness around it."

(Practitioner, Voluntary Service).

Child to Parent Violence and Domestic Violence

There are important differences between child to parent violence and domestic violence. Apart from the ethical and legal duties of parents to provide housing, education and welfare for their children, it is not legally possible to seek safety, barring or protection orders for children under the age of 18. Another important difference between child to parent violence and domestic violence is that child to parent violence involves a reversal of power that challenges the ways in which we usually understand cycles of abuse and power within families. Violence within the family usually involves attacks on less powerful individuals (children and/or partners) by more powerful individuals. Yet child to parent violence involves attacks on parents, usually understood by practitioners as more powerful individuals, by the usually less powerful child or adolescent (Agnew & Huguley 1989).

But there are many similarities between domestic violence and child to parent violence; for example, the types of abusive behaviour used, the victim's experiences of self-blame and shame, and the fact that women/ mothers are the most frequent

targets of abuse are common features in both of these forms of intra-familial violence. It may at first be difficult to accept that child to parent violence is in many ways similar to domestic violence because child to parent violence also challenges our perceptions of cycles of abuse and power within families. As we saw above, where child to parent violence takes place, there is a reversal of conventional power dynamics within families where the abusive or violent behaviour of child or adolescent leads to family members feeling controlled, intimidated or threatened by it and they believe they must adapt their own behaviour because of threats or use of abuse or violence. This counter-intuitive dynamic could lead practitioners to the belief that child to parent violence is uncommon, a belief reinforced by parents reluctance to describe their experiences of violence at the hands of their child or adolescent.

Child to Parent Violence takes place in a variety of cultures, socio-economic backgrounds and family compositions. Fathers can also be targets of child to parent violence.

It seems that many parents living with child-to-parent violence share common experiences with women and men who have been targets of domestic violence. It is common for parents who are assaulted by their young children to deny or minimise the violence they experience or to blame themselves for the abusive behaviour of their child (Cottrell & Monk 2004; Gallagher 2004; Edenborough et al 2008). Similar to the experiences of those living with domestic violence, it seems that many parents living with child to parent violence may be isolated in the community and struggling in silence.

How common is child to parent violence and are some parents more likely to experience child to parent violence?

One of the reasons behind the development of the Responding to Child to Parent Violence Project was the fact that research into child to parent violence is still in the early stages of development. For example, there are few statistics on incidents reported to social work teams, child and adolescent mental health teams and the Gardai. Those incidents that are reported to police and juvenile justice services are likely to reflect only a small minority of cases, given the difficulties a parent may have in reporting their own child to the police (Condry & Miles 2012; Ibabe et al 2013). This makes it difficult for us to develop a clear picture about how many cases of child to parent violence take place, when and where it occurs and what are the ways in which social work and social care practitioners are responding to this emergent problem (Holt 2012).

Research suggests that 18% of 2 parent and 29% of 1 parent families experience child to parent violence. Adolescent boys and adolescent girls use tactics of abuse, violence and controlling behaviour.

But there seems to be clear evidence that child to parent violence occurs across a variety of family circumstances and socio-economic backgrounds and that child to parent violence does not only take place in single parent, under-privileged and multi-stressed families (Gallagher 2004; Weinblatt & Omer 2008; Avrahim-Krehwinkel & Aldridge 2010). For example, in their review of the child to parent violence literature, Walsh and Krienert (2009) found research that indicated that 18% of two parent and 29% of one parent families in the US experience child to parent violence.

In research involving 485 adolescents in 8 schools in the Basque Country in Spain, Ibabe et al (2013) found that 21% of the young people involved in the study had been physically violent towards their parents (40% daughters and 60% sons) and 33% of them had used psychological violence towards a parent (44% daughters and 56% sons). It also seems that, similar to patterns that occur in domestic violence, mothers are more likely than fathers to be targets of child to parent violence, (Gallagher 2008; Wilcox 2012; Holt 2013), although some fathers experience child to parent violence (Pagani et al 2009). Some research suggests that child to parent violence occurs in two types of family environments. One type involves two parent families, often middle class well educated parents who are victimised by their over-entitled young people. The second type includes families in which mothers parenting their children alone are assaulted by their children in the wake of domestic violence (Gallagher 2004).

Why do some children use child to parent violence?

Since child to parent violence seems to take place in different type of family compositions, in different cultures and across different socio-economic backgrounds, is there any one factor that all these families seem to have in common? Omer (2004) and Omer and Weinblatt (2008) suggest that one characteristic shared by all families with children who use violence at home are escalation cycles (or patterns/ habit of interaction) that lead to violent and controlling behaviour. It seems that in some families, a cycle of escalation and coercion between parent and child may develop over time, in which increasing levels of aggression become part of a conflict pattern between the child and the parent within the family (Omer 2004; 2011), leading to incidents of child to parent violence. It seems that understanding and recognising these escalation habits is a key to breaking these conflict patterns. Since habits or patterns of interaction often develop unconsciously over time, practitioners can ask parents in a non-blaming way about habits of interaction that can lead to child to parent violence in their family. This approach also means that the practitioner and parents can work together in changing such patterns by identifying first the patterns of interaction and then the new skills within the NVR programme required to break the cycles of escalation that lead to child to parent violence in their families (Omer 2004; Weinblatt & Omer 2008).

In trying to understand the emergence of child to parent violence, some practitioners and researchers raise questions about the links between domestic violence or about mental health problems such as Conduct Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and child to parent violence. Some children who use violence towards their parents have experienced abuse themselves or have witnessed abuse of their mothers (Gallagher 2004). Cycle of violence theories presume that boys will react to domestic violence by acting out, using violence and other externalised behaviours while girls will react in a passive, submissive and internalised manner (Baker 2012).

In some families, habits of escalation cycles develop over the years which can lead to incidents of child to parent violence.

But there are complex reasons why children react to domestic violence in the ways that they do. Although undoubtedly some do, not all young people who experience domestic abuse at home re-enact violence in their relationships. As we saw earlier, men can also be targeted in child to parent violence and girls as well as boys can be violent towards their parents (Eckstein 2004; Pagani et al 2009; Ibabe et al 2013). Adopting an over-simplistic view of childhood and rushing to conclusions about the behaviour of all children who experience domestic abuse obscures the reality that each child is a distinct individual and each child who lives with domestic abuse and violence at home, experiences and responds to it differently.

Some children who are living with mental health problems where they display aggression and poor self-regulation, mental health diagnosis and who use child to parent violence could find that their violent or controlling behaviour is attributed to ADHD, Conduct Disorder or similar mental health diagnosis. This risks the unintended effect of excusing aggressive and violent behaviour and disempowering both the child and parent. It also obscures the painful experiences of parents living with the realities of child to parent violence in their everyday lives. An unintended consequence of a diagnosis of a mental health disorder could include an implicit (and mistaken) belief that the child using child to parent violence cannot learn the skills required to avoid the use of violence. Practitioners are familiar with the realities that with the right support, children living with ADHD and/ or other mental health diagnoses can and do develop the skills to regulate their behaviour. A conviction that children cannot develop such skills can disempower parents and children and risks prolonging experiences of helplessness, hopelessness and violence.

Children who have lived through experiences of abuse and violence and/ or who are living with the impact of mental health problems challenge practitioners and agencies to provide the kinds of individualised services that best meet their needs. But

practitioners experienced in working with children and families are well placed to recognise that understanding the emergence of violence does not mean excusing the use of violence. This also challenges practitioners to take all violence seriously (whether used by adults or children and young people). By attending to the support needs of those children and young people who have lived through complex challenges in the past while still challenging them and holding them to account for their abusive behaviour in the present, the practitioner can effectively address the problem of violence.

Understanding the pathways that can lead to child to parent violence does not mean accepting or excusing violent and controlling behaviour.

What is the Evidence Supporting the Use of NVR?

As we noted earlier, research about the problem of child to parent violence is at an early stage of development, leaving us without clear evidence on emergence of child to parent violence and about the effectiveness of different responses to this problem. The commitment of many psychotherapists and practitioners in Ireland to continuing professional development activities can be understood as representing a determination to provide individuals and families with interventions that have been demonstrated to have been effective. In reviewing the positive evidence behind interventions that work with parents of children with a wide range of behaviour problems, Lucas (2011) notes an over-emphasis on evidence based practice could inadvertently lead to the mistaken belief that simply because there is little or no evidence behind a particular programme then that programme is not likely to be effective. If practitioners are limited to only choosing those methods of intervention that have a significant weight of evidence for their effectiveness, then they cannot consider innovative approaches that have more recently arisen in response to need but about which there is not yet any published papers.

However, there is some evidence supporting the use of the NVR programme. For example, Weinblatt and Omer (2008) describe a short term intervention project in Tel Aviv that involved the parents of forty one families where children presented with aggressive behaviour problems towards their parents. Thirty two families had two parents and nine families had one parent households. The NVR programme was designed to assist parents develop a new awareness of their own role in (de)escalation cycles, new skills and a support network to help them change how they respond to child's destructive and violent behaviour. During the period of the intervention project, the parents reported less permissiveness and helplessness in their parenting style, a decrease in their escalatory behaviours, significant reductions in their children's escalatory behaviours and an increase in positive behaviours. Significantly for a parent focused intervention, only one parent failed to complete the programme and that the positive gains were maintained one month after the end of the intervention.

There is research evidence supporting the use of the NVR programme.

Gieniusz (2014) reviewed three studies (Wineblatt & Omer 2008, Ollefs et al 2009, Ollefs 2011 & Newman et al 2013) that explore the effectiveness of NVR as a response to children with violent and destructive behaviour. She reported that all of the studies show the NVR approach is effective in improving parental well-being, reducing parental helplessness and seem to lead to positive improvements in the behaviour of the child. Gieniusz (2014) also noted that the studies show improvement in behaviour typical for conduct disorder in adolescents after their parents took part in the NVR programme, that NVR is as effective in leading to change in adolescents as in younger children, that adopting the whole range of NVR techniques seem to make positive results more likely, and positive results occur over the relatively short-term intervention focus of the NVR programme.

Section C
Assessment and Engagement: Preparing to Use the NVR Programme with Parents

Introduction

This section outlines the assessment and engagement process that we suggest takes place before beginning the NVR programme with parents in either individual or group work sessions. As this handbook is not designed as a group work manual, it is expected that any practitioner who plans to use the Non Violent Resistance Programme in a group work format either has direct experience and training themselves as a group facilitator or can involve a colleague throughout their implementation of this programme who has such training and experience. Practitioners might also find it useful to refer to more extensive guides on group work practice and solution focused therapy such as those referenced in the list of recommended reading at the end of this handbook.

Initial engagement and assessment

The NVR Programme does not replace but rather compliments the existing skills of practitioners working with families and children. Assessment and engagement with the service user provide the fundamental basis of any intervention. We rely on the skill of practitioners and the wisdom of parents in decisions about how to commence work, agreeing goals of intervention and whether or not the NVR Programme might be useful for a specific family. Every agency and each practitioner can take a range of approaches to assessment and engagement with families and it is not our intention to prescribe assessment techniques to any practitioner. We are writing as social workers and a systemic psychotherapist and so our approaches to assessment and engagement rely on these perspectives and represent some ways (by no means the only ways) of commencing work with parents and families. The questions and suggestions that follow are approaches that we have found helpful in beginning our work with parents and families in the context of violence in the family.

It could become a routine part of everyday practice for practitioners to ask all service users in a safe and respectful way about whether they feel unsafe at home.

Before asking parents to commit to taking part in the Non Violent Resistance Programme (in either group work or one to one sessions), it seems useful to schedule one or two assessment and engagement sessions. We suggest that it could become a routine part of everyday practice for practitioners to ask all service users in a safe and respectful way about whether they feel unsafe at home. In some cases, a service user might dismiss such a question in an initial session (perhaps out of fear, embarrassment or uncertainty) but return to it later in their work with the practitioner. Asking about it indicates to the service user that the practitioner is able to speak with them about experiences of violence and controlling behaviour at home. It lies outside the remit of this handbook to describe best agency policy and responses to a disclosure by any member of a family about feeling unsafe at home, but we advise that these kinds of questions are asked only when practitioners are clear about the support and advice that they can offer (including on-ward referrals to specialist agencies where relevant) and their obligations within and beyond the agency in which they work.

Who attends the sessions?

Mothers and fathers play fundamental roles in the growth and development of their child. We advise that especially where there is child to parent violence taking place, both parents should be actively encouraged to attend the assessment/ engagement and the NVR sessions, including parents that are separated but where both parents are regularly involved in their child's life. In a minority of cases, parents report that they cannot be in the same room as their former partner. Where this is the case, the practitioner, with the agreement of both parents, can meet with the parents in separate sessions as they progress through the Non Violent Resistance Programme. The involvement of two parents is not a requirement for the success of the NVR

programme, so parents who are parenting alone can be confident that they can benefit from participating in the NVR programme (e.g. Weinblatt & Omer 2008). But the programme will have a greater chance of success where two parents who are actively involved in a child's life both take part in the NVR programme and both agree on the key principles of the programme.

The initial assessment and engagement session(s) provide the parent with the space to talk about their experiences of child to parent violence. It also gives the practitioner the opportunity to clarify the nature and extent of the problems with which the family is living. This is especially the case when the problem of child to parent violence is the explicit reason for referral to the practitioner. But this is not always the case. A family may be referred to a service for identified problems that might fit with the agency's explicit referral criteria yet with little clear indication that child to parent violence is taking place. A parent's experience of child to parent violence may remain hidden until the parent has the confidence that he/ she can speak with the practitioner about the realities with which they are living. When a parent discloses their experiences of child to parent violence, the practitioner is challenged to respond in a helpful and supportive way. We suggest that the practitioner pauses the usual assessment procedures normally followed and asks the parent about the nature and extent of the problem with which they are living.

How do I assess the nature and extent of child to parent violence in a family?

One useful way to explore experiences of violence at home is to ask questions about the activities and areas of the home from which the parent feels excluded or banned due to the threat of violence or controlling behaviour (see Section F in this handbook for a useful resource for this exercise). Parents are often surprised at the kinds of "rules" set by their son/ daughter that they have internalised and sometimes unconsciously follow, such as provision of transport on demand or not talking with friends their child invites to the home. The practitioner can ask about who else knows about the problem (frequently at this point, no one else does), what other services, if any, are already involved with the family and who the parent confides in or relies on for support. Completing a genogram (or basic family tree) can be useful in getting a sense of family and friendship relationships. It is also important to ask the parent about what he/she/ they hope will be different after they have spoken to you about these problems and how would they know that the sessions have been useful for them. It can also be helpful to provide the parent with some information about the nature and extent of child to parent violence, as outlined in Section B in this handbook. This seems to begin a process of release for parents from persistent feelings of self-blame and isolation.

Parents are often surprised at the kinds of "rules" set by their son/ daughter that they have internalised and unconsciously follow.

Taking a solution focused approach to practice which assumes that service users have strengths and that there are always exceptions to problem behaviour (or sometimes something works/ sometimes things are a little better), a practitioner can also include as part of the assessment/ initial engagement process, questions about what parents have tried to resolve the problem that has worked on occasion.

A brief outline of the NVR programme for parents

The practitioner can then give a brief overview of the NVR programme and ask the parent to think about committing to the NVR programme, described as an evidence supported, brief, structured and respectful response to the problem of child to parent violence. The initial assessment and engagement process can take either one or two sessions, but between sessions, the practitioner can invite the parent(s) to experiment with a "thinking task" between this and the next session. For example, the practitioner can ask parents to think about what they have in their lives at the moment that they would like to continue to have when the problems are resolved or when there is no longer violence at home, what will be taking place instead? By the end of the initial

assessment and engagement process, the practitioner and parent will have begun to discuss the specific goals or behaviours that the parents hope to see an end of in their family. When the referral to the practitioner has come from another team/ service, it is helpful for the practitioner and the parents to agree that the practitioner will contact the referrer to outline the agreed goals of the work together and the focus on the NVR programme.

Section D
Session Plans for both Groups and Individual Sessions

Introduction

This section gives an overview of a session by session plan for the Non Violent Resistance Programme that could be used in either a group work or in sessions with parents. It includes some advice for practitioners on the implementation of the programme session by session based on experience and on research. As we noted earlier, this handbook is not designed as a group work manual, so it is expected that any practitioner who plans to use the NVR Programme in a group work format either has direct experience and training themselves as a group facilitator or can involve a colleague throughout their implementation of this programme who has such training and experience. Practitioners might also find it useful to refer to more extensive guides on group work practice and solution focused therapy such as those referenced in the list of recommended reading at the end of this handbook.

This section also includes detailed descriptions of the different key elements of the NVR Programme in the order that seems to work best in session with parents, either during group or individual sessions.

Parents reflections on what seems to work

Listening to what parents tell us, it seems there are a number of key ingredients where the NVR Programme makes a difference. For example, parents often report that although it does take practice, they manage develop a new habit to "press the pause button" and not respond to their son or daughter's violence or threats of violence in the same way as they had before. Many parents remark that their changes in how they respond to their child seems to lead to welcome changes in the frequency and intensity of their son or daughter's aggressive and violent behaviour. Parents also positively report the benefits of making the formal announcement of their commitment to non violence and of resistance to violent and controlling behaviour. Before they take the step of making the announcement, parents find it helpful to build up their support network (including for example grandparents, perhaps adult siblings, trusted friends and in some cases practitioners), telling them about the problems they have had with violence at home, their plan to commit to the NVR Programme and to announce this commitment at home. Parents are often surprised and encouraged by the supportive responses from those they told about their plans and the programme. Such positive reactions often reinforce a parent's commitment to non violence and their determination to implement the programme in full.

Although it does take practice, parents tell us they manage to develop a new habit to "press the pause button" and not respond to their son or daughter's violence or threats of violence in the same way as they had before.

Positive parental presence, refusal to follow orders and breaking of taboos also seem to represent an important turning point for parents as they become responsible for how they relate and react to their child. Some parents have also chosen to use the Protest Sit in, with positive outcomes. In the concluding stages of the NVR programme, parents often refer back to their feelings of optimism and hope created during the first session when the programme was outlined: they talk about feeling encouraged by an approach which re-assured parents that while their child's violence was not their fault, there was something concrete they could do (the elements of the Non Violence Resistance Programme described in this handbook) and that they would have the support of the practitioner throughout the programme and of the support network. Parents are often encouraged to hear that the programme is a structured and brief intervention, lasting up to ten sessions, and involves parents in a respectful way.

Although there is a clearly structured approach to the Non Violent Resistance Programme, as we outline the session guide below, we do not intend to be prescriptive. Practitioners can sense in their work with parents when to progress to the next topic/ theme for a group work or individual session and when to slow the pace

of the session to create space for a parent to experience the sense of being heard and respected. Although each session described below has an indicated theme, we recognise the wisdom of the practitioner and the need of the parent will influence progress through these themes. However, there is a logical order of themes to follow whether you are working with a group or in individual sessions. We would suggest for example that it makes sense that parents discuss the theme of the support network and begin to develop a support network before discussing in depth the theme of the announcement.

We have already mentioned that the Non Violent Resistance Programme does not replace but rather compliments the existing skills of practitioners working with families and children. As we describe the session structure of the NVR Programme in this section, we do not intend to insist that practitioners or parents must follow a particular set of principles in a particular order. But it does seem that the commitment to non-violence and resistance, increased parental presence, the development of the support network, the family announcement and acts of reconciliation are key ingredients that help bring about changes in the patterns of interaction between parents and children that have led to violence in the past.

It also seems important to clarify that the approach we describe to implementing NVR in practice is not the only response to child to parent violence (other responses are described in Sheehan (1997) and Gallagher (2004)), nor indeed are we describing the only interpretation of the NVR approach. A more comprehensive description of NVR is available for example in Omer (2004; 2011) and alternative interpretations of NVR in practice are described in Wilson and Smith (2014) and Jakob (2014). However, what we offer here is our interpretation of NVR, based on our work with parents and families in different contexts and in individual and group sessions. It is also based on the discussions we have had with and feedback from practitioners that have taken part in the 2 day training programme on Non Violent Resistance Programme for Practitioners.

The Core Elements of the NVR Programme.

Before we describe a session by session structure for the NVR programme, we will take a few moments to review a summary of the core elements.

- Parental Commitment to Non Violent Resistance: parents commit to resisting violence and to avoid violence when responding to their child, regardless of the provocation. This includes parents committing to avoiding verbal as well as physical aggression.

- De-escalation Skills: the development of parental self-management and self-calming skills to de-escalate and avoid unnecessary confrontations.

- Increased Parental Presence: changing the ways in which a parent is present in their child's life and re-focusing interactions away from persistent conflict.

- The Support Network: the parents' disclosure about the extent of the problem of violence with a number of significant people who they also invite to be part of a support network, such as grand-parents, aunts and/or uncles, or friends.

- Family Announcement: an announcement to the family that violence at home will no longer be tolerated (during the announcement, the type of violence is clearly specified)

- Acts of Reconciliation: spontaneous unearned treats offered by parents to the child.

- Refusing Orders & Breaking Taboos: reinstating activities that parents have felt they could not do such as visiting the child's room, talking with friends who visit or watching the television in the sitting room.

- The Sit-In: a dramatic break with habits of the past and a clear demonstration of parental commitment to non-violent resistance.

Session Structure

Although different themes are suggested for different sessions, it seems to work best that group and individual sessions follow a routine structure – this seems to facilitate parent learning as well as practitioner ease with the programme as the practitioner does not have to devote additional time to working out exactly how to structure each and every session. We do not insist that practitioners follow this schedule as outlined below, but it is one that we have found seems to work.

A. Introduction/ welcome – the practitioner(s) meets the parent(s) and welcomes then to the session, engaging them in informal conversation. (5-10 minutes)

B. Review of interval (the space between this and the previous session) – the practitioner(s) signals the beginning of the NVR session by asking what has been different since the previous session and asks for comment on the "thinking task" or activity that parents were invited to consider between the sessions. This is also an opportunity for the parent(s) and the practitioner(s) to discuss any parent-child conflict that may have taken place and the ways in which the parent(s) responded to these incidents. (25-30 minutes)

C. Introduction of New Theme – the practitioner(s) introduces and outlines the theme relevant to the session, as detailed below. (5 minutes).

D. Discussion of New Theme – the parents and the practitioner(s) discuss the parent's responses to the theme and explore the implications of this theme in their family relationships. (25-30 minutes).

E. Skills Practice/ Role Play (and/or group exercise where relevant) – this provides parents an opportunity to practice, in a safe context, some of the skills that they will develop throughout the NVR course and to receive constructive and positive feedback from the practitioners. (25-30 minutes).

F. Hand-outs/ Planning for Next Session/ Week – the practitioner(s) share with parents any hand-outs / information might be useful for parents to have between sessions, discuss with parents what might be a useful relevant task for parents to consider in the interval between sessions and signals the themes that will be discuss during the next session. (10 minutes).

G. Evaluation – particularly in group sessions, the use of evaluation forms help practitioners get a sense of the "fit" between their approach and the expectations and experiences of parents (which also leads to continued attendance and completion of the programme). In one to one or one to two sessions, we encourage the practitioner to find ways of seeking feedback from parents about how they are experiencing the process of the session, whether there is something missing that could be included during the next session and whether there was a particular comment, idea or question that stays with them as the session draws to a close.

H. Tea/ coffee (where NVR is run as a group work intervention).

l. Post session review – a short period after each session where the practitioners meet to review the session and plan the next one is usually part of all group work processes. When a practitioner is working with parents on an individual session basis, we suggest that it is useful for the practitioner to schedule some time to reflect on (or to discuss with a colleague or supervisor) each NVR session.

We include suggested time slots for each of these elements for when the NVR programme is run as a group work programme but we are conscious that the demands of each different group means that these time slots can only be guidelines and can be adapted as practitioners and parents work together. When the NVR programme is provided as part of individual sessions, the individual practitioner can best judge how to pace the session but naturally less time will be needed for the different components of the session as there will be a much smaller number of people taking part in the session.

Session 1: Commitment to NVR, Goals and De-escalation Skills

The NVR programme, session 1, begins once the parent has committed to non violence and has agreed to try the NVR programme for up to 10 sessions. As noted earlier in Section C, the assessment and engagement process will have already taken place and the practitioner will have a clear idea of the nature and extent of child to parent violence in this family, the ways in which parents respond to incidents of child to parent violence and the goals that parents have for their participation in the NVR programme. The parents will also have been asked to think about committing to Non Violent Resistance and to commit themselves to avoiding the use of violent actions or words in their relationship with their child. Near the beginning of the first NVR session, the practitioner asks parents about what they have thought about the outline of NVR and whether they can commit to the NVR programme for up to ten sessions. One of the challenges for parents and for practitioners inherent in working with children and families is maintaining a focus on the objectives of the NVR programme - focusing on the actions of the parents, resisting violence and ending violence at home. Additional problems may clamour for the attention of the parents and the practitioner – for example school refusal, drug/ alcohol mis-use, an increase in acting out behaviour outside the home leading to the involvement of a Juvenile Liaison Officer, or child protection and welfare concerns. Having committed to the NVR programme for up to ten sessions, parents are reminded that additional concerns need to be addressed elsewhere (either within the same service or through work with another service) and that the focus of the work at the moment is on the NVR programme. In exceptional circumstances, the parent and practitioner can negotiate a one session pause on the NVR programme while they focus on an urgent issue with the understanding that the NVR work will resume at the next session.

One of the challenges for parents and for practitioners is maintaining a focus on the objectives of the NVR programme - focusing on the actions of the parents, resisting violence and ending violence at home.

It is not unusual for parents who have been living with child to parent violence to find it difficult to quickly name clear and concrete goals other than a hope for it to be better. If this has not taken place by the end of the assessment/ engagement process, then during the first NVR session, the practitioner helps parents develop goals that are clear and specific ("an end to hurtful name-calling and shouting and no more hitting and kicking" for example) rather that general and vague (such as "I just wish he was good" or "I want to have a better relationship"). The challenge for the practitioner then is to gently open out the conversation so that the parent can identify what it is that they hope will be different. For example, in response to a parent's statement about wanting a better relationship, a practitioner could ask something like "When your relationship with your son/ daughter is better/ different, how will you know it's different? What will be happening instead? What will you both do differently?"

If this has not already been completed during the assessment/ engagement process, the practitioner asks the parent about patterns of child to parent violence during the first NVR session – when is it most likely that incidents of child to parent violence occur and in what ways have parents responded to their child's provocative, violent or controlling behaviour? This leads to another task for the practitioner during the first session of NVR, which is to introduce the parent to new skills to help de-escalate situations and to interrupt cycles of escalation that may have developed over the years. One of the most important de-escalation strategy is the skill of "pressing the pause" button - this means that parents commit to not responding immediately to a crisis or outburst. Instead they commit to remaining calm and to stating calmly to the child that the behaviour will be dealt with later when they and the child are calm. Near the beginning stages of the NVR programme, parents frequently report that they insist that their child talks to them when a crisis emerges. They may follow their child around the house "to give them a piece of my mind" – even though their experience tells them that this "adding fuel to the fire" is not effective and often leads to child to parent violence in their family. "Pressing the pause button" gives the parent the opportunity to think in a calm way about how they would like to respond to their child's behaviour, rather than getting caught up in an escalation cycle that could lead to violence. The principle of parental self-control and delayed responses to provocative behaviour is a

"Pressing the Pause Button" means that a parent consciously chooses not to respond to a crisis immediately but pauses to consider the best response and returns to dealing with the incident at a time of their choosing when they and the child are calm.

cornerstone of both the Parents Plus Programme and the Non Violence Resistance programme – see Sharry & Fitzpatrick (2004) and Omer (2004; 2011). In the NVR literature, this strategy is also referred to as "striking while the iron is COLD", though of course, it is made clear to parents that striking here is an explanatory image, not an encouragement to hit their child!

For example, 14 year old "Justin" arrives home at 2am in the morning, much later than the time agreed when he left home the previous evening. As he approaches the door of his home, Justin is getting himself ready to argue with his Mum or Dad who he knows will be waiting up for him. Meanwhile, at home, the parent is worried and angry that yet again Justin has broken an agreement. The parent is determined to wait up until Justin returns home to demand an explanation and insist on an apology. In this example, both parties are preparing for conflict and to defend their position. It is likely that this scenario will lead to an incident of violence in families where child to parent violence has already taken place. With the NVR Programme, the parent chooses a calm and controlled response, tells their son/ daughter that they are not happy with what has happened and that they will talk about this problem later the next day or at some time later when the parent and child are calm. Parents may also find it helpful to practice some calming self-talk, similar to a mantra that they can repeat to themselves, such as "I will not be provoked. I will remain calm".

Following discussion of this new technique, it can be helpful for the practitioner to role play the application of "pressing the pause button" in a scenario suggested by the parents. In group work sessions, small groups of parents can discuss and then role play a scenario suggested by the practitioners in the same small groups. Following this the practitioner(s) lead a review the session, highlighting important comments and providing positive and constructive feedback to parents. The parents are then invited to think about practising pressing the pause button between this and the next session and the theme for the following session is highlighted.

Session 2 – the Support Network

Near the beginning of second and each following session, the practitioner can begin with a review of the interval period between the sessions by asking about what went well between sessions, what was different, what would parent like to see more of? Sometimes a parent could report that things have stayed the same and that nothing has really changed. The practitioner could then respond with curiosity and ask about what is that the parent did to prevent things from getting worse. On other occasions, a parent could report that things have become much worse. When this occurs, the practitioner responds by asking about what did the parent do that prevented things from getting much worse and about what is it that the parent would like from today's session. There are some suggestions below for how the practitioner might respond if the parent states that there has been violence at home since the previous session.
Early in the second (and following) sessions, the practitioner can also ask about the parents' responses to the task agreed at the end of the previous session. In a modelling of the "influence not control" dynamic that is integral to the NVR programme, the practitioner's response to a parent's non-completion of the task is not anger or frustration but rather a curiosity about what happened. Perhaps the task was too complex, perhaps the task was too challenging or perhaps the opportunity to practice the agreed task did not arise. A positive response or a negative response from parents to the previously agreed task then leads to the same reaction from the practitioner – curiosity. During the second NVR session, the practitioner can ask whether the parent had any further thoughts about "pressing the pause button" or any other de-escalation strategies they might have occurred to them. It is not unusual at this stage for parents to report that they have quietly begun to remain calm and not allow themselves to become provoked into the familiar cycle of escalation. This provides the practitioner an opportunity to ask detailed questions about how the parent was successful in breaking what may have been an escalation habit of many years and what did they notice was different as a result of this change in their behaviour.

Following a review of the interval between sessions and a discussion of the agreed tasks, the practitioner asks about whether anyone in the family used violence in between the sessions. If the answer is "yes", the practitioner avoids the temptation to ask detailed questions about what happened and who was to blame, as these kinds of questions can seem to excuse violence (e.g. "he wouldn't have hit him if she left him alone") or blame parents. The important focus at this moment is not on the behaviour of the child but instead on the parent's responses and what they/ he/she did well and would now rather do differently. The parent might report that she shouted back and pushed the son out the front door, slamming the door on his face. In this case, the practitioner can ask how the parent feels about this reaction now, in the cold light of day and whether they might have done something differently if they could go back to that time again.

If the answer to the question about whether anyone had used violence in the intervening period is "no", the practitioner compliments the parent and asks how that happened. The practitioner can explain that it is highly unlikely that violent behaviour suddenly stops spontaneously. It is more likely that someone did something differently to influence this and it is important that this is noticed in this family. This can sometimes lead to parents reporting, after a pause, something like "oh yes, I tried that pause button thing" or "now I remember, I just began to say 'hello' in the morning and ask 'how have things been?'". By encouraging the parents to identify what it was that they did differently, the practitioner facilitates the development of parental confidence and competence.

At this stage of the second NVR session, the practitioner introduces the main theme for this session, which is the support network. As is the case with any form of abuse in the home, silence perpetuates the violence. The practitioner encourages the parents to tell others, such as grand-parents, aunts and/or uncles, or anyone who they feel can be a support to them as parents about the extent of the problem of violence and

their own commitment to ending the violence at home. This can also include people such as other practitioners and friends and family who might live far away – one of the advantages of living in a world with facilities such as email, internet phone/ video calling services, instant messaging and social media sites. Some parents may find it very hard to identify someone to act as a member of an NVR support network – perhaps for example they have very little contact with their families of origin. The practitioner can then broaden the scope of inquiry about the networks that the parent is involved with – perhaps the parent is involved in a charitable agency, attends a support group, or regularly attends a religious service. Perhaps there are other professionals with whom the parent is involved who could play some role as an NVR support network person. Although it is the parents who choose who to include in the support network and the consent of the son or daughter is not sought, it can be helpful to include in the support network at least one person to whom the child feels close.

The members of the Support Network are asked by the parent to share with the child (at an agreed time) that they know about the violence that takes place at home and that they support their parent's and the family's efforts to bring about an end to it. Before the parent approaches potential members of the support network, the practitioner discusses with the parents the kind of support they might like from different members of their support network. It is likely that the kind of support available from a coach, a teacher or another practitioner, for example, would be very different from that available from a close relative who lives in the same area. One mother described an example of her involvement in the support network of her sister who lived nearby. She outlined how she asked her sister to change how she acted if she called her to help with her 12 year old son who assaulted her regularly and called her hurtful names repeatedly. In session with a practitioner using the NVR programme, the mother worked out the kind of support she would like from her sister, role played this with the practitioner and then asked her sister to support her by calmly coming to the house and speaking with her son (rather than shouting and screaming at him). This mother later described her feelings of confidence and surprise when her sister did as she had been asked which led to a positive change in her son's behaviour. The mother also said it helped that her sister was his favourite aunt.

One mother described her feelings of confidence and surprise when her sister did as she had been asked which led to a positive change in her son's behaviour. The mother also said it helped that her sister was his favourite aunt.

Members of the support network do not have to provide the kind of direct involvement that the mother described in the example above. Parents can ask members of the support network to be involved by text, by cards/ letters or by instant messaging, social media sites or through internet phone/ video services, so that those who live very far away can be part of the support network, if the parent believes they can play a helpful role. For example, another mother asked her mother (the child's maternal grandmother) to send a card to her daughter to whom she had not spoken to since the daughter started being physically violent towards her mother. The grandmother sent a card to the young girl, stating that she still loved her, that she agreed with her mother that the violence at home must stop and that she hoped the girl would help her mother put an end to violence in the home. The mother reported that this card had a positive impact on her daughter and she believed this played a big part in helping to end the violence at home.

Externalising the problem – the problem is the problem, not the child

Parents may initially be reluctant to consider developing a support network through telling others about child to parent violence. They might feel they risk criticism and exposure and might want to avoid giving their son or daughter a bad name. But one of the significant elements of the NVR programme is that the problem of violence is externalised so that the problem is the behaviour and not the child. Whenever the child is spoken with by parents or support network members about the problem, the message is reinforced that the specific violence and abuse (for example threats of harm, hurtful name-calling, hitting) must end, that the parents are also committed to

respect and resisting violence and that they are seeking their child's suggestions about how to end the violence.

The focus is on the violence as a problem rather than the child as a problem.

The focus is on the violence as a problem rather than the child as a problem. In other words, the problem is the problem; the child is not the problem. This way of thinking and talking about a problem, called "externalising the problem", derives from the field of narrative and family therapy. Our experiences of working with parents to help their children with all kinds of problems that lead to referrals to a range children and family services are reflected in the comment of Lundby (2014). He remarks that this approach is especially useful in his work with families and "many of the parents we have been working with tell us that externalising the problem is the single most important thing they experienced in our work together" (31). Externalising the problem is a deliberate attempt by the practitioner and by parents to see the child as distinct and separate from the concerning problem. In families where child to parent violence takes place, the problem then is not the son or daughter but the specific problems that concern the parents and others – for example, hitting, pushing, name-calling, bullying, threats of self-harm as a method of controlling others. The problem can be regarded by parents and practitioners almost like an uninvited guest to the family or an infection that can be dealt with (Lundby 2014). Making a distinction between the child (and the family) from the problem means that the child (and family) is no longer defined by the problem. This in turn creates the potential for the practitioner and the family to think and act differently in relation to the problem (McLuckie 2006). It also helps parents and family members to find ways of avoiding blaming or criticising each other and to blame and criticise the problem as it leads to a new optimism and hope. This process seems to help parents find new strengths and to become open to new ideas about how to respond to the problem (Lundby 2014).

When the practitioner and the parent discuss the involvement of the support network in session 2 of the NVR programme, talking about the problem in this way also helps parents feel more comfortable about telling others about the nature and extent of the problem of child to parent violence in the family. The focus of the conversation then that the parents can practice in a role play on talking with the support network or in discussion about this with the practitioner is not on our bad/ violent son/ daughter but on what the (specified) violence does to our family and our determination (and responsibility) as parents to take the lead role in bringing it to an end.

At this stage of the second session, the practitioner leads a review of the session, highlighting important comments and providing positive and constructive feedback to parents. The parents are then invited to carry out a thinking task between this and the next session: for example, parents could be invited to think about whom to involve in the support network and how best to involve them. If the parents are eager to begin recruiting the support network right away, the practitioner encourages them to do this. The practitioner also advises them to let the support network members know that they should not contact the child about this until the parents are ready to make the announcement and have asked them to make contact in support of the parents' commitment to ending violence. If the parents are not keen to begin recruiting the support network at this point or are still uncertain about the idea, the practitioner can encourage them to reflect on this in the interval between the session and return to this discussion near the beginning of the third session.

Before the end of the second NVR session, the practitioner refers to the theme of the next session, which is Increased Parental Presence.

Session 3: Increased Parental Presence

As noted earlier, all the sessions after the first session follow the same pattern. For example, after the initial welcome and informal conversation, session 3 begins with practitioner leading a review of the interval period between the sessions. The practitioner asks about what went well between sessions, what was different, what would the parent like to see more of? There is also a discussion about the parent's responses to the task that was agreed at the end of the second session and about whether or not violence has been used at home in the period between the sessions. Some possible responses from parents and some avenues that the practitioner might explore are detailed in this section of session two above and are not repeated here.

Focusing on the theme of parental presence, one of the devastating consequences of child to parent violence on family relationships is that almost all interactions between parent and child become negative and filled with hostile intent. Contact between the parent and child, understandably, becomes minimal. The NVR programme and increased parent presence help to change this dynamic in the parent-child relationship and lays the foundation for an end to child to parent violence. Increasing parental presence invites parents to find ways to make positive and perhaps unexpected connections with their child. In this session, practitioners can explore with parents the ways in which child to parent violence has negatively changed the parent-child relationship and led them to withdraw from interaction with their child. The practitioner can ask about the kinds of positive differences in their relationship with their child that they would like to see and ask them about how they think they could increase their positive presence in their child's life.

Some suggestions that parents have tried include increasing their presence in their child's life by sending text messages or making quick calls just to say hello, by knocking and opening the door to their child's room as they pass by, by asking more questions about their child's daily life, about where they go and what they do. It is not expected that a son or daughter will then respond with smiles and gratitude. They may in fact respond with silence or shouting. But such acts convey the message that the parent is once again a parent whose duty it is to take an interest in their child and will gradually lead to a change in the relationship dynamic. The point of this strategy is not to make the child behave nicely and to express warm feelings towards the parent but to assist the parents to develop the skill of positive parental presence and the skill of persisting with a positive parental activity in the face of perhaps opposition or rejection. If some acts of increased parental presence are more likely to lead to increased levels of aggression, the parents can choose instead to do more of the acts of parental presence that are less likely to have this effect.

Increased parental presence conveys the message that the parent is once again a parent whose duty it is to take an interest in their child. It gradually leads to a change in the relationship dynamic.

During an NVR review meeting towards the end of the NVR programme (described later in this section), an adolescent girl whose parents took part in the Non Violent Resistance programme described how she was at first baffled (and for weeks persisted with a passive aggressive attitude towards her father's positive phone contact). She later acknowledged that she quite liked the fact that her father called her on her phone for a quick hello. Previously their only telephone contact followed complaints from school or from her mother. Both parents and the daughter described that her father's persistence with positive phone contact and with new skills of de-escalation were key ingredients in changing their relationship dynamic. They reported that the de-escalation skills which he had developed as part of the NVR programme contributed to bringing an end to child to parent violence in their family.

At this point in the session the practitioner will have discussed with parents

a. the ways in which child to parent violence has changed the parent-child relationship,
b. explored the ways parents can begin to re-establish connections with their child
c. and provided the parents with information about increased parental presence.

The practitioner can now invite parents to take part in a role play or in a discussion about how they might implement increased parental presence in their family. This provides parents with an opportunity to practice new skills and to discuss in a safe environment any concerns they might have about this strategy.

Following this, the practitioner leads a review the session following a pattern outlined at the end of session 2. The practitioner highlights important comments, provides positive and constructive feedback and encourages them to carry out a thinking or action task between this and the next session: for example, parents could be asked to begin to increase their presence in their child's life in one or two of the ways discussed earlier in session 3.
As session 3 of the NVR programme comes to an end, the practitioner refers to the theme of the next session, which is the Announcement.

Session 4: The Announcement

This is an announcement to the whole family that violence at home will no longer be tolerated and that there are a number of (specified) people who are supporting the parents in ending the violence at home. Omer (2004) remarks that the announcement is a turning point for the whole family. It represents parents' declaration of commitment to non violent resistance and of commitment to themselves, their supporters and to their children. Parents tend to expect that their child will react with either indifference or hostility to the announcement. Session 4 of the NVR programme prepares the parents to take this significant step and to plan for the response of their children to the announcement.

Session 4 begins with what will be now a familiar process for the parents. After the initial welcome and informal conversation, the practitioner leads a review of the interval period between the sessions. The practitioner asks about what went well between sessions, what was different, what would parent like to see more of? There is also a discussion about the parent's responses to the task that was agreed at the end of the third session and about whether or not violence has been used at home in the period between the sessions. Some possible responses from parents and some avenues that the practitioner might explore are detailed in this section of session two above and are not repeated here.

The parent gathers the family together and states that the whole family, including the parent, will no longer accept the use of violent language or behaviours.

The practitioner introduces the theme for this session, once the following steps have been completed:

a. In session with the practitioner, the parent has committed to non-violence in their relationship with their child,
b. The parent has discussed with the practitioner how to avoid escalation and has practised skills of de-escalation and increased positive parental presence
c. The parent has put the Support Network in place.

Then the parent is in a position to make the Announcement. This takes place at a time of the parent's choosing and when there is a period of calm at home (and not in response to an incident of violent or controlling behaviour). The parent gathers the family together and states that the whole family, including the parent, will no longer accept the use of violent language or behaviours. The tone is a clear and non-threatening announcement of a change in parental behaviour. It is change from acceptance of to resistance to violent and controlling behaviour. The specific types of violence and abuse that have been problems for the family are identified. As part of the announcement, a parent could say for example:

"I am no longer putting up with constant name-calling, screaming and punching. I will never do any of these things myself. Here are the names and numbers of the people who are helping us stop violence and abuse at home..."

As part of the announcement, the parent can make clear that it is not their intention to control their child but it is their duty as a parent to resist the violence they described. Regardless of the response to the announcement by the child who has been using child to parent violence, the parent does not become involved in any discussion about the merits of this new approach. The aim of the announcement is not to convince the child that there is a problem of violence in the family or to secure their agreement to the programme.

This is a hugely significant step for parents as it is an announcement of a change in family habits, which may well be challenged by the child who uses child to parent violence. Many parents find it helpful to have the statement written out so that they can read it to their gathered family. Parents, especially those who are parenting alone

or parents who believe their child may use violence following the announcement, can find it useful to have a member of the support network present as they read out the announcement.

Soon after the announcement, supporters contact the child who has used abusive behaviour/ violence saying they know about the abuse/ violence and are committed to helping them and their parent(s) stop the violence. In one NVR group, parents reflected on the usefulness of the Announcement during a follow up group meeting. For example, one parent said "I think the announcement has worked cos now and again he will say to me "look I am not stoned" or "I didn't do anything" so I think it's getting through to him that he knows he is not allowed into my house if he is not himself. So he's taken it on board. It is getting in there slowly but surely." (Parent 5 from a NVR focus group original transcript).

The practitioner discusses with the parents the specific content of the announcement that they would like to make to their family. It is helpful for the practitioner to bear in mind that since this is a step filled with foreboding for many parents, it may take up to two sessions before the parent feels ready to make the announcement. It can also be useful at this point in the programme to suggest a role play with parents about how they would make the announcement in their family and what they might do following the responses they expect from their child.

Following an in-depth discussion about the announcement and the implications of it for their family, the practitioner leads a review the session, highlighting important comments, and providing positive and constructive feedback to parents. A role play where possible can be very useful as many parents report that this is a particularly helpful exercise before making the announcement at home. The practitioner listens to any concerns the parents might have expressed about the announcement and discusses these with the parents. Although the parent might feel a little anxious about making the announcement, he/ she might still believe that they could be in a position to make the announcement in the interval between the two sessions. If this is the case, the practitioner encourages them to do this while advising them to contact the support network members in advance of the announcement. The parents ask the support network to contact the child by phone, text, social media message or by visiting them at an agreed time very soon after the parents have made the announcement. If the parents are reluctant to make the announcement soon or are still uncertain about the idea, the practitioner can encourage them to reflect in the interval between the sessions on the potential benefits for their family of making the announcement. They are also invited to think about the ways in which any hesitation they might have about making the announcement could be resolved. The practitioner can also make a note to return to this discussion near the beginning of the next session.

Before the end of this session, the practitioner also refers to the theme of the next session, which is Acts of Reconciliation.

Session 5: Acts of Reconciliation

The next session of the NVR programme follows the familiar pattern of the previous sessions. After the initial welcome and informal conversation, the practitioner leads a review of the interval period between the sessions by asking about what went well between sessions, what was different, what would parent like to see more of? There is also a discussion about the parent's responses to the task that was agreed at the end of the third session and about whether or not violence has been used at home in the period between the sessions. Perhaps the parent might have committed at the end of the previous session to make an announcement at home before this session yet she/ he reports that the announcement was not made. In response to this, the practitioner adopts the kind of approach outlined in session 2 – curiosity and support. If the parent did not feel in a position to commit to making the announcement at the end of the previous session, the practitioner can return to this theme and if needed, devote a significant amount of time in this current session to discussion, to role play and to re-assurance in relation to the announcement. If the parent did make an announcement, the practitioner asks about how the parent managed to make the announcement, how they prepared for it and how they reacted to any responses of their children to the announcement.

"I liked the reconciliation gestures because it works out more positive for me and it's easier to talk to him and get on with him. It's a lot healthier than fighting."

(Parent from an NVR group)

If the parent did make the announcement in the interval between the sessions, the practitioner can guide the conversation to the next part of the session – the introduction of the main theme for the session: Acts of Reconciliation. Omer (2004) notes that research on escalation and aggression shows that Acts of Reconciliation reduce mutual aggression and improves relationships. Parents who have used Acts of Reconciliation also report that these Acts help change for the better their interactions with their child. They can also be seen as another way in which parents can actively use positive parental presence. Acts of Reconciliation are simply offers for activities or treats by parents that are not connected to any behaviour, good or bad by the child. They are not earned by good behaviour and, once offered, they are not withdrawn due to bad behaviour. They are offered by the parent at any moment that they feel is a suitable time. For example, a parent can offer to take the child the cinema to see a film the parent suspects the child will like, or rent their favourite movie or offer to cook their favourite food or get their preferred take-out food. There are no strings attached to the offer so if the child refuses the offer, this should not become a focus of a dispute. The goal of the Act of Reconciliation is for the parent to make the offer and let the child know they are valued for no other reason than they are their child. As part of the NVR programme, the parent moves from either almost complete withdrawal from interaction with or constant confrontation with their child to more positive and more active involvement through increased Parental Presence and Acts of Reconciliation. Parents seem to particularly like this element of the NVR programme as it releases them from feeling like the "bad guy", insisting on rules all the time. As one parent taking part in an NVR group said "I liked the reconciliation gestures because it works out more positive for me and we seem to be getting on a lot better now and it's easier to talk to him and get on with him. It's a lot healthier than fighting." (Parent 3- from a NVR focus group original transcript).

Following a discussion about Acts of Reconciliation, the practitioner can encourage parents to think about how they might apply this in their own lives and relationships with their child. Role plays and/ or in group work, small group discussions offer parents the opportunity to tease out how these new ideas might be received in their family and how they might then respond.

The practitioner then guides the focus of the conversation to reviewing the session where the practitioner highlights important comments, provides positive and constructive feedback to parents and explores with parents any concerns that might have been expressed. The parents are invited to engage in thinking or action tasks that follow logically from the discussions that took place during the session. The session draws to a close with the practitioner indicating the theme for the following session – refusing orders and breaking taboos.

Session 6: Refusing Orders and Breaking Taboos

After the initial welcome and informal conversation at the start of session 6 of the NVR programme, the practitioner leads a review of the interval period between the sessions by asking about what went well between sessions, what was different, what would parent like to see more of? There is also a discussion about the parent's responses to the task that was agreed at the end of the previous session and about whether or not violence has been used at home in the period between the sessions. Some of the possible responses from parents and some avenues that the practitioner might explore are detailed earlier in this section and the practitioner is encouraged to read the suggestions outlined in session 2.

Following the initial and review stages, the practitioner shares information relevant to the theme for this session – refusing orders and breaking taboos. We described earlier the habits of escalation that can develop in relationships that can lead to child to parent violence. We also noted that one of the steps to breaking these habits is for parents to develop the skill of "pressing the pause button" and of responding to problem behaviour in a calm and thought-through manner. Habits of submission can also develop over the years in family relationships whereby parents become more obedient to the wishes of their son or daughter while the child becomes less respectful toward the parents (Omer 2004). As a way of raising parents' awareness of the range of services they provide for her/his child, the practitioner asks parents to make a list of all the services they provide for their child. This includes the services they provide freely and those they feel obliged to provide due to the negative behavioural consequences from their child if they do not provide them. This also raises parents' awareness of the subtle and not so subtle methods of coercion that may have crept into their relationship with their child, where they feel powerless to resist or to refuse. The parents can then explore with the practitioner which of these actions/ orders they are going to begin to refuse to carry out. Some of the actions that parents have chosen to no longer automatically provide have included paying for expensive mobile phones, internet services or TV packages, giving the child money on demand, providing a taxi service on demand, cooking at unsocial hours (or providing special meals) or doing household chores in a particular way according to their child's insistence. It is important that the practitioner reminds the parents that Refusing Orders is not a sanction and is not carried out in response to an incident of abuse or violence. It is not a punishment. It is calmly implemented as a change in routine and a breaking of old patterns of the parent's obedience. It is also a recovery of parents' sense of self and authority. There is no requirement for a parent to discuss this with a son or daughter (in fact to do so could lead to an incident of child to parent violence). Instead a parent may simply say "I realised I was automatically doing X..." or "It occurred to me I didn't feel right always doing Y, so I decided to stop it".

Refusing orders can also be a way of parents insisting calmly that their child talks to them in a respectful tone: for example "I will not talk with you about this while you are standing over me and shouting at me", and then walk away from the child. The practitioner can also caution parents to avoid 'over-talking' with their child about their new approach. Many children may oppose these changes initially. But the aim of this new pattern of interaction is not to persuade the child to accept it as a good idea nor to change the child's behaviour. It conveys parental commitment to a positive display of parental presence and to new kinds of relationship with the son or daughter.

Refusing Orders is not a sanction. It is not carried out in response to an incident of abuse or violence. It is calmly implemented as a change in routine and a breaking of old patterns of the parent's obedience.

Parents have reported that this approach changes how they feel about themselves as a parent, helps restore their self-confidence and leads to positive changes in how their son or daughter relates to them. The practitioner should also note that parents are free to reinstate any of the services or activities they have suspended once they feel there is no longer an element of coercion or threat.

Breaking Taboos

As we mentioned earlier, all families develop habits of interacting over the years and in some families some of these become negative habits of interaction. In families where child to parent violence takes place, parents may feel that there are activities that they are 'forbidden' from doing by their child. These can include for example parents being forbidden from entering the child's room or introducing themselves to the child's friends, having friends visit the family home, watching television in the sitting room or wherever the better screen for films, television series or sports is located at home. Practitioners can assist parents in looking at a floor plan of their home and/ or an outline of what they do as a family to help them identify any activities that they are forbidden from engaging in. The practitioner can then discuss with parents which activities they wish to reinstate, some right away and some perhaps later. Once a parent has decided which of the taboos they would like to focus on, they also inform their support network as it may be expected that the child will oppose this change in routine. Similar to refusing orders, the breaking of taboos is not a punishment. This too is an act of non-violent resistance and is a change in routine that empowers parents and changes parents' sense of self. In this session, the practitioner can prepare the parent for possible negative reactions from the child such as threats, screaming or violence. The best parental response is to rely on the principles outlined earlier:

(a) to persist,
(b) resist violence and
(c) develop the ability to avoid being provoked into a negative or violent response.

Refusing orders and breaking taboos can significantly change the dynamic between the parent and child. An example of this was provided by one parent who took part in an NVR parent group who stated: "What changed in my house is that my son doesn't come in and roar and shout at me saying I want this and I want that. Now he just asks me." (Parent from a NVR focus group original transcript).

"What changed in my house is that my son doesn't come in and roar and shout at me saying I want this and I want that. Now he just asks me."

(Parent from an NVR group)

Following a teasing out of the implications of refusing orders and breaking taboos for the parent's family, the practitioner can suggest a role play or a step by step analysis of how this might be implemented at home. They also explore how best the parent might react to the responses they could expect from their son/ daughter. This can be facilitated within small group discussions when the NVR programme is provided through a group work format. This leads then to the next part of the session where the practitioner reviews the session, highlighting important remarks, providing positive and constructive feedback to parents and noting any concerns that might have been expressed. The practitioner invites the parents to engage in thinking or action tasks that follow logically from the discussions that took place during the session. For example, the parents could be encouraged the think about the differences to their sense of self as a parent when they begin to refuse orders and break taboos. They could also consider how refusing orders and breaking taboos might benefit their relationship with their child. Alternatively, parents could be encouraged to begin refusing orders and breaking taboos, by starting with the activities that they rank as being most important for them. The session draws to a close with the practitioner indicating the theme for the following session – the Sit In.

Session 7: The Sit-In

Following the initial welcome and informal conversation, session 7 of the NVR programme begins with practitioner leading a review of the interval period between the sessions by asking about what went well between sessions, what was different, what would parent like to see more of? Before the session commences, the practitioner can read over the discussion in session 2 above about the parent's responses to the task that was agreed at the end of the second session and about whether or not violence has been used at home in the period between the sessions. Some possible responses from parents and some avenues that the practitioner might explore are detailed in session two above and are not repeated here.

The practitioner then guides the session towards the main theme for today – the Sit-In. Omer (2011: 101) states that the Sit In demonstrates determined resistance, perseverance and a resolute commitment to non violence. He also notes that many parents report feelings of worth, power and belonging that they had never known before using the Sit In as part of the wider set strategies included in the NVR programme.

As might be expected, careful planning is needed in advance of the Sit In. The practitioner needs to reinforce the message that the Sit In is not a punishment. It signifies a dramatic break with habits of interaction in the past where perhaps parents had come to accept violent and controlling behaviour as part of family life. The Sit In usually takes place a few hours or perhaps a day or two after an incident of violent or controlling behaviour, at a time of the parent's choosing. As part of the NVR programme session on de-escalation skills, parents will already have been coached by the practitioner in how to avoid escalating arguments and withstand provocation.

During session 7 of the NVR programme, the practitioner talks the parent through the following steps before the parent plans to use a sit in. At a moment of her/ his choosing, the parent enters the child's room, closes the door and sits between the child and their bedroom door for a set time, for example a half hour. If the parents feel it is necessary, a supporter may also be present in another part of the home. Taking a seat in the child's room, the parent says clearly something like:

"I am/ we are not going to put up anymore with (define the behaviour clearly, for example, your hitting and kicking me) and I will sit and wait for (e.g. half an hour) for you to come up with a solution that will stop the violence".

Alternatively, the parent could also make a statement in relation to unacceptable behaviour towards a sibling, like:

"We are/ I am not putting up anymore with you hitting your sister, calling her names and making fun of her".

General vague goals are not helpful. If the parent has asked a support person to be present (in the home but not in the room), the parent tells the child this and says something like "we thought that you would be violent so we asked X to be a witness". If the child behaves violently despite the presence of a witness outside the room, the parent can ask the support person to come into the room. It is very likely that this will lead to an end to the violence.

The Sit In ends when the child has made a suggestion that the parent believes might be useful. If the child makes an unacceptable suggestion, the parent simply states "that is not acceptable", without discussing it. If the child makes no suggestion, the parent calmly remarks "it looks like we have not yet come up with a solution". After the protest sit in is over, the daily routine is continued without mentioning the sit in or the desired change. The Sit In can be a key moment in the change process for the child and for the parent. The child will begin adapting to the new and surprising situation. For example, the child might change their behaviour for the better, without explicitly stating this is a result of the Sit In. The parent will also begin to adapt to this new situation – having the ability to stay in their child's presence without being drawn

into an argument or an escalating row. This experience begins to change for the better the parent's sense of self as a parent.

What if...? Trouble-shooting the Sit-In

It is helpful that the practitioner facilitates a lot of discussion of the implications and consequences of the Sit-In. Many parents will at first be reluctant to consider adopting this approach. While the practitioner respects the ultimate decision of a parent on whether or not to use the Sit-In technique, parents often feel more open to considering using a Sit-In when they have had the opportunity to discuss their concerns and how they might react to the different responses their child might demonstrate. We outline below some common responses of children to the Sit-In, together with some advice for parents that might be helpful.

The child ignores the parent during the Sit-In.

Some children might give the impression that the presence of the parent means nothing to him/ her. The child might turn on the television, play on the computer, tablet or mobile phone. If this is the response, the parent can try to switch off the device once. If the child turns it on again or the parent cannot get the device to turn it off, the parent simply waits calmly in the room until the end of the time the parent announced. If the parent persists in struggling with the child to take away the device or persists in turning off the television, this could lead to an escalation. One of the aims of the NVR programme is for the parent to develop the ability to resist violence and provocation and to interrupt any cycles that could lead to escalation. The next time a Sit-In is planned the parent can switch off the modem or the cable television supply box.

Alternatively, the child could pretend to be asleep or turn away from and ignore the parent. If this happens, the parent simply continues with the Sit-In until the allotted time has passed. One parent reported that her 8 year old son lay on his bed, turned his back to her and ignored her during the Sit-In. When it was over and his mother left the room, the boy ran down to his father and whispered "You'll never guess what happened. Mam sat and watched me for ages. It was awful! I'll never hit her again". Of course the father was aware of the Sit-In and both parents smiled as they retold this event near the beginning of the next NVR session. The Sit-In did not mean that there were never any problems with their son's violence again but they believed that it was an important part of the solution.

The child attempts to make a deal with parents or claims not to understand.

In some cases a son or daughter will try to make a bargain with parent to bring an end to the Sit-In. For example, the child might say "if you give me 10 euro phone credit now, I'll be good". If this happens, the parent replies that she/ he cannot accept that suggestion; the parent does not explain any reasons. Otherwise, the parent could find that an escalation pattern begins to develop with the child making more demands and the parent trying to reason with the child, leading to an incident of child to parent violence. The aim of the Sit-in is not to convince the child about the value of the parents' point of view or to win an argument with the child. The aim of the Sit In is to increase parent presence, resist violence and break taboos. After a short answer, the parent simply resumes sitting in silence.

One of the aims of the NVR programme is for the parent to develop the ability to resist violence and provocation and to interrupt any cycles that could lead to escalation.

Alternatively, the child might claim that what the parent is doing is unfair and they do not understand it. The practitioner can advise parents to avoid this invitation to an argument and escalation cycle. It is unlikely the child will accept this new approach by the parent or agree with the Sit-In. The best response from a parent would be a short and calm statement similar to "It is my duty to resist violence" and resume the silent sitting.

The child makes a promise or suggestion.

Some parents believe that since their child has broken so many promises made to them in the past, they cannot trust anything he/ she says or promises. This is understandable but practitioners encourage the parent to accept any positive

suggestion by the child. For example, if a 12 year old son promises to never hit his mother again, the parent can end the Sit-in immediately without any further mention of the Sit in or the promised change. But if there is another incident of child to parent violence, the mother carries out another Sit-in. If her son promises never to hit her again, the mother's her response is simply "You suggested that before but we know it doesn't work. What other suggestion can you make?" She then resumes sitting in silence. A similar approach can be taken with any positive suggestion made by the child.

The child screams to try to get the attention of others.
If the child adopts this response, she/ he is probably trying to embarrass the parent in front of neighbours or others at home. If the parent raises this as a possibility during the discussion with the practitioner, one suggestion that could be made would be to let the neighbours know in advance about the NVR programme and about the plan the parent intends to follow. It is likely that neighbours have heard the child scream and shout before and they will probably be supportive of the plan adopted by the parent. The practitioner could also devise a short information leaflet with parents about the NVR programme that they could give to neighbours. If a child shouts and screams during the Sit-In, the parent remains calm and waits for the end of the announced time.

The child attacks the parent or attempts to leave the room.
"What will I do if my child attacks me?" is a genuine concern voiced by some parents living with child to parent violence. Practitioners take such concerns seriously and their reaction can sometimes mirror that of parents – fear and uncertainty. As parents and practitioners explore these issues together in session as part of the NVR programme, answers to this kind of questions can emerge and anxieties can begin to dissolve. An attack on a parent during a Sit-In can begin verbally, with a child calling the parent names and making threats. As above, the parent remains sitting calmly and avoids discussion with the child. If the child approaches the parent to push or hit the parent, the first response is to continue with the Sit-In – as long as it is safe to do so – and for the parent to protect him/ herself without hitting back and by calling the supporter into the room, if the supporter is elsewhere in the home. If there is no supporter in the home and/ or if it is unsafe for the parent to continue with the Sit-In, then it is ended by the parent and/ or the parent makes way for the child to leave the room. This is not an act of surrender or submission, as Omer (2004) notes but is a tactical withdrawal, enabling the parent to resume the Sit-In when the parent a supporter is available.

It is important that the practitioner emphasises that the point of the Sit In is not to make the child behave nicely during it. The point of the Sit In is not for the parent to win but to demonstrate to child, parental presence, persistence and resistance to violence. Even if the child acts out during the Sit In, it does not mean that the Sit In was ineffective. Children often change their behaviour without agreeing to or without having made a suggestion, as many children would see making a suggestion as a form of submission. They may prefer to change their behaviour without making this concession to their parent. Additional Sit-Ins will be needed only if the problem behaviour remains as it was after the Sit In is over.

Having explored the implications of the Sit-In for the parent's family, the practitioner can suggest a role play or a step by step analysis of how the Sit-In might be implemented at home and how best the parent might react to the responses they could expect from their son/ daughter. This could also be facilitated within small group discussions when the NVR programme is provided through a group work format. The practitioner then leads a review of this session, highlights important comments, provides positive and constructive feedback to parents and discusses with the parent any concerns that might have been expressed. Then the practitioner invites the parents to engage in thinking or action tasks that follow from the discussions that

took place during the session. Often parents seem to need to reflect on and tease out the implications of a Sit-In for their family over the period between two sessions and resume discussion of it during the next session. For example, where parents are uncertain about using a Sit-In at home, the practitioner can encourage parents to the think about what might help a Sit-In work for their family, what might prevent a Sit-In from working and what might help resolve any concerns they might have. Parents could also be encouraged to discuss the idea of a Sit-In with members of their support network. The session draws to a close with the practitioner indicating the theme for the following session – the NVR Review Meeting.

Session 8 (or later) The NVR Review Meeting/ Programme End Meeting

As adapted for use in Ireland, the NVR programme was designed as a 10 session programme to which parents commit at the beginning of the process. Some families find that as they implement the NVR programme at home, positive changes become established and the practitioner can begin to discuss with parents the idea of drawing the programme to an end and hold an NVR review meeting for session 8. For other families, a longer amount of time may be required and certain themes may need more than the time allocated in the session structure outlined above. But we suggest that for individual session work, an NVR Review Meeting take place around session 10 at the latest. This is a meeting that is quite distinct from formal child in care or other types of statutory or formal service reviews. It is facilitated by the practitioner and may involve the parents and the practitioner only when the programme has been run on an individual session basis. It can sometimes be useful to have a larger number of people at an NVR review meeting but it is the parents who nominate those who attend and it is the parents who issue the invitation to the meeting.

It is important to note that an NVR review meeting is not a response to a crisis or an incident but is held when positive change has already taken place within the family. The rationale behind holding an NVR review meeting stems from narrative and family therapy practices of building a community (or network) of support around the parents and the child to re-affirm progress and commitment to new ways of relating. By the time an NVR review meeting is called, the practitioner and the parents will have already reached a shared approach to the problem through which the problem is externalised (see above). The parents will also have already practiced the key elements of the NVR programme outlined above and the support network will have been active in helping the family address child to parent violence. During the meeting, the practitioner compliments all who have been involved and explicitly identifies the role and the actions each person has taken in helping to reduce or bring to an end child to parent violence. The practitioner also facilitates a conversation about any difficulties that may have emerged during the period of the NVR programme. The focus is not on the causes of the difficulties but on the actions of each individual, what they did to resolve problems and, looking back from the position they are in today, what they might have done differently. The practitioner then leads a discussion about what needs to happen for the positive changes to continue, what might hold back such progress and what might be the ways to resolve these difficulties. In some cases, this may include the identification of an additional service and in other cases it may involve a re-focusing on different aspects of work with the family in the same service. Some parents may wish to continue with the NVR programme for a small number of additional sessions while some parents may wish to end their involvement with the service for now (as enough progress has been made). Alternatively, parents might like to set a review meeting with the practitioner for some weeks or months into the future. As some parents have commented at the end of the NVR programme "We don't have a Hollywood home, all smiles and laughing all the time. There are teenager/ parent rows now and again...But I am not afraid anymore, I know I can deal with this and we're getting on OK".

The parents may well have conflicting feelings - relief that their son/ daughter is not at home and also regret and guilt, wondering whether they might have handled the situation better.

When the NVR programme has been facilitated as a group work intervention, much of the same process can be followed as outlined in the preceding paragraphs, with the clear distinction that only those who attended the group work sessions can attend the final NVR Review/ End of Programme meeting.

Section E
Frequently Asked Questions

In this section we outline some responses to some of the most frequently asked questions that arise in sessions with parents and during training with practitioners. We hope to address the kinds of questions that emerge for practitioners thinking about the NVR programme. As you reflect on the questions you have in the context of your specific service, your experiences and training as a practitioner, the experiences of your colleagues and the needs of families with whom you work, it is likely that different answers will emerge other than the ones that we suggest. That is as it should be. The answers or solutions we propose here are suggestions that each practitioner and family can consider in the light of their own experiences. You can then reach a decision on whether or not what we suggest cast some light on the dilemmas that may emerge when applying NVR to practice and everyday living. It is also important to note that anything we suggest here does not replace or supersede the relevant legislation, policies and procedures that are in place in different agencies, contexts and services. Practitioners working with families and children are advised to be familiar with the Children First National Guidance on the Welfare and Protection of Children (2011) which is available to download free of charge from **http://www.dcya.gov.ie**

Question: A child using child to parent violence has a complex history, complex needs and has a mental health diagnosis – can NVR be helpful in this context?

Response: Some children who use child to parent violence are also living with a diverse range of complex needs and/ or a history of abuse and/ or neglect and perhaps also a mental health diagnosis. If it is the practitioner's and the parent's understanding that a comprehensive assessment needs to take place and that a specific intervention is required to address a particular need (for example, perhaps family therapy for depression/ anxiety, referral to a CAMHS service for self-harm, referral to the National Education Welfare Board for non-attendance at school), then this needs to take place. However, this does not mean that NVR cannot be helpful. The presence of complicating factors in a child's or parent's life is not an exclusion factor for the NVR approach. NVR can be used alongside other interventions, though we suggest that one practitioner/ service uses the NVR approach while another practitioner in the same service / or another service where relevant addresses the specific need that has arisen.

The presence of complicating factors in a child's or parent's life is not an exclusion factor for the NVR approach

Question: A parent living with child to parent violence is also struggling with their own mental health needs/ alcohol or drug abuse needs – can NVR be helpful for parents in these circumstances?

Response: Some parents considering Non Violent Resistance as an approach to child to parent violence are also living with their own mental health difficulties and/ or may also be living with alcohol/ drug misuse problems. When this is the case, parents could benefit from involvement with a specialist service (for example, adult mental health services or alcohol/ drug misuse programmes) and the practitioner can encourage a referral to such a service with the parent. But the presence of these complicating factors in a parent's life is not an exclusion factor for the NVR programme. As suggested above, the NVR programme can be helpful when run in parallel with other services/ programmes that may also be required.

Question: During an NVR session a parent reports that there was an incident of child to parent violence at home and they feel the NVR approach is not helpful. Should we just abandon the programme and try something else?

Response: it is not unusual for a set-back to occur during the NVR programme and for a re-occurrence of child to parent violence. In fact, Omer (2004) and our own

experience in practice suggests that the problem may get worse before it gets better. The child who has used child to parent violence in the past may actively resist the changes the parent is adopting. During the initial sessions of the NVR programme, the practitioner can advise the parents that this may take place. You can then develop a plan together for the best responses to their child's active resistance towards change and a repeat incidence of child to parent violence. If a parent describes an incident of child to parent violence during their involvement with the NVR programme, the practitioner can re-assure the parent that this is not unusual. The practitioner can then review with parents the ways in which they responded to child to parent violence and whether their focus for the NVR programme might have changed.

For example, perhaps an incident of child to parent violence has led to the involvement of the local child protection and welfare social work team, a child going into respite foster care and parent's feelings of anger, frustration and hopelessness. Where this has taken place, the practitioner can first make space and time to listen to the feelings of the parents and to their responses to the incident of child to parent violence. The parents may well have conflicting feelings such as relief that their son/ daughter is not at home and therefore not a source of constant tension together with feelings of regret and guilt, wondering whether they might have handled the situation better. Bearing in mind that questions relating to child placement are for the child protection and welfare social work team, the practitioner can ask questions focusing on how he/ she can be helpful to the family at this point. Perhaps for example, the practitioner can help the parents to take the first steps to re-establishing contact and a connection with their child. The practitioner could also explore with the parents the responses of members of the support network to the incident. Perhaps one of the support network members could act as a mediator between the parents and the child – in some cases, the intensity of emotion and the feelings of hurt still too raw for a parent and child to speak calmly with each other about re-building their relationship. It is also helpful for the practitioner to bear in mind the specific role that he/ she has agreed with parents in relation to working together. It can be very easy for a practitioner to assume responsibility for resolving questions relating to where the child lives, but unless this task is specific to your agency (in this example, unless you are a child protection and welfare social worker), then it is probably best to clarify with parents that those specific questions can be resolved elsewhere while you maintain focus on helping parents re-establish a relationship with their child and re-engage with the NVR programme (which aims at a relationship without the threat or fear of violence).

Question: During an NVR session, a parent discloses an incident where she/ he used violence towards their son/ daughter. Should I make a report to the child protection and welfare team?

Response: During any initial engagement and assessment sessions practitioners usually outline the policy and practice in relation to the limits of confidentiality and the circumstances when there is an obligation for information to be shared with others outside the session. As can be the case in any work with children and families, some parents might disclose during the course of their work with the NVR programme that they have in the past or recently acted ways that could raise concerns about child protection and welfare. Given this possibility, we encourage practitioners to have a clear understanding themselves about how they will respond to such concerns before commencing work with parents. This means that the practitioner may need to clarify the position with the agency, colleagues and/ or the local child protection and welfare team, particularly in relation to parental behaviour that might have taken place years previously. Then, if a parent does make a disclosure during the NVR programme, the practitioner can be clear with parents about what needs to take place next. In some cases it might be necessary to make a referral to the child protection and welfare team. We suggest that the practitioner has an open discussion with parents about their concerns, identifies with the parents what they could include in a referral that also reflects positively on the parents and clarifies with the parents that the practitioner is not conducting a child protection and welfare assessment of them (unless, of course,

this does indeed lie with the practitioner's remit). Such an approach will make it more likely that the collaborative relationship between the practitioner and the parents will continue.

Question: During an NVR session, a parent states that their child is threatening to harm him/herself as a way of exercising power and control or as an attention seeking behaviour. What would be a good response to this?

Response: Parents and practitioners are often uncertain about how best to respond when faced with threats of self-harm; such threats could represent an attempt by the child to manipulate parents or they could be a genuine cry for help from the child. We suggest that it is best to take seriously all threats of self-harm. The practitioner could advise a parent that threats of self-harm are best assessed by a qualified professional such as a GP who could then make a referral to the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, or in an emergency to the Accident and Emergency Department of local hospital. It is also worth mentioning that the NVR programme may also be helpful when used together with interventions designed to reduce the risks of suicide and self-harm.

Question: Is it necessary to use the complete NVR programme as it is outlined in this handbook or can a practitioner or family choose which parts of the programme to use?

Response: Bringing an end to child to parent violence and positive changes in the relationships between parents and children are probably most likely to be achieved by practitioners and parents exploring together and implementing all the different elements of the NVR programme. However, it also seems that elements of the NVR programme can be useful as a brief stand-alone intervention and that some practitioners and families might find some principles and strategies of the NVR programme more helpful and applicable in their specific context than in others. Adopting a solution focused perspective on the problem of child to parent violence, it seems that it is best if practitioner and parents discontinue with whatever approaches do not work and continue with and do more of whatever approaches their experience tells them works to reduce and prevent child to parent violence in their contexts.

Question: What about consequences for aggressive behaviour? The NVR programme seems to have no consequences for child to parent violence.

Response: It seems to us that the important issue here is not whether or not consequences are imposed on a son or daughter for their behaviour but whether or not the response of the parent and others is influential in ending violence in the family. The underlying principles of the NVR programme include resistance to violence, persistence with non violence, taking responsibility for individual responses to aggression and violence and avoiding the impulse to engage in battles for control. The NVR programme does not seem to include consequences for aggression and violence in the ways in which we usually think about consequences. Yet, the child who uses child to parent violence is challenged by the developing confidence and competence of parents as they respond with non violence, resistance and the support network. The parent openly and resolutely opposes all use of violence. The parent practices new skills that interrupt the cycle of escalation such as pressing the pause button and using calming self-talk. The child is informed that a support network is behind the determination of all members of the family to end violence at home. If a parent is a target of child to parent violence, the members of the support network contact the child to re-assure them of their concern while supporting the family's efforts to bring violence to an end. Although these and other elements of the NVR programme are not consequences in the conventional sense, they do seem to influence positive changes in the relationships between parents and children and lead to an end to child to parent violence.

We have included here some of the most frequently asked questions but it is likely that questions emerge in practice that are not addressed explicitly here. We hope that our responses above, and the principles of the NVR programme as described in this handbook, provide some indication to practitioners about the kinds of approaches that might be helpful.

Section F
Supports for Sessions

Introduction

In this section we will suggest some hand out material that may be useful when explaining topics to families. All of the materials can be used in group sessions or in one to one settings. We also provide some evaluation forms.

Useful Exercises

Exercise 1: Priority List (Traffic Lights) -This exercise is useful near the start of the programme. It would be impossible to address all troublesome behaviours all the time and attempting to do so would usually escalate situations. A Priority List can help the parents to make choices. It is a way for parents to prioritise the behaviours they would like to have addressed in order of importance.

First, parents list all the behaviours of their child that are causing them or others in the family concern or stress.

Next, from this list they choose one or two behaviours that they are going to focus on first and prioritise these at the start of the programme (red light). These include the most urgent and most concerning behaviours and could include for example hitting, kicking, screaming, and causing injury. Parents are advised to choose only one or two behaviours for this category.

Parents then list which behaviours they are prepared to address at a later time after the priority issues have been resolved (amber light). The practitioner emphasises that these secondary concerns will be addressed (they may include name-calling or swearing) at a later point once the immediate and most urgent concerns have been resolved.

Parents then choose from their original list any behaviour that does not need to be addressed during the NVR programme though they might be regarded as a source of irritation for them (green light). These could include for example, the ways in which a son/ daughter dresses or their daughter/ son leaving crockery around the home.

Exercise 2 – Mapping the Territory - Similar to the Priority (Traffic Light) List, this exercise can be done near the beginning, perhaps as part of the assessment and engagement process. It can help give the practitioners a good idea of family and home life. It also helps raise parental awareness of the areas or activities from which they are 'barred' from or don't feel safe in. In this exercise the parents outline or draw a plan of their home identifying rooms so that it becomes a map of the home territory. Parents can then discuss in a one to one or group session how they feel about each room. This information may also be helpful to refer to when discussing the Breaking Taboos theme during the NVR programme.

Exercise 3 - Service List - This exercise can assist parents in Breaking Taboos and Refusing Orders as part of the NVR programme. Parents are asked to draw up a list of all the activities and services that they provide for their child. This will include providing accommodation, meals and laundry. It may also include giving money on demand and providing a 24 hour taxi service. The exercise raises parental awareness of the wide range of activities and services they provide for their child, some under duress. Parents are also invited to list all the activities they believe they cannot do (such as for example enter their child's room, greet their child's friends when they come to visit, go out for an evening for themselves). Together with the practitioner, the parents review these lists and decide which activities and services they would like to restrict or resume.

Parents Session Feedback Form - NVR Programme

Name: ..... (optional) Date:.....

We are interested in hearing your views and feedback about this session. Please be frank and honest as that would help us to make sure the group is useful for you.

Please circle the number that best reflects your views on the following statements about today's session.

1) The session was helpful for me today.

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

2) I felt supported and listened to during the group today.

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

3) I took an active part in today's group discussions and activities.

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

4) I feel confident that positive change will take place as a result of attending this group.

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

What ideas/thoughts/comments were most stood out for you during our session today?

.....

.....

Is there anything particularly helpful that you would like more of? What might that be?

.....

.....

Is there anything unhelpful from today that could be left out? What might that be?

.....

.....

Feel free to use the other side of the page for further comment. Thank you. Please return at the end of the session.

Parents Course Feedback Form - NVR Programme

Thank you for taking part in the Non Violent Resistance Programme for Parents. This Course Feedback Form asks you will allow you to describe your reactions to the NVR Programme for Parents. Your feedback will help us review the programme and provide us with information to plan future groups.

Name: ..... (optional) Date:.....

Please indicate your experience of the topics listed below where 1 = very poor/ not relevant to me and 5= excellent/ very useful to me.

A) Parents Commitment to Non Violent Resistance.
1 2 3 4 5

B) De-escalation skills (e.g. pressing the pause button).
1 2 3 4 5

C) Increasing Parental Presence.
1 2 3 4 5

D) The Support Network.
1 2 3 4 5

E) The Family Announcement.
1 2 3 4 5

F) Acts of Reconciliation.
1 2 3 4 5

G) Refusing Orders & Breaking Taboos.
1 2 3 4 5

H) The Sit in.
1 2 3 4 5

Please turn over to page 2.

Please indicate how strongly you agree with each of the following statements by placing a circle around the number that best reflects your view.

1) The group sessions were well organised.

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

2) The group leaders were supportive and approachable.

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

3) The group discussions were helpful

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

4) The role-plays and/ or small group exercises were useful.

Disagree Strongly				Agree Strongly
1	2	3	4	5

What suggestions can you offer that would help make this course a better learning experience for you and other parents?

Thank you. Please return to the group leaders.

Practitioners Feedback Form - NVR Programme

Thank you for using the NVR handbook in your work either in individual sessions or in a group. Please respond to the questions below to help us to improve the handbook. This form can be emailed declanp.coogan@nuigalway.ie or posted anonymously to Declan Coogan, School of Political Science and Sociology, Aras Moyola, NUI Galway, Newcastle Rd., Galway, Ireland.

How many people started the NVR programme with you? .....
How many people finished the sessions? .....
How many sessions of the NVR programme did you provide? .....

1. Please circle the number that best reflects your views on the following statements about the NVR handbook for practitioners.

   A) The handbook was easy to use in practice.
   1 2 3 4 5

   B) The handbook contained all the information I needed to use the NVR programme.
   1 2 3 4 5

   C) The materials in the session support section were helpful.
   1 2 3 4 5

   D) The parents I worked with benefitted from the NVR programme.

   1 2 3 4 5

2. What part of the handbook was the most useful for your work?

   .....

   .....

3. What part of the handbook was the **least useful** for your work?

   .....

   .....

4. What stands out for you from using the handbook that you will use again in your work?

   .....

   .....

5. Any other comments:

   .....

   .....

   .....

   .....

Thank you.

Appendix I –Recommended Reading and Bibliography

Recommended Reading

Sharry, J & Fitzpatrick, C (2009) The Parents Plus Adolescents' Programme- Facilitators' Manual. Dublin. Parents Plus/ Mater Misercordiae University Hospital Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service.

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Appendix II Helpful Links

All news and information on the Responding to Child to Parent Violence Project:
www.rcpv.eu

Child to parent violence in Ireland including updated information on the NVR programme and this handbook:
www.cpvireland.ie

Information and news on the Break4Change programme in Brighton England:
http://www.safeinthecity.info/getting-help/child-to-parent-violence
http://www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice/effective-practice-library/break-4-change

Information on the Parents Plus parenting programme:
http://www.parentsplus.ie

Website which includes the phone number for a confidential and anonymous helpline and other information for parents in Ireland, Parentline, Ireland:
http://www.parentline.ie

Website which includes the phone number for a confidential and anonymous helpline and other information for parents in Northern Ireland, Parenting NI:
http://www.parentingni.org

Information and training on child to parent violence and non violent resistance, Partnership Projects in the UK:
http://www.partnershipprojectsuk.com/

The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.
An Oifig Náisiúnta um Fhoréigean Baile, Gnéasach agus Inscnebhunaithe a Chosc
http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/

Notes

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