Intimate partner violence and abuse among young people affected by gangs and high risk contexts

Dr Ana FitzSimons, Dr Kelly Bracewell, Katie McCracken and Dr Chloe Gott (Opcit Research) and Prof Michelle Lefevre (University of Sussex)

June 2021

Contents

Acknowledgements 3

Executive summary 4

Rationale and aims 7

Methods 7

Scope and limitations 9

Findings 9

Intimate partner violence and abuse among gang-affected young people 10

Factors influencing vulnerability to IPVA 12

- Individual 13
- Family 14
- Peer groups 15
  - Peer group normative interactions with the information environment 17
- School 17
- Neighbourhood 19
- Support services 21
- Society and policy 22

Direct work with young people in high risk contexts to address intimate partner violence and abuse 23

- The gendered nature of intervention with young people to address IPVA 24
- Challenges with working with boys and young men to address IPVA 25
- Enablers of effective direct work with young people in high risk contexts to address IPVA 27

Conclusions and recommendations: addressing the ecology of vulnerability 30

References 32

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to extend special thanks to those professionals who agreed to share their insights and experiences of working to support young people in high risk contexts. Thanks go to Arsenal in the Community, Edge North East, Everton in the Community, Greater Manchester Complex Safeguarding Hub, Hackney Youth Justice, Leeds Youth Justice Service, Liverpool Targeted Services for Young People, Redthread, Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, St Giles Trust (London, North Wales, Midlands, East England), Stoke City Community Trust, The Evolve Team (Camden), The Safety Box (London), Westminster Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit, as well as organisations that preferred to participate under condition of anonymity. Any errors are of course the authors' responsibility.

Funding for this research was provided by the Home Office under the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Research Fund 2020/21. Any views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Home Office.

Executive summary

This study reviews and contributes to the evidence base on violent and abusive behaviours towards partners, among gang-affected young people and others living in contexts of high extra-familial risk, identifying lessons for prevention and response. Using a Critical Interpretive Synthesis methodology, we reviewed existing evidence and gathered primary data through interviews with 31 professionals working with young people in high risk contexts.

The evidence we collected and reviewed demonstrates that boys and young men associated with gangs are at higher risk than their non-gang-associated peers of engaging in violent and abusive behaviour towards their partners. Gang-associated girls and young women, and to a lesser extent boys and young men, are also at higher risk of experiencing violence and abuse from their partners.

While many traditional approaches to tackling intimate partner violence are underpinned by psychological explanatory models of perpetration that focus on perpetrators' individual characteristics (particularly trauma relating to adverse childhood experiences), this study demonstrates that meso and macro level contextual factors – including, among others, peer group and community level factors – are also associated with increased risk of engaging in abuse of partners. Thus, we do not seek to replace psychological explanatory models altogether but, rather, to augment these with the addition of contextual explanations. By transcending the individual/context dichotomy, we hope to build a more comprehensive, realistic picture of the high-risk contexts in which some young people abuse, and how these contexts relate to and help explain abusive behaviour.

A key contribution of this study is the provision of the most extensive outline to date of drivers and stressors for intimate partner violence and abuse faced by young people living in contexts of high risk. Our analysis does not suggest that any single factor or combination of factors necessarily in all cases influences or causes abusive behaviours but, instead, is intended to provide an overview of issues identified in the literature and by the professionals we interviewed as increasing young people's vulnerability to engaging in partner abuse. Participants in this study consistently emphasised that almost all the young people they work with are subject to multiple and in some cases very many of these factors. Key factors influencing young people's vulnerability to engaging in violence and abuse towards intimate partners include the following:

- **At the individual level:** psychology and subjective wellbeing (including trauma and other mental health conditions, stress, the need for identity and a sense of self, and an underdeveloped sense of agency and self-efficacy); patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes and beliefs; a lack of life skills for navigating high-risk contexts; some special educational needs, disabilities and developmental delays (including those that are undiagnosed).
- **At the family level:** experiencing or witnessing domestic violence within the family home; parental misuse of alcohol or drugs; parental mental health; patriarchal and misogynistic gender norms within the family.
- **At the peer group level:** normative cultures of violence (reflected and amplified through interaction with the information environment); highly patriarchal and misogynist gender norms; hierarchical social norms and structures; continual stresses and threats faced by the peer group (from police or other gangs); provision of a collective identity that is maintained through violence.

- **At the school level:** lack of effective education on healthy relationships, violence and abuse, consent, gender, sexuality, critical thinking and moral reasoning; inappropriate school responses to incidents of violence and sexual harassment and assault; use of exclusions and Pupil Referral Units; misrecognition and lack of support for special educational needs and disabilities, including developmental delays; gender and other social norms.
- **At the neighbourhood level:** material disadvantage and deprivation; neighbourhood violence, public disorder and crime; patriarchal social norms.
- **At the support services level:** lack of appropriate or sufficient support from mental health and other children's services; lack of youth centres, libraries and other community-based diversions into positive and safe activities with positive role models; the cliff edge of support at 18; service inequalities stratified by socioeconomic status and racialised identity.
- **At the social and policy levels:** overall gender inequalities, patriarchy and misogyny in society; poverty and economic deprivation; policy, legislation and budgets (including on poverty, inequality, youth violence and crime, domestic violence and abuse, and education including Personal, Social and Health and Economic education).

Our evidence review found an increasing focus within research on the influence of extrafamilial contextual factors on intimate partner violence and abuse (IPVA) – though much of this only establishes, rather than explaining, a link. It also found signs of an increasing focus within services in the UK, and particularly some children's services, on understanding and intervening to address the extrafamilial contextual risks many young people face. We found extremely scant evidence, however, on the effectiveness of interventions to address IPVA among gang-affected young people and others in high risk contexts: there is a notable deficit of dedicated impact and process evaluations of interventions and services working to address IPVA among these cohorts.

One of the most striking findings of our primary research was that, while there is some direct work taking place with young people to address risks of intimate partner abuse, the vast majority of this is targeted at girls and young women. The aim of this work was generally described in terms of empowering girls and young women to keep themselves safe from abuse. Within teams that had a team member with particular expertise in IPVA, this team member tended to work predominantly with girls and young women. In other words, intimate partner violence and abuse is largely treated as an issue for girls and young women, but not boys and young men: it was described as absolutely central to work with girls but, by almost all participants, as peripheral at most to work with boys.

The fundamental premise of this kind of siloed approach places responsibility for avoiding violence and abuse on girls and young women, without working to tackle its causes. It leaves the drivers of violence in place, and boys and young men without support to address their own abusive behaviours. The best case scenario, in terms of the intervention outcomes it is reasonable to expect, is therefore that girls engaged in interventions do manage to keep themselves safe from the threat but that threat finds its target elsewhere. The approach also leaves boys without the support they need to address any violence or abuse they face from their partners. Where work was done with boys and young men, this was described as happening 'when it comes up naturally', rather than as an element of any practice model, framework or approach.

This points to the paradigm that needs shifting. Of course children and young people should be empowered to avoid, as far as they can, experiencing violence and abuse, but preventing and responding to abuse must also involve those who are engaging in abuse, and the contexts that make abusive behaviour more likely.

Participants described a range of barriers and challenges in working with boys and young men on intimate partner violence, however. One key challenge is that the remits of services and teams working with gang-affected young people often prioritise other forms of violent behaviour among boys and young men, including knife- and gun-related violence towards their peers. This suggests an implicit hierarchy of harm (according to which, for example, rape is less serious than stabbing), which is, at the very least, contested, considering the rights of all children and young people to protection from all forms of serious harm. Professionals also highlighted that the mix of skills, confidence and interests in their teams is not always well suited to addressing IPVA among the boys and young men they work with, and a lack of practice frameworks, guidance and tools for this work. A common (and well-evidenced, reasonable) concern was that, given the prevalence of domestic abuse within the childhood homes of the young people they work with, discussions of intimate partner abuse may risk causing psychological harm and re-traumatisation. Feelings of shame and stigma connected to having engaged in abusive or violent behaviour towards partners may also create barriers to open discussion, with silence on IPVA representing a form of psychological defence.

Practitioners' lived experience of high risk contexts was identified by interviewees as an important enabler of long term, relationship-based work with gang-affected young people. One important implication of these findings is that there is an imperative for services to continue prioritising lived experience in practitioner recruitment, while also enabling continual specialist IPVA skills development among these staff. Another implication is that there would be value in trialling a multi-disciplinary team-around-the-worker approach, with group case discussion to enable continual input from dedicated specialists to inform ongoing direct work.

Fundamentally, however, efforts to tackle IPVA among young people in high risk contexts must examine and act upon the whole ecology of risk and vulnerability: interventions with individual young people that leave environment drivers and stressors in place have a Sisyphean task. Likewise, too narrow a focus on any particular subset of environmental factors will struggle to mitigate others left in place. Policy-makers must urgently recognise the need for development, adequate funding and continual, participatory evaluation of long term, comprehensive and coherent strategies to support young people to flourish, free from violence.

Rationale and aims

This study reviews and contributes to the evidence base on violent and abusive behaviours towards partners, among young people living in contexts of high extra-familial risk (including young people affected by gangs), and identifies lessons for prevention and response. While there is a growing body of research on intimate partner violence and abuse (IPVA) among young people, and on contextual risks and interventions, the extant evidence on our specific topic is relatively limited and, so, worth reviewing, interpreting and expanding.

The central objectives of this study were to:

- Generate primary evidence and provide a critical overview and synthesis of existing evidence on intimate partner abuse by adolescents in high risk contexts, and current work to address this abuse.
- Identify implications for policy and practice, including useful learning on preventative and responsive interventions with individuals, groups and communities.
- Identify gaps and limitations in existing research and practice, and scope further research needs.

We hope this report will be useful to policy-makers, commissioners, services, third sector organisations and other researchers interested in how young people can be supported and enabled to end partner abuse and build healthy relationships.

Methods

This study was conducted using a Critical Interpretive Synthesis methodology, involving a literature review and consultations with professionals working with young people facing significant extra-familial risks. Critical Interpretive Synthesis enables a dynamic, iterative approach to question formulation and evidence gathering, as well as reflexive theory-building based on synthesis and critique of qualitative and quantitative forms of evidence (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005; Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). This approach was particularly well-suited to our purposes, given the nascency of evidence, policy and services specifically relating to intimate partner violence and abuse among adolescents in high risk contexts, and our intention to integrate our analyses of primary and secondary evidence. Our methods included a rapid review of existing literature and interviews with public and third sector practitioners and managers with experience of working with young people facing contextual risks.

Our primary research question was: what is the evidence regarding whether, how and why young people in high risk contexts (including gang-affected young people) engage in intimate partner abuse, and how might this knowledge inform both preventive approaches and focused responses to abuse? This question was not designed to test a hypothesis, but to enable exploratory analysis and interpretation of evidence on this under-researched topic. It was sufficiently open that, in Eakin and Mykhalovskiy's (2003) terms, it provided a useful 'compass' throughout the study. Subtopics were specified, modified and refined during the study through an iterative process informed by findings from the literature and interviews.

Our literature search strategy involved: applying search terms to databases of peer reviewed literature, iteratively applying new terms to enable exploration of emerging themes; searching websites with repositories of relevant information, research and analysis (such as the website of the Contextual Safeguarding Network); reference chaining (searching the reference lists of sources for

further relevant sources); and issuing a call for evidence among our professional networks, inviting our contacts to suggest relevant literature. Our literature search terms included terms relating to abuse (violence, exploitation, coercion and control, etc.), intimate relationships (couple, dating, partner, etc.), adolescents (teens, young people, etc.), and high risk contexts (gangs, contextual risks, neighbourhood violence, etc.).

We began by using purposive sampling to select sources that directly concern our topic (intimate partner abuse among young people in high risk contexts), and later introduced theoretical sampling to interrogate and elaborate the emerging analysis. Only sources published in English within the last 15 years (since 2006) were included. Given the importance of incorporating different forms of evidence (including qualitative and quantitative findings, and grey literature such as briefings and evaluation reports), we prioritised sources for inclusion on the basis of relevance, rather than requiring them to meet particular methodological standards. We did not exclude any sources on the basis of geographical criteria, but instead attended to the context of evidence in our analysis, focusing on insights and implications for the UK context.

In-depth, semi-structured, one-to-one or dyad interviews were conducted with 30 participants from 21 services and organisations with expertise and experience in designing and delivering interventions and support to young people in high risk contexts. These were held virtually using online conferencing software. Our sample included strategic service leads, managers and frontline practitioners working directly with young people affected by violence and gangs, based in youth justice teams, violence reduction teams, gangs units and children's social care, as well as third sector organisations and community groups addressing youth violence. We used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling across these clusters, seeking diversity in participants' roles and sectors, and inclusion of context-sensitive approaches, rather than a representative or probabilistic sample.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore views on emerging findings from the review of secondary literature, address gaps in evidence, and gather further perspectives and insights on how intimate partner abuse among young people in high risk contexts might be addressed. Using narrative research techniques, researchers asked participants questions on a range of themes to prompt focused yet flexible discussion on the prevalence and forms of IPVA among young people in high risk contexts, risk and resilience factors for engaging in abusive behaviour, why these factors may be influential, and approaches to intervention and support to prevent and respond to IPVA in these contexts.

Evidence from different sources was triangulated to capture complexities, areas of agreement and difference, and gaps in evidence and practice, and analysed to generate descriptive and explanatory themes, with our findings developed through an iterative process of data analysis and theory building.

All analysis was conducted through an age-sensitive, rights-based lens, cognisant of the rights of all children and young people to live in an environment that enables them to develop and flourish.[1] The

[1] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out a framework of indivisible rights to which all children everywhere are entitled and came into force in the UK in 1992. Rights that are particularly relevant to work with children in high risk contexts in the UK, including gang-affected children, include: the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions and actions that affect children (Article 3); governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential (Article 6); every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously (Article 12); every child has rights to protection from

analysis is also sensitive to the influence of intersecting inequalities and stratifications based on sexism, racism, class, and hetero- and cis-normativity.

Scope and limitations

The study was conducted over a four month period from February to May 2021. The interview sample of professionals was small and non-representative of any population group, but did enable us to capture a range of views from different perspectives. The greatest limitation of the research was that the reporting deadline, combined with the Covid-19 pandemic, prevented consultation with the young people whom it most concerns: ensuring ethical engagement that was safe for participants, researchers and the wider community was not possible to arrange within the study period. This means we were unable to benefit from hearing young people's perspectives on abuse and interventions, or to examine how these may support, contradict or otherwise augment the findings from our literature review and consultations with professionals. We urge that further research (for example, into the various gaps in knowledge that we identify) should prioritise inclusion of young people's voices.

The rapid timeframe also required a stringent focus on the substantive issue of intimate partner abuse among young people in high risk contexts and how to address it. We therefore did not attempt comprehensive synthesis of the full range of relevant evidence from related research fields – notably, research on gangs, on intimate partner abuse among young people and on contextual frameworks for intervention – though this study is nestled within and intended to contribute to each of these fields.

Conventional systematic review methodology would not have been suited to the challenges of this study, given the need for rapidity, inclusion of diverse forms of evidence and exploratory analysis. Exact replicability was not an aim of the research: rather, we hope future work will focus on expanding the evidence and addressing the many deficits and gaps.

Findings

Many traditional approaches to tackling intimate partner violence are underpinned by individual/psychological explanatory models of perpetration. These predominantly focus on risk factors for perpetration that are connected to the perpetrator's individual experiences – and often their early childhood familial experiences. On this view, perpetration tends to be attributed to factors such as trauma and other effects of experiencing or witnessing violence within the home as a child, or poor attachment to parents as an infant. Nonetheless, as is widely recognised, many

---

violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment from parents and others looking after them (Article 19), and from exploitation (Articles 34, 35 and 36); children must not suffer cruel or degrading treatment or punishment and should be arrested, detained or imprisoned only as a last resort and for the shortest time possible (Article 37); children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life (Article 39); and a child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law must be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others, and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society (Article 40).

children with such experiences do not go on to abuse their partners, which exposes the limitations of these individualised explanations.

This study contributes to other recent efforts to overcome these limitations in IPVA theorisation, by demonstrating that meso and macro level contextual factors – including, among others, peer group and community level factors – have also been found to be associated with increased risk of engaging in abuse of partners. It should be noted that we do not seek to replace individual/psychological explanatory models altogether but, rather, to augment these with the addition of contextual explanations. By transcending traditional dichotomies, we can build a more comprehensive, realistic picture of the high-risk contexts in which some young people abuse, and how these contexts relate to and help explain abusive behaviour.

The preponderance of existing evidence included in this study aims to determine whether there is any association between partner violence and gang membership or affiliation, and partner violence and neighbourhood violence. This evidence does indeed establish a positive link, which our primary research confirmed. There is far less research focused on explaining that link or furthering understanding of how best to address it. While some studies note the implications of their main findings for interventions, there is a lack of dedicated impact and process evaluations of interventions working to address intimate partner violence among young people in high risk contexts.

A strong recommendation of the study is therefore for research to re-focus away from identifying whether or not there is an association (given a link has been credibly established), and towards explanatory mechanisms that enable us to understand why young people in these contexts have a higher likelihood of engaging in abusive behaviour, and what effective preventative and responsive interventions might look like. Our analysis provides a foundation for further exploration in these areas, identifying several avenues worth pursuing in future research while sketching out how they may map on to the overall picture.

Intimate partner violence and abuse among gang-affected young people

The existing literature establishes an association between peer group level factors, and gang membership and association in particular, and IPVA. Overall, it demonstrates that boys and young men associated with gangs are at higher risk than their non-gang-associated peers of engaging in violent and abusive behaviour towards their partners. Gang-associated girls and young women, and to a lesser extent boys and young men, are also at higher risk of experiencing violence and abuse from their partners.

This finding echoes that of previous evidence reviews, which have also identified that gang association increases risks of experiencing abuse from, and being abusive towards, intimate partners. Ulloa et al.'s (2012) review of international evidence finds young people in gangs are at higher risk of relationship abuse and inter-partner violence. Salter's (2014) review of international evidence on multi-perpetrator domestic violence finds that girls and women partnered to members of gangs and organized crime groups are 'particularly vulnerable' to multi-perpetrator domestic violence (including violence by their partners together with others). Valasik and Reid's (2020) recent review of international evidence finds that 'while the primary risk factor influencing the violent victimization of male gang members is their exposure to neighbourhood violence, female gang

members are most likely to be victimized by their fellow male gang members, including their significant others'.

In terms of individual studies, Petering's (2015) research with 505 young people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles finds gang members were more likely to have experienced recent partner violence. Miller et al.'s (2012) study of 20 young adult Latina women with known gang involvement in Los Angeles finds exposure to gang violence is 'closely associated with unhealthy and abusive intimate relationships'. Reed et al.'s (2009) study, while involving urban, African American men between 18 and 65 years of age rather than young people, finds involvement with street violence in the previous 6 months, ever being involved with gangs, and perceptions or beliefs that violence occurs in one's neighbourhood are significantly associated with perpetration of intimate partner violence. Gover et al.'s (2009) analysis of a statewide survey of public high school students in South Carolina finds gang members – including females and males – are more likely to experience dating violence victimisation and sexual assault, including by partners in gangs.

While most of this literature is skewed towards the US context and towards violent forms of abuse, our primary research strongly supports that gang-affected boys and young men in the UK are at a high risk of engaging in abusive behaviour towards their partners.

There was consensus among the 30 professionals we interviewed that intimate partner violence was endemic and normalised among the gang-affected young people they worked with. As one participant expressed,

> "I would say it's normal. Coercive control and a level of physical violence is experienced fairly consistently."

This violence and abuse was described in highly gendered terms: while some participants reflected that girls' and young women's abuse of boys and young men may be largely undetected, or that unhealthy relationships may involve abusive behaviour from each party, most described boys and young men engaging in abuse towards partners who were girls and young women.

Participants described a wide range of forms of abuse taking place within the relationships of the young people they work with. There was general agreement on the high prevalence of unhealthy relationships characterised by coercion and control, emotional and psychological abuse, and physical violence. Participants also reported high levels of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation, including grooming girls and young women for (child) sexual abuse and exploitation. Mobile technology and social media were cited as platforms for abuse, including through pressuring or coercing partners to engage in sexting, and posting sexual images of partners on social media. Some respondents also described instances of financial abuse and exploitation within relationships. There is existing evidence from a US context of gang initiates committing gang rape as part of initiation into gangs, and two participants mentioned they also had knowledge of examples of this in the UK context (Ulloa et al., 2012).

This motivates a recommendation that interventions to address IPVA among gang-affected young people must be underpinned by an understanding of the dynamics of each of these forms of abuse.

Factors influencing vulnerability to IPVA

Our literature review and primary research with professionals working with children and young people in high risk contexts identified a wide array of contextual factors contributing to the drivers and stressors for abuse within their relationships. These are set out in Table 1, below.

In setting these factors out, we do not seek to claim that any one factor or combination of factors necessarily in all cases influences – far less causes – abusive behaviours.[2] Rather, we aim to provide an overview of issues identified in the literature and by professionals as increasing vulnerability to engaging in partner abuse. Most participants in this study expressed the view that almost all the young people they work with are subject to multiple and in some cases very many of these factors. They also raised that many factors increase risk of both gang association and intimate partner violence and abuse: this overlap helps to explain the association between the two. These are issues worth addressing further in practice and research, and we hope this framework motivates an approach that is sensitive to the relevance of a wide range of often interrelated aspects of young people's contexts.

At the practice level, the findings suggest value in trialling interventions that address drivers on multiple levels and evaluating these to further the evidence base on contextual risks and interventions. Research might also, for example, usefully explore the ways in which these factors may compound each other, in additive or multiplicative ways.

Table 1: Individual and contextual factors influencing young people's vulnerability to engaging in violence and abuse towards intimate partners

Individual
Psychology and subjective wellbeing (including trauma and other mental health conditions, stress, the need for identity and a sense of self, and an underdeveloped sense of agency and self-efficacy)
Patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes and beliefs
A lack of life skills for navigating high-risk contexts
Some special educational needs, disabilities and developmental delays (including those that are undiagnosed)
Family
Experiencing or witnessing domestic violence within the family home
Parental misuse of alcohol or drugs
Parental mental health
Patriarchal and misogynistic gender norms within the family
Peer group
Normative cultures of violence (reflected and amplified through interaction with the information environment)
Highly patriarchal and misogynist gender norms

[2] This view is in line with Burfeind and Jeglum-Bartusch's (2016) conception of a risk factor as 'any individual trait, social influence, or environmental condition that leads to the greater likelihood of problem behaviours and ultimately negative developmental outcomes during the adolescent years'.

Hierarchical social norms and structures
Continual stresses and threats faced by the peer group (from police or other gangs)
Provision of a collective identity that is maintained through violence
School
Lack of effective education on healthy relationships, violence and abuse, consent, gender, sexuality, critical thinking and moral reasoning
Inappropriate school responses to incidents of violence and sexual harassment and assault
Use of exclusions and Pupil Referral Units
Misrecognition and lack of support for special educational needs and disabilities, including developmental delays
Gender norms and other social norms
Neighbourhood
Material disadvantage and deprivation
Neighbourhood violence, public disorder and crime
Patriarchal social norms
Support services
Lack of appropriate or sufficient support from mental health and other children's services
Lack of youth centres, libraries and other community-based diversions into positive and safe activities with positive role models
Cliff edge of support at 18
Service inequalities stratified by socioeconomic status and racialised identity
Society and policy
Overall gender inequalities, patriarchy and misogyny in society
Poverty and economic deprivation
Policy, legislation and budgets (including on poverty, inequality, youth violence and crime, domestic violence and abuse, and education including Personal, Social and Health and Economic (PSHE) education)

Individual

In terms of personal, individual-level attributes or characteristics of young people that may contribute to an increase in vulnerability to engaging in abuse, professionals interviewed for this study described elements of individual psychology and subjective wellbeing (including, commonly, trauma and other mental health conditions, the daily stresses and strains of high-risk contexts, the need to develop identity and a sense of self, and an underdeveloped sense of agency and self-efficacy); patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes and beliefs; a lack of life skills to enable them to navigate high-risk contexts; and some special educational needs, disabilities and developmental delays, including those that are undiagnosed and inadequately supported.

"If you look at it, you know, the violence and murders and stabbings and shootings – often what actually that situation is about is often very trivial, very pointless and could have been avoided, people would think, very easily. But actually, those people haven't managed to, they don't have the skills set, to have the skills to manage that conflict in any other way but to pull out a knife, or, you know, be violent."

Further discussion of these individual-level factors explored how they are shaped by young people's trajectories through and experiences of their environments, and how the relevance of each factor to IPVA is strongly mediated by this context. For example, special education needs may become more relevant if they are undiagnosed and unsupported within the school context, or symptoms are misunderstood and treated as grounds for school exclusion or transfer. And patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes are profoundly shaped by individuals' perceptions of normative expectations and socio-cultural norms at the meso and macro levels (including in families, peer groups and schools).

Given the focus of our study, we discuss these factors in greater depth below, in relation to the wider contexts and environments that seem to make them matter to IPVA among young people in high risk contexts. We stress again that no single vulnerability should be viewed as, in itself, explaining why young people engage in abuse, but acknowledged as having a place in a holistic understanding of abusive behaviours and their drivers.

Family

When asked an open question about what factors they thought contributed to IPVA among the young people they worked with, almost all participants discussed how relationships, experiences and norms within families can influence young people's vulnerability to engaging in and experiencing abuse.

There is now a large body of literature establishing an association between abuse and other adverse child experiences within the family home, and increased risk of engaging in violence and abusive behaviours as an adult (see, for example, Felitti et al., 1998; and, more recently, Wheeler, 2021).[3] Given the very significant focus on this in existing research, including multiples systematic reviews and extensive theorisation of the link, we do not seek to rehearse existing evidence here. Nonetheless, family-level vulnerability factors were consistently discussed by participants, who were generally aware that existing research demonstrates association of these factors with IPVA but emphasised that established findings chimed with their own professional experience.

In particular, the issue of individual-level psychological trauma and social learning from past or ongoing experiences of childhood abuse within the family was frequently raised, and families were cited as a key site of adverse childhood experiences that can influence learned psychology and

[3] The CDC-Kaiser Permanente study from Felitti et al. (1998) investigated the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on physical and mental health problems in over 17,000 adults. The study and subsequent related research establish an association between experiencing and committing violence as an adult, and childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, household dysfunction and (increasingly, in recent research) community and environmental ACEs such as racism, bullying and community violence.

behaviour in relation to abuse. Experiencing or witnessing domestic violence and abuse in the family home was seen as reinforcing vulnerability to becoming abusive by creating trauma and then also: normalising abusive behaviours and relationships; modelling abusive behaviour and techniques; and motivating abusive and violent approaches to relating to others by disincentivising more healthy behaviours.

> "We've got one young person that learned this behaviour, yes, first within the family home. Because there was a lot of domestic violence. But then also from his brother, who is a gang leader. […] His brother had a history of violent relationships with women. I think there's a couple of women that have restraining orders against him, and I'm talking serious level of violence. […] But he took on the mantle of, again, an abusive relationship with his partner."

Parental misuse of alcohol or drugs and parental mental ill health were raised as further factors that can weaken the protection families (and positive family relationships) can provide against youth violence, including where parents are concerned to support their children to be safe, do well and develop healthy relationships, but lack capacity and effective support.

Patriarchal and misogynistic norms at the family level were also discussed as motivating perceptions and expectations that undermine development of healthy relationships. Families are an overwhelming influence on the development of children's normative expectations, particularly prior to adolescence (when other influences become stronger), and participants discussed their perceptions of the impact of families modelling unequal and oppressive power dynamics between male and female family members, on young people's perceptions of 'a normal relationship'.

Demonstrating the limits of family-focused explanations for vulnerability, however, several professional were also clear that, in some cases, even a supportive, safe and nurturing environment provided by families did not mitigate other vulnerabilities to violent and abusive behaviour.

Peer groups

Compared to their non-gang-associated peers, gang members and associates are at higher risk of being violent and abusive towards intimate partners. As explored above, findings from the literature show that gang membership and association increase the likelihood of engaging in partner violence and abuse, and the observations of professionals we interviewed for this study supported this finding.

Much of the discussion in the literature and in our primary research concerning explanations for this link concerned the role of peer-group level social norms, structures and activities in motivating and normalising violence. Professionals described profoundly misogynistic and patriarchal normative attitudes and expectations with regard to girls and women, among the boys and young men in their cohorts. A frequently raised theme was the instrumental treatment of girls, as things to be used and controlled through violence, coercion and manipulation. Notions of masculinity in play were described as equivocating between 'being a man' and being violent, abusive and disrespectful towards girls and women – pointing to the need for approaches that are sensitive to the need for development of positive masculinities among boys and young men. The restrictiveness of normative conceptions of masculinity among gangs, and other high risk, violent peer groups, extended also to sexuality and gender identity: several participants raised that, whatever progress was being made in broader society towards greater understanding and acceptance of non-heteronormative and non-

cisgender identities, this progress had not been seen among the cohorts they work with. This may itself create further stressors for those in these groups who are questioning or struggling with their own sexuality and gender identities.

> “I was in a gangs meeting once and we looked at about 15, you know, young boys and young men, and every single one of them had somebody in their close group who had a domestic abuse conviction. And we know how rare domestic abuse convictions are in relation to domestic abuse overall. So what that said to me was: all of these young men have been exposed to violence.”

In addition to gender norms, professionals described broader hierarchical norms: ‘pecking orders’, often stratified by the frequency and brutality of young people’s use of violence, and standardly maintained through the exercise of violence and threat. In other words, the logic of gang dynamics not only accepts but requires the use of violence to improve and maintain status. Continual exposure to and normative glorification of violence contribute to subjective normalisation and provides strong motivational incentives for its use. One professional described violence as a standard ‘means of communication’, including a means of communicating status and expectations of others. Some reflected on how subjective experiences of inferior status and violent victimisation within peer groups can feed into stressors for violence in general and towards partners in particular, given the combination of normalisation and glorification of violence and misogynistic attitudes towards girls and women.

Young people’s susceptibility to accepting and adhering to these norms was linked to other factors by several professionals. In particular, the sense of belonging, identity and having a social role that gangs and other peer groups can provide can motivate attachment to the group and its norms. These motivational factors (the need to develop identity and so on) apply to most young people, but professionals noted that young people with psychological and cognitive vulnerabilities, including trauma and learning needs (such as developmental delays), those who have little opportunity and support from other sources to develop more positive identities and roles, and those with an underdeveloped sense of agency and self-efficacy, are particularly vulnerable. These factors are, of course, themselves affected by the wider contexts in which young people live, from family life, to schooling and other services, and the policies that govern these spaces.

Interview findings on the importance of peer group level norms shed further light on but generally fit with existing theorisation in the literature. Nydegger et al.’s (2017) study of 107 female and 169 male gang members with a mean age of 17.7 years, in ‘a mid-sized Midwestern city’ in the US, found that endorsing unequal gender norms was significantly related to intimate partner violence victimization among female participants and perpetration among male participants. (Additionally, male gang members who had sexual relationships with girls five or more years younger than them were significantly more likely to perpetrate partner violence and rape.) Wesche and Dickson-Gomez’s (2019) research with 281 gang members aged 14 to 19 years from across 32 gangs in the US adds further nuance to the picture. The research found that, among adolescents involved in gangs, ‘equitable beliefs about women/girls as romantic and sexual partners’ (that is, viewing them as equals within intimate relationships) were protective against intimate partner violence and coercive sex victimization and perpetration. Importantly, however, gang members who held more ‘equitable beliefs about girls’ role as gang members’ (that is, as holding equal status within the gang hierarchy) were at increased risk of experiencing several negative outcomes, including intimate partner violence victimization and perpetration, forced sex victimization, and gang rape victimization.

Ulloa et al.'s (2012) discussion of explanatory mechanisms for partner violence among adolescent gang members also focuses on gang norms, cultures and structures, including gender roles within gangs. The authors describe how boys and young men's involvement in the most violent and risky aspects of gang activity (in terms of risking victimisation from other gangs and enforcement by police and criminal justice) supports a power imbalance in their favour, which in turn helps 'justify' violence against girls and women. In taking these risks, boys and young men are continually exposed to extremely violent scenarios, which may increase their tendency towards aggressive behaviour. In gangs with severely patriarchal subcultures, 'the use of abuse and intimidation in intimate relationships is heavily prevalent and accepted by both the perpetrator and victim', while in 'extreme cases, emotional, sexual, and physical abuse are used as entertainment as well as methods of control and punishment'. In some of the literature they review, gangs also appeared to play a strong role within members' intimate relationships, for example in deciding whether to allow males to engage in sexual activity with females other than partners, or whether to intervene when relationships become physically, emotionally or sexually abusive (though this was not raised by professionals we interviewed).

Peer group normative interactions with the information environment

Several professionals reflected how peer group-level cultures of violence are reflected, amplified reinforced by aspects of the information environment and young people's use of social media and online technology. In addition to the use of mobile technology and social media as platforms for abuse (such as in cases of coercive sexting or sharing sexual images online without consent), professionals described concerns about glamorisation of violence and gang life in pornography, popular music lyrics and videos, television shows and films.

Drill music in particular was viewed as a sphere in which young people consume and create cultural artifacts of glorified violence, often including violence against women and girls. There is increasing interest in research into how social media and other technology relate to intimate partner and other violence, abuse and exploitation, including recent attempts to further understanding of the relationship between drill music and gang violence (see, for example, Leitão, 2021; Fernet et al., 2019; Taylor and Xia, 2018; Walker and Sleath, 2017; and, on drill music, Ilan, 2020; Lynes et al., 2020; Fatsis, 2019). We emphasise that no professionals made the claim that consumption or production of drill videos causes violence, with some noting that attempts to tackle violence by banning drill videos in the UK are both futile (they remain widely shared and consumed) and wrongheaded (in misrecognising, and signalling misrecognition of, the origins of violence).

In line with much of the recent scholarship, the implication is that much violent drill music is more symptom than cause of violence. As other forms of media amplify and reinforce existing social norms, so drill increases visibility and provides further channels for normalisation of violence that nonetheless already exists and needs to be tackled at its roots.

School

Schools are coming into increasing focus at the research and policy levels, both as sites of violence and abuse, and as potential bulwarks against it. While extremely cognisant of the challenges schools face in supporting children to develop healthy relationships and behaviours, participants discussed

elements of schooling and education systems that, in their view, represent missed opportunities to provide a more enabling environment for addressing violence and abuse among young people.

Several participants noted that many of the cohort they work with are or were based in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) rather than mainstream schooling. These professionals identified referrals to PRUs and school practices with regard to exclusions as major contributors to leaving children both vulnerable to gangs and without the support they need to avoid violence and develop healthy relationships.

Rather than delivering specialist support tailored to meeting individual needs, PRUs were identified as introducing children into a wider peer group in which pupil-level social norms normalise violence, abuse and aggression. A commonly-expressed view among these professionals was that once a child has been removed from the relative safety and normality of mainstream schooling into a PRU, work to enable and motivate them to make safer, healthier choices (including developing healthy relationships) becomes much harder.

It is notable that so many participants highlighted the prevalence of special educational needs and disabilities among their cohort, and linked inadequate support for these to IPVA. The point is not, of course, that these needs and disabilities cause abusive behaviour, but that misrecognition of and inadequate support to meet needs are factors that may undermine key aspects of children's development, including development of self-efficacy and healthy behaviours. Additionally, where needs are misrecognised as aggressive behaviours, they may in turn be treated as grounds for expulsion or referral to a PRU on behavioural grounds.

> "His malnutrition, learning needs and capacity that maybe aren't being picked up through schools because they're very disruptive and aggressive. […] Unfortunately, it happens so much more with very young people that their aggressive behaviour gets put down to either aggression within themselves or what's going on at home, and people are missing the learning needs and capacity kind of issues."

A key element of reducing vulnerability not only to IPVA but to gang-association itself, is therefore ensuring schools (and all educational environments) have the resources, training and practice models in place to respond effectively to the significant needs of the most vulnerable.

> "I'm not critical of schools, I think they've got a really, really tough job. But they need upskilling, they need training, they need support, they need to know how to be trauma responsive, they need to consider all the factors involved for young people, not just their presenting behaviour in a classroom. And if we can upskill our education colleagues in terms of how to respond to trauma, then I think we'll reduce exclusions, or get the right support in place for young people."

Further school-level factors identified by participants as contributors to risk of IPVA among young people – and not only those in the riskiest contexts – included ineffective education on healthy relationships, violence and abuse, consent, gender and sexuality, but also ineffective training in the kind of critical thinking and moral reasoning that aid development of empathy and respect for others' rights. Inadequate school responses to incidents of violence and sexual harassment and assault were also described as reinforcing rather than tackling damaging normative expectations regarding the acceptability and consequences of violence and abuse.

The ‘Everyone’s Invited’ website was set up to enable young people and others to publish their anonymous accounts of sexual harassment and assault. In the three months since March this year, over 15,000 anonymous testimonies have been submitted and shared on the platform, many of which are accounts of harassment in schools and universities in the UK (Everyone’s Invited, 2021). While this has laid bare the scale and reach of problems, a recent questionnaire from the BBC and NASUWT found more than half of 1,500 UK teachers who responded did not think adequate procedures were in place in their schools to deal with peer-to-peer sexual abuse (BBC and NASUWT, 2021).

Arguing for school-based interventions to prevent dating and relationship violence in the UK, Meiksin et al. (2019) highlight the importance of schools in addressing both abusive behaviour and the gendered social norms that underpin it. They argue that schools-based ‘multi-component interventions – for example, addressing school curricula, policies and environments – are required to address factors driving DRV at multiple levels of the social ecology (Meiksin et al., 2019).

Schools make a difference to levels of violence and abuse in children’s relationships and are filled with highly-skilled professionals committed to children’s wellbeing and development: all schools need the resources and frameworks they need to create an enabling environment for avoiding violence and abuse, and developing positive, healthy relationships.

Neighbourhood

Our review of existing literature on contextual risk factors for IPVA identified several neighbourhood-level factors found to contribute to higher risk of partner abuse, as well as efforts in some local authorities to deliver more joined up ‘place-based’ services (following sections consider support services in more detail). Interestingly, however, neighbourhood-level factors featured less prominently in interview discussions of young people’s vulnerability to engaging in partner abuse.

Beyer et al.’s (2015) systematic review of evidence published in English after 1995 on neighbourhood environment and intimate partner violence found a significant positive association between partner violence and community-level factors, including experience of and exposure to community violence. While there were no geographical exclusion criteria, most evidence included in this review related to urban US contexts. Regarding mechanisms that help to explain this link, the authors argue that high levels of violence within communities and/or social networks signal that social control is limited, as well as normalising and legitimising violence as a form of conflict resolution. Both of these factors thereby also, they argue, encourage violent acts with the promise of impunity (Beyer et al 2015). Similarly, VanderEnde et al.’s (2012) systematic review of global evidence on community correlates of intimate partner violence against women identifies a range of community attributes influencing risk, in the US and other contexts. Relevant factors include community-level gender inequality, gender norms and adapted measures of collective efficacy and social cohesion, though the authors note a lack of theorisation to explain how these factors influence risk.

Our review confirmed, since publication of these two evidence reviews, further research demonstrating associations between community-level factors and IPVA, and some progress towards better explanatory theorisation of that link. For example, a study, by Kirst et al. (2015), which included a representative sample of 2,412 residents of Toronto in Canada, found high perceived social support and low perceived neighbourhood problems were protective against intimate partner

violence, suggesting 'social capital' has a contextual effect on risk of partner abuse. The authors argue that higher levels of perceived neighbourhood problems can reflect disadvantaged environments in which regulating disorder is more challenging, and which can create stressors that make IPV more likely to occur. Voith et al.'s (2020) qualitative study involving focus groups with 32 'predominately low-income, African American men in batterer intervention programs' suggests that structural neighbourhood-level factors, such as high levels of community violence and gang activity, can influence the 'social learning of violence, while exposure to violence and trauma through the proliferation of high-risk neighborhoods predisposes men toward IPV as young adults'. These studies point to sociopsychological mechanisms mediating the influence of space and community on personal motivations, cognition and behaviour.

Further recent studies establishing associations between community factors and IPVA include, in a UK context, a study by Yakubovich et al. (2020), based on data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children in the United Kingdom, which gathered data from 7,219 women from birth and their mothers from pregnancy. The study found that cumulative exposure to greater neighbourhood deprivation over the first 18 years of life was associated with women's increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence in early adulthood. In this study, neighbourhood deprivation is defined as an official measure of area-level deprivation in England, which considers deprivation beyond economic poverty alone, using indicators across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, crime, housing, and living environment. Elsewhere in Europe, Gracia et al.'s (2015) analysis of geocoded data on 1,623 cases of intimate partner violence with associated protection orders in Valencia in Spain found risk was increased in neighbourhoods that had high levels of public disorder and crime, and were 'physically disordered and decaying'. In Ghana, Cofie's (2020) analysis of data from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey and the Ghana Population and Housing Census also found patriarchal norms and community-level residential instability affect the perpetration of 'spousal violence' against women. Clark et al.'s (2018) study reflects an increasing focus on the influence of community-level social norms on risk of IPVA. The study surveyed 1435 'female, married, reproductive-age participants' across 72 wards in Nepal, modelling associations between collective normative expectations (that is, expectations about what others in their communities believe, aggregated to the ward level) and experiences of IPVA. The authors found women in wards with more patriarchal gender role expectations (such as 'acceptability of violence' and 'silence and tolerating violence to preserve the family and family honour'), were at increased risk of violence from their partners.

In discussions of vulnerabilities to IPVA among the young people they work with, the professionals we interviewed tended to talk about neighbourhood-level factors in slightly different terms. Geographic locations were viewed as relevant to gang-association in the sense that in places where gangs and violent peer groups are already established, there is a wider path – greater opportunity – for young people to become associated, due to proximity. County lines operations, often using young people, were also viewed as representing a push of gang activity and violence outwards from large cities to incorporate new areas. Interestingly, however, our (small) sample generally tended to emphasise factors other than neighbourhood-level normative expectations and attributes in discussions of what contributes to increased risk of young people engaging in abusive behaviours within their intimate relationships.

As highlighted by Beyer et al. (2015), explanations for the influence of place on occurrence of IPVA tend to draw on social disorganization theory developed in urban settings in the US. Taken together, our findings from existing literature and interviews suggest there remains a need for further

research to understand and explain how and why place and neighbourhood may influence IPVA among young people in high risk contexts, in the UK and elsewhere.

Support services

The professionals we interviewed for this study spoke of significant problems in the provision of support services faced by young people in high risk contexts, in a funding environment marked by years of austerity. As discussed above, schools were raised as a key contextual influence, but a broad range of other services were identified as crucial in providing the social 'scaffolding' these young people need. Demand for mental health provision was frequently raised as outstripping supply – both NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and community-based support services that some young people and families may view in less stigmatised terms. Children's social workers were described as often very highly skilled in strengths-based practice methodologies but as having too high caseloads to spend the time required with young people to build trusting, positive relationships. Defunding and closures of youth centres, libraries and other community organisations and centres that provided young people with opportunities for positive activities with positive role models in their communities were viewed as further undermining the social 'scaffolding' needed to support at-risk young people to flourish. Of particular relevance to work with gang-affected young people, the now-familiar language of the 'cliff-edge of support' on young people's 18th birthday was also invoked by almost all participants. Teams working specifically with young people affected by or vulnerable to gangs talked of seeing already-insufficient support being withdrawn or reduced often just as young people are at their most vulnerable to gangs.

> "Transitions is another massive area, which is really, really difficult because you try to put all this together for kids, knowing that actually once they hit 18 they're no longer viewed as vulnerable to child exploitation, because they're not children. There's no longer CAMHS, and actually what's available for adult mental health... I mean, I think the transitions between child mental health and older mental health is appalling, to be honest."

While not raised by participants, it is also relevant to note evidence of inequalities of access to high quality services stratified by factors including socioeconomic background and racialised identities, which may disproportionately affect many young people in high risk contexts. For example, economic deprivation has been associated with a lower level of GP registration, particularly during adolescence (Viner and Barker, 2005); greater difficulty in getting a GP appointment (Cecil et al., 2016); and poorer perception of the quality of primary care (Mercer and Watt, 2007). Recent research by Chui et al. (2020) highlights specific barriers to young people aged 16 to 17 from ethnic minority backgrounds in accessing or remaining in touch with mental health services in London, UK, including language barriers, an imbalance of power and authority between service users and providers, and discrimination and insensitivity to the needs of service users with racialised identities.

Beyer et al.'s (2015) systematic review found a research gap on how access to services may influence IPVA, and this is certainly an area that requires more research. Recent years have, however, seen increasing interest among services and policy-makers in the UK in multi-agency contextual, complex, and transitional approaches, particularly with regard to safeguarding, providing further opportunities to learn from implementation (Firmin and Knowles, 2020; Firmin and Lloyd, 2020; Firmin et al., 2019; Firmin, 2017; Firmin et al., undated). We discuss interventions and services in further detail in later sections of this report.

Society and policy

At the macro level, overall levels of gender inequality and misogyny in a society, poverty and economic deprivation, and government funding, policy and legislation in a wide range of areas were identified as influencing risk of partner abuse either in the literature or, specifically in relation to young people in high-risk contexts, by participants in this study.

An analysis of results from 29 countries in the International Dating Violence Study by LeSuer (2020) found that gender inequality is significantly associated with increased odds of having experienced 'severe', but not 'minor', forms of intimate partner sexual violence. As discussed in the section on peer groups above, several participants also discussed the prevalence of patriarchal and misogynistic norms among the young people they work with, with some reflecting on how these are shaped by wider gender norms and normative trends at the macro(society-wide and supra-national) level. One participant, for example, noted the 'pornification of culture', while others cited easy access to violent pornography. These can be viewed as constitutive parts of a broader social environment shaping young people's attitudes and (gendered) normative expectations about (among other things) sex and relationships – including the place of violence within these.

Participants also discussed issues around poverty, deprivation and marginalisation of young people. Young people were described as responding to their perception, recognition and experiences of limited opportunities to flourish with (reasonable) 'despair', 'frustration' and 'anger'.

> "I think it's a combination of things. It's a combination of a lack of opportunity, and a lack of aspirations massively, you know, they struggle to see a future and they struggle to understand that things can get better for them. So I think a lot of it comes out in that aggression towards another person, because they don't know where else to channel it."

Financial circumstances and economic deprivation were frequently cited as increasing vulnerability to exploitation by gangs (who may promise or provide financial inducements), and also increasing stresses and strains once young people are involved within gangs (for example, where they are being financially exploited or held responsible for aspects of high stakes financial transactions).

With regard to the relationship between poverty and likelihood of engaging in IPVA, research on adult partner violence establishes (and in some cases attempts to explain) a link. Poverty – like any other factor explored in this study – should not be viewed as a cause of violence and existing evidence is clear that intimate partner violence and abuse cuts across all socioeconomic groups. However, existing evidence suggests economic difficulties can be a stressor for adult IPVA (for example, Wilson, 2016).

Hesketh's (2019) study provides further theorisation of why poverty and marginalisation may have an influence on IPVA among gang-affected young people in particular. The study, conducted in Merseyside, UK, explored differences between 22 young men aged between 18 and 25 were involved in street gangs as active and ex-members, and 22 who had completely abstained from street gang membership. Hesketh argues that marginalisation and austerity have contributed to increasing inequality and institutional constraints on young people and that, in coping with limited opportunity, young men can feel powerless, and lack identity and aspirational drive. Borrowing from Lyng's (1990) research on 'edgework', Hesketh describes how joining a gang can then become a way of 'seizing back control' and militating against constraints through criminal or other risk-taking

behaviour. It can also, Hesketh argues, be a means by which young men can gain 'an identity of being 'bad' from which intrinsically pleasurable seductive and criminally erotic sensations were derived'. Hyper machismo and violence is a normalised part of that role. Regarding young women with gang-associated partners, Hesketh uses the term 'vicarious edgework' to connote the phenomenon of 'young women drawn to male gang members ('bad boys') to derive the excitement of risk indirectly while remaining law-abiding'. The dynamics of this attraction can then contribute to young women's misrecognition or normalisation of violence and abuse. This work highlights a 'concerning sociopsychological and key motivating driver triggered by marginalisation' – helping to explain potential psychological mechanisms that mediate the contribution of poverty and deprivation to motivations for partner abuse.

Importantly, there appears to be a gap in the literature in relation to theorisation of the dynamics of IPVA among young people with more advantaged material circumstances (who may nonetheless be subject to other vulnerabilities). Given the research on IPVA prevalence among adults across all socioeconomic groups, this could be a hidden dynamic and is worth exploring further.

Of course, government funding, policy and legislation have a strong, direct influence on the whole ecology of vulnerability to engaging in abuse. Many of the drivers and stressors discussed throughout this report are directly affected by, for example, law and policy on statutory and non-statutory responses to youth violence and crime, domestic violence and abuse, education including Personal, Social and Health and Economic (PSHE) education, and poverty and inequality. Inadequate funding and investment in services was frequently described as leaving communities unable to provide the support young people need. Funding cycles were also widely criticised for providing only short term security for services across the public and community sectors, and (as explored in more depth below) all participants called for a longer term vision and approach.

A key conclusion to draw from the evidence thus far is that, where young people's trajectory through life involves a disproportionate concentration of the factors discussed above, they are placed at higher risk of engaging in intimate partner violence and abuse. (Many of these factors are also, of course, a concern for all sorts of reasons other than their contribution to partner abuse: poverty and gender inequality also matter for reasons of social justice, for example.) Efforts to tackle IPVA among young people in high risk contexts thus require examining and acting on the whole ecology of risk and vulnerability: a narrow focus on any subset of factors will leave others in place (and so any positive effects may still only be a drop in the ocean). Government policy must recognise the need to address the issue from all sides, comprehensively and coherently.

Direct work with young people in high risk contexts to address intimate partner violence and abuse

Our evidence review found an increasing focus within research on the influence of extrafamilial contextual factors on IPVA. It also found signs of an increasing focus within services in the UK, and particularly some children's services, on understanding and intervening to address the extrafamilial contextual risks many young people face. We found extremely scant existing evidence, however, on context-sensitive or any other interventions to address IPVA among gang-affected young people and others in high risk contexts. Several studies note the implications of their main findings for interventions, but there is a clear deficit of dedicated impact and process evaluations of interventions working to address IPVA among these cohorts. This section therefore predominantly discusses findings from interviews with professionals from public services and community or third

sector organisations working with young people in contexts of high extrafamilial risk, including gang-affected young people, which explored their insights and experiences to draw out lessons on what the work currently looks like and how it might be strengthened. A strong recommendation of the study for research to re-focus towards identifying and elucidating in greater detail what effective preventative and responsive interventions might look like.

General recommendations or implications for intervention from the literature include: integrating sexual violence prevention and reproductive health promotion within gang violence intervention programs (Miller et al, 2012); addressing gender beliefs among gang members, with a focus on improving equity in sexual and romantic relationships, rather than respect for females as gang members (Wesche and Dickson-Gomez, 2019); early interventions to help all gang members (including boys and young men) understand and identify unequal gender norms, and interpersonal and sexual coercion and violence (Nydegger et al, 2017); implementing gender-specific prevention and intervention programmes that acknowledge and address gender differences in risk factors for IPV (Valasik and Reid, 2020); providing 'specialized and coordinated modes of investigation, support, and care' (Salter, 2014); addressing IPV-related needs and concerns within pregnancy care for teenagers (Renker, 2006); examining the potential to involve parents in adolescent dating violence prevention programmes (Latzman et al, 2015); expanding the focus of interventions, to respond to extra-familial risk factors including social marginalisation (Hesketh, 2019); addressing multiple forms of violence, including community-level violence (Reed et al, 2009); mapping neighbourhood-level risk factors to improve targeting of IPV prevention strategies (Gracia at al, 2015); and using hospital-based data to understand the geographic distribution of sexual and gender based violence cases, and thereby to identify 'hot-spots' to prioritise when targeting interventions (Muldoon et al, 2019).

The gendered nature of intervention with young people to address IPVA

The professionals we spoke to all said the cohorts they work with are mostly boys and young men, and a minority of girls and young women. As described above, there was also universal agreement that highly gendered intimate partner violence and abuse are endemic and normalised among their cohorts.

One of the most striking findings of the primary research was that, while there is some direct work going on with young people to address risks of abuse, the vast majority of this is targeted at girls and young women. The aim of any work on IPVA was generally described in terms of empowering girls and young women to keep themselves safe from abuse. Within teams that had a team member with particular expertise in IPVA, this team member tended also to work predominantly with girls and young women.

> "We work with young women as well, we have specialist sexual violence workers. I suppose the big difference between the work with young women and the work with young men is the work with young women is all about this. And the work with the young men touches on it, but the main focus of that work would be around them being violent towards their peers. But work with young women is almost 100% around grooming, consent, sexual violence, coercive control."

In other words, intimate partner violence and abuse is treated as an issue for girls and young women, but not boys and young men. It was described as absolutely central to work with girls but, by almost all participants, as peripheral at most to work with boys.

The fundamental premise of this kind of siloed approach places responsibility for avoiding violence and abuse on girls and young women, without working to tackle its causes. It leaves boys and young men without support to address their own abusive behaviours. The best case scenario, in terms of the intervention outcomes it is reasonable to expect, is therefore that girls engaged in interventions do manage to keep themselves safe from the unabated threat and that threat finds its target elsewhere. The approach also leaves boys without the support they need to address any violence or abuse they face from their partners. The limits of current work and the need for additional focus on changing abusive behaviour rather than avoiding abuse were discussed in clear terms by some participants.

> "The focus is always on the victims, you know, and in some respects, rightly so. But also, if we're not then helping the perpetrator, then this is just going to be an ongoing cycle, isn't it. […] Yes, safeguard victims. But actually, we need to help and support perpetrators, or, you know, like I say, one relationship will end another will begin, and the same thing is going to happen."

Where work was done with boys and young men, this was often discussed as happening 'when it comes up naturally', rather than as an element of any practice model, framework or approach.

Challenges with working with boys and young men to address IPVA

Participants described a range of barriers, challenges and difficulties with working with boys and young men on intimate partner violence. In discussions of service remit, one participant from a local authority gangs unit described prioritising other forms of violent behaviour among boys and young men.

> "The biggest risk now is them going out and killing. The young men stabbing each other are the young men. So our highest [unhearable] is stopping them stabbing other men. And while I'm not diminishing the importance at all of the violence that happens with the young women, it's sort of less… less people die."

Reflecting on this, it may seem to represent a perceived hierarchy of harm ('rape is less serious than stabbing'), which is, at least, contested, considering the rights of all children and young people to be protected from all forms of serious harm.

But these judgements, and other factors, were described as coming into play when making difficult choices in the context of limited and insecure funding cycles and fluctuating political fashions. Participants described the dynamics of funding regimes as significantly affecting how they 'position the work', with some noting, for example, relatively easier access to funding for tackling youth crime and, within that, certain areas of crime such as – for now – county lines.

Also in relation to service remit, some participants described their service models as based on treating the young people they work with as victims, not perpetrators. This distinction and consequent distribution of work, stratified by whether a young people has been abusive or experienced harm, seems particularly ill-suited to work to address partner abuse among young people in high risk contexts, however, as one participant reflected.

> "So we definitely probably see a lot of young people who are… who we are treating as victims because of the way that they have come to us and the support

> that we're offering, but that may have also been considered perpetrators in different spaces. […] We need a cultural shift, don't we, because… we're basically saying we're fine staying in this space where women have to keep themselves safe. And nothing is done about the people who are harming them or not enough is done about the people who are harming them."

This participant described missed opportunities to take a more nuanced approach.

> "I feel like that then means there's obviously an opportunity for us to indirectly safeguard young women by making those conversations more normalised with young men, but also an opportunity for us to make sure that young men have a space to disclose any things that they may have experienced within relationships, which I don't think we give as often as we should."

Professionals also discussed challenges due to the mix of skills, confidence and interests in teams not always being well suited to addressing IPVA with the boys and young men they work with. Most teams we spoke to with a specific remit to focus on gangs, across public services and community organisations, placed a high value on the lived experience of professionals working with young people (the benefits of which we discuss further below). Lived experience was described by almost all the professionals we spoke with as a key enabler of developing the kinds of relationships with young people that might enable change – including changing abusive behaviours. But expertise in IPVA, as discussed above, tended to be siloed into work with girls, and child and adolescent clinical psychology was not a well represented discipline among the gangs teams we spoke with.

> "I think people the right place people to do that work would be these people [in specialist gangs teams with good representation of lived experience], because we've spent time building those relationships. But it's another level of support, of encouragement, of training."

These gaps in relevant expertise and skills within teams were cited as a key barrier to those with the closest relationships with young people engaging in any work on IPVA. In particular, a common (and well-evidenced) concern was that, given the prevalence of domestic abuse within the childhood homes of the young people they work with, discussions of intimate partner abuse would risk causing psychological harm and re-traumatisation, and should only be done by highly skilled professionals, trained and qualified in trauma-informed, therapeutic approaches.

> "As a staff team, we're used to stepping into space of violence between gang members, and less used to doing relationship work with young men. We're pushing and working harder, but it's proving quite hard for us to develop it."

All participants agreed there is a lack of practice frameworks, theoretical models and tools to underpin or inform work with any young people, but particularly boys and young men, and those in high risk contexts, on intimate partner abuse. One participant discussed using an adapted version of the DASH tool, intended for use in assessments of adult victims of domestic abuse, to inform work with young women to think through the threats and strengths in their social networks.

While much work was described in terms of having conversations with young people, which might provide opportunities to discuss issues with relationships and partners, professionals emphasised the importance of these being led by the young person and tailored to their interests and concerns. Several further reflected on the barriers to boys and young men talking about these issues with professionals, or anyone else. Feelings of shame and stigma connected to having engaged in abusive

or violent behaviour towards partners were frequently raised as a barrier to open discussions, with silence as a psychological defence. One participant reflected on how wider social norms can also act to silence boys and men on these issues.

> "I don't know that society has those sorts of conversations with young men. When a young woman has been harmed, and you want her… I think the difficult thing with some services is that they come at that with, the reason they do those things is with a view to teach that young woman how to keep herself safe, which I think misses the point a bit. […] We learn all too often as women that there are lots of things we can do to keep ourselves safe. But if there's a perpetrator that wants to take advantage of those things, then that will still exist. We feel comfortable having these conversations with women, because we're saying this is what you do to stay safe. And with men, I think we're not very comfortable having those conversations to say these are things that you also shouldn't do to endanger someone or, and in the same respect there are obviously men who have experienced relationship abuse as well."

This points to the paradigm that needs shifting. Of course children, young people and adults too should be empowered to avoid, as far as they can, experiencing violence and abuse, but preventing and responding to abuse must also involve those who are engaging in abuse, and the contexts that make abusive behaviour more likely.

Enablers of effective direct work with young people in high risk contexts to address IPVA

Professionals discussed several enablers of direct work with young people in high risk contexts that are relevant to understanding how work to address their experiences of intimate partner violence and abuse could be approached. Certain key enablers were unanimously agreed upon by participants. Among these were the need to provide long term, relationship-based, young person-led support. The caution, particularly for policy-makers, that 'there are no quick fixes' came up frequently in interviews. As is well established in the literature on children's and transitional services in the UK, supporting vulnerable young people most often requires building a long term, trusted relationship through which strengths can be bolstered and risks addressed, centring their wishes as well as their needs. Intervention across stages of vulnerability and risk was viewed as crucial – including early intervention to reduce escalation of risks and transitional (post-18) services among gang-affected young people. Having teams that could work across child and young adult age groups was also seen as particularly crucial given the multi-age nature of most gangs.

Participants were unanimous on the need to deliver young person-led, individually tailored support – not a structured, time-limited programme with set activities, goals and milestones. Meeting young people 'where they are' – both physically (through 'street work') and in terms of their interests and aspirations – was viewed as vital to effective work.

> "It's hard with our clients to stick to one programme because every client is so individual and their needs are so complex. I wouldn't... I don't think it would work very well, if we just had one kind of specific programme that we had to follow."

"If they're not in the mood, there's no point doing something. Structured doesn't work – week 1 we do this, week 2 this…"

"Centre them in any plans. […] Focus on their best hopes and ambitions for the future."

In terms of professional qualities, participants discussed the importance of lived experience as well as highly developed skill sets. Lived experience was viewed as not only helping to establish and strengthen relationships with young people through their identification with the professional, but also as providing relevant role models, and bringing a range of benefits to teams and services including better inclusion of underrepresented voices.

"We push the lived experience angle very strongly. I mean, our staff team that delivers this work is probably about 80 or 90% people with a range of lived experience. It doesn't just mean they've got the empathy, it also means they represent in other ways, age, race and so on."

"They see you as a role model, and they see you as proof that they can change, that they can do things that you've done."

Interestingly, there were differences of view on whether the gender and racialised identities of professionals \mattered to relationship-building with young people. While one professional expressed the view that sending a white woman to work with the young boys in their cohort would not work, another described instances where, in their view, professionals made a difference to young people's biases and prejudice, by bucking stereotyped expectations. Several professionals also talked about the relevance of knowing and being from the local area:

"If you see our Welsh team, it's staffed by big Welsh guys, who've been through the criminal justice system in Wales, so they can talk to young Welsh kids in a way that the professionals in their area can't."

In terms of the mix of skill sets, as discussed above, psychological and therapeutic expertise, as well as expertise in violence against women and girls, was often described as a deficit. In teams that did use specifically trauma-informed approaches, that evidence-informed theoretical grounding was viewed as vital in improving the team's collective understanding of, and ability to respond effectively to, the needs of children and young people. Given the value of lived experience in facilitating long term, relationship-based work with young people living in contexts of high extrafamilial risk, this suggests potential value in a multi-disciplinary team-around-the-worker approach, with group case discussion to enable continual input from dedicated specialists to inform ongoing direct work. It also strongly suggests the imperative of continual specialist skills development among staff who can effectively build relationships with young people.

"Support, value, invest in frontline staff. Have a flatter hierarchy of management. Have a flat hierarchy in terms of what we privilege. And by that… Enforcement's important. I think it's incredibly important. […] But it just isn't… it's a short solution. And I think we need to invest in longer solutions. And that that comes from investing in staff, training them and, kind of, acknowledging where they are at the moment as well. You know, I think we've got really, really good staff. […] And I just think that's the way forward. I think this idea of having well paid, well rewarded frontline practitioners, specialists in their field, who can teach and

support others to do that, in all areas, including intimate partner violence, it would be a good idea."

The lack of focus on IPVA in work with boys might also be addressed through further development and testing of relevant practice frameworks, approaches and tools. This is not to suggest there is a need for one-size-fits all, inflexible, step-by-step approach – existing evidence is clear, and participants agreed, these would be ineffective. It is, instead, to point to the clear need for further support and guidance to inform, motivate and provide a compass for the kinds of conversations and other work that may help to shift the framework outwards, from addressing violence towards peers, to include, in addition, violence and abuse towards partners.

This might be facilitated through existing work in several local authorities to develop, test and refine approaches such as contextual, complex and transitional safeguarding models, as well as public health models of youth violence and exploitation. These appear potentially promising models through which the specific issue of partner abuse among young people in high risk contexts might be addressed, provided the issue is centred as a key focus of the model.

These models share a recognition of the need for a joined up, multi-partner approach to addressing the risks facing young people. Where participants described multi-agency or multi-partner work, they cited benefits of building mutual understanding, identifying overlapping agendas, thinking imaginatively about what can be achieved, benefitting from information sharing, and efficiencies in collaborative work. Difficulties and challenges were also identified, including difficulties in fostering genuinely collaborative partnerships, keeping different service remits and responsibilities clear, ensuring collective approaches do not dilute accountability, and keeping a balanced focus on the range of issues that matter. Several participants expressed the strong view that, while policing and criminal justice are key partners, enforcement approaches are the least effective in supporting young people to move away from violence: a central focus needs to be on supporting professionals who have or can develop positive relationships with young people to deliver effective work with them, including by creating an enabling environment for this work throughout wider services.

As much of the discussion in this report shows, the drivers and stressors for intimate partner abuse among young people in high risk contexts run across the meso and macro social levels, from families and peer groups, to schools, neighbourhoods and local services, through to national policy and vectors of stratification. No single service can shoulder responsibility for a young person's entire social environment. A comprehensive, coherent approach is needed to address the ecology of risk and vulnerability to engaging in abuse, at all levels, simultaneously.

Overall, there remains a very significant need to build an evidence base to help us understand how interventions with young people, and into their contexts, may help to address abusive behaviour. We caution, however, that short term evaluation of this work will be as little use as short term intervention, and urge a longer term vision of continual development through ongoing testing and reflexive improvement. Evaluation itself would also benefit from taking a participatory approach, working with young people to co-design evaluation frameworks that capture the issues and outcomes that matter to them.

Conclusions and recommendations: addressing the ecology of vulnerability

The evidence from this study illuminates an extensive range of drivers and stressors for intimate partner violence and abuse faced by young people living in contexts of high risk. Our analysis does not suggest that any single factor or combination of factors necessarily in all cases influences or causes abusive behaviours but, instead, is intended to provide an overview of issues identified in the literature and by the professionals we interviewed as increasing young people's vulnerability to engaging in partner abuse. Participants in this study consistently emphasised that almost all the young people they work with are subject to multiple and in some cases very many of these factors.

The key individual and contextual factors identified in this study as influencing young people's vulnerability to engaging in violence and abuse towards intimate partners are:

- **At the individual level:** psychology and subjective wellbeing (including trauma and other mental health conditions, stress, the need for identity and a sense of self, and an underdeveloped sense of agency and self-efficacy); patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes and beliefs; a lack of life skills for navigating high-risk contexts; some special educational needs, disabilities and developmental delays (including those that are undiagnosed).
- **At the family level:** experiencing or witnessing domestic violence within the family home; parental misuse of alcohol or drugs; parental mental health; patriarchal and misogynistic gender norms within the family.
- **At the peer group level:** normative cultures of violence (reflected and amplified through interaction with the information environment); highly patriarchal and misogynist gender norms; hierarchical social norms and structures; continual stresses and threats faced by the peer group (from police or other gangs); provision of a collective identity that is maintained through violence.
- **At the school level:** lack of effective education on healthy relationships, violence and abuse, consent, gender, sexuality, critical thinking and moral reasoning; inappropriate school responses to incidents of violence and sexual harassment and assault; use of exclusions and Pupil Referral Units; misrecognition and lack of support for special educational needs and disabilities, including developmental delays; gender and other social norms.
- **At the neighbourhood level:** material disadvantage and deprivation; neighbourhood violence, public disorder and crime; patriarchal social norms.
- **At the support services level:** lack of appropriate or sufficient support from mental health and other children's services; lack of youth centres, libraries and other community-based diversions into positive and safe activities with positive role models; cliff edge of support at 18; service inequalities stratified by socioeconomic status and racialised identity.
- **At the social and policy levels:** overall gender inequalities, patriarchy and misogyny in society; poverty and economic deprivation; policy, legislation and budgets (including on poverty, inequality, youth violence and crime, domestic violence and abuse, and education including Personal, Social and Health and Economic (PSHE) education).

Our hope is that this framework – an ecology of vulnerability – contributes to existing efforts to develop more long term, holistic approaches to addressing intimate partner violence among young

people in high risk contexts, which are sensitive to the relevance of the full range of often interrelated aspects of their environments.

Future research should prioritise the elucidation of explanatory mechanisms that enable us to understand why young people in these contexts have a higher likelihood of engaging in abusive behaviour, and what works in preventative and responsive interventions. Our analysis provides a foundation for further exploration in these areas, identifying several avenues worth pursuing while sketching out how they may map on to the overall picture.

With regard to practice, the findings suggest value in trialling interventions that address drivers on multiple levels and evaluating these to further the evidence base on contextual risks and interventions.

In terms of direct work with young people, our findings make clear there is a fundamental need to refocus work to address IPVA among young people to include work with boys and young men. Working predominantly, or indeed only, with girls and young women to keep themselves safe places disproportionate responsibility for avoiding violence and abuse on girls and young women, without working to tackle its causes. This paradigm needs to shift. It leaves boys and men without the support they need to address their own abusive behaviours, and indeed to address any violence or abuse they face from their partners.

It is clear that practitioners' lived experience of high risk contexts is an important enabler of long term, relationship-based work with gang-affected young people, but also that professionals working in gangs teams often lack confidence, knowledge, skills and capacity to address IPVA behaviours among boys and young men. There is, then, potential value in a multi-disciplinary team-around-the-worker approach, with group case discussion to enable continual input from dedicated specialists to inform ongoing direct work, as well as an imperative for services to enable continual specialist IPVA skills development among staff with lived experience.

What is also clear, however, is that efforts to tackle IPVA among young people in high risk contexts must examine and act upon the whole ecology of risk and vulnerability: interventions with individual young people that leave environment drivers and stressors in place have a Sisyphean task. Likewise, too narrow a focus on any particular subset of environmental factors will struggle to mitigate others left in place. Policy-makers must urgently recognise the need for development, adequate funding and continual, participatory evaluation of long term, comprehensive and coherent strategies to support young people to flourish, free from violence.

References

Beyer, K., Wallis, A. B., & Hamberger, L. K. (2015). Neighborhood environment and intimate partner violence: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 16*(1), 16-47.

Burfeind, J., & Jeglum Bartusch, D. (2016). *Juvenile delinquency.* London: Routledge.

Cecil, E., Bottle, A., Cowling, T. E., Majeed, A., Wolfe, I., & Saxena, S. (2016) Primary care access, emergency department visits, and unplanned short hospitalizations in the UK. *Pediatrics, 137*(2).

Chui, Z., Gazard, B., MacCrimmon, S., Harwood, H., Downs, J., Bakolis, I., Polling, C., Rhead , R., Hatch, SL. (2020) Inequalities in referral pathways for young people accessing secondary mental health services in south east London. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 1*(16).

Clark, C. J., Ferguson, G., Shrestha, B., Shrestha, P. N., Oakes, J. M., Gupta, J., McGhee, S., Cheong, Y. F., & Yount, K. M. (2018). Social norms and women's risk of intimate partner violence in Nepal. *Social science & medicine, 202*, 162-169.

Cofie, N. (2020). A multilevel analysis of contextual risk factors for intimate partner violence in Ghana. *International review of victimology*, 26(1), 50-78.

Dixon-Woods, M., Agarwal, S., Jones, D., Young, B., & Sutton, A. (2005). Synthesising qualitative and quantitative evidence: a review of possible methods. *Journal of health services research & policy*, *10*(1), 45-53.

Dixon-Woods, M., Cavers, D., Agarwal, S., Annandale, E., Arthur, A., Harvey, J., Hsu, R., Katbamna, S., Olsen, R., Smith, L., Riley, R., & Sutton, A. J. (2006). Conducting a critical interpretive synthesis of the literature on access to healthcare by vulnerable groups. *BMC medical research methodology*, *6*(1), 1-13.

Eakin, M., & Mykhalovskiy, E. (2003). Reframing the evaluation of qualitative health research: Reflections on a review of appraisal guidelines in health sciences. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice, 9*(2), 187–194

Fatsis, L. (2019). Policing the beats: The criminalisation of UK drill and grime music by the London Metropolitan Police. *The sociological review*, *67*(6), 1300-1316.

Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *14*(4), 245-258.

Fernet, M., Lapierre, A., Hébert, M., & Cousineau, M. M. (2019). A systematic review of literature on cyber intimate partner victimization in adolescent girls and women. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *100*, 11-25.

Firmin, C. (2017). *Contextual Safeguarding: An overview of the operational, strategic and conceptual framework*.

Firmin, C., & Knowles, R. (2020). *The legal and policy framework for Contextual Safeguarding approaches: A 2020 update on the 2018 legal briefing*.

Firmin, C., & Lloyd, J. (2020). *Contextual Safeguarding: A 2020 update on the operational, strategic and conceptual framework*.

Firmin, C., Eastman, A., Ian Wise, Q. C., & Proschaka, E. (2019). *A Legal Framework for Implementing Contextual Safeguarding: Initial opportunities and consideration*.

Firmin, C., Horan, J., Holmes, D., & Hopper, G. (Undated). *Safeguarding during adolescence– the relationship between Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Transitional Safeguarding: A briefing*

Gover, A. R., Jennings, W. G., & Tewksbury, R. (2009). Adolescent male and female gang members' experiences with violent victimization, dating violence, and sexual assault. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 34*(1), 103-115.

Gracia, E., López-Quílez, A., Marco, M., Lladosa, S., & Lila, M. (2015). The spatial epidemiology of intimate partner violence: do neighborhoods matter?. *American journal of epidemiology, 182*(1), 58-66.

Hesketh, R. F. (2019). Joining gangs: living on the edge?. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice.*

Ilan, J. (2020). Digital Street Culture Decoded: Why Criminalizing Drill Music is Street Illiterate and Counterproductive. *The British Journal of Criminology*, *60*(4), 994-1013.

Kirst, M., Lazgare, L. P., Zhang, Y. J., & O'Campo, P. (2015). The effects of social capital and neighborhood characteristics on intimate partner violence: A consideration of social resources and risks. *American journal of community psychology, 55*(3-4), 314-325.

Latzman, N. E., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Niolon, P. H., & Ghazarian, S. R. (2015). Predicting adolescent dating violence perpetration: Role of exposure to intimate partner violence and parenting practices. *American journal of preventive medicine, 49*(3), 476-482.

Leitão, R. (2021). Technology-Facilitated Intimate Partner Abuse: a qualitative analysis of data from online domestic abuse forums. *Human–Computer Interaction, 36*(3), 203-242.

LeSuer, W. (2020). An international study of the contextual effects of gender inequality on intimate partner sexual violence against women students. *Feminist criminology, 15*(1), 97-118.

Lynes, A., Kelly, C., & Kelly, E. (2020). THUG LIFE: Drill music as a periscope into urban violence in the consumer age. *The British Journal of Criminology*, *60*(5), 1201-1219.

Lyng, S. (Ed.). (2004). *Edgework: The sociology of risk-taking*. London: Routledge.

Meiksin, R., Allen, E., Crichton, J., Morgan, G. S., Barter, C., Elbourne, D., Hunt, K., Melendez-Torres, G. J., Morris, S., Reyes, H., Sturgess, J., Taylor, B., Young, H., Campbell, R., & Bonell, C. (2019). Protocol for pilot cluster RCT of project respect: a school-based intervention to prevent dating and relationship violence and address health inequalities among young people. *Pilot and feasibility studies, 5*, 13.

Mercer S., and Watt GCM., (2007) The inverse care law: clinical primary care encounters in deprived and affluent areas of Scotland, *Annals of Family Medicine, 5*(6), pp. 503–510.

Miller, E., Levenson, R., Herrera, L., Kurek, L., Stofflet, M., & Marin, L. (2012). Exposure to partner, family, and community violence: gang-affiliated Latina women and risk of unintended pregnancy. *Journal of urban health: bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine, 89*(1), 74–86.

Muldoon, K., Galway, L., Drumm, A., Leach, T., Heimerl, M., & Sampsel, K. (2019). P114: Geographies of sexual assault: using geographic information system analysis to identify neighbourhoods affected by violence. *Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine, 21*(S1), S105-S105.

Nydegger, L. A., DiFranceisco, W., Quinn, K., & Dickson-Gomez, J. (2017). Gender norms and age-disparate sexual relationships as predictors of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and risky sex among adolescent gang members. *Journal of urban health, 94*(2), 266-275.

Petering, R. (2016). Sexual risk, substance use, mental health, and trauma experiences of gang-involved homeless youth. *Journal of adolescence, 48*, 73-81.

Reed, E., Silverman, J. G., Welles, S. L., Santana, M. C., Missmer, S. A., & Raj, A. (2009). Associations between perceptions and involvement in neighborhood violence and intimate partner violence perpetration among urban, African American men. *Journal of community health, 34*(4), 328-335.

Renker, P. R. (2006). Perinatal violence assessment: Teenagers' rationale for denying violence when asked. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing, 35*(1), 56-67.

Salter, M. (2014). Multi-perpetrator domestic violence. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 15*(2), 102-112.

Taylor, S., & Xia, Y. (2018). Cyber partner abuse: A systematic review. *Violence and victims*, *33*(6), 983-1011.

Ulloa, E. C., Dyson, R. B., & Wynes, D. D. (2012). Inter-partner violence in the context of gangs: A review. *Aggression and violent behavior, 17*(5), 397-404.

Valasik, M., & Reid, S. (2020). Distinguishing between Aggression in Groups and in Gangs: Are Gangs Always Violent? In Ireland, C. A., Lewis, M., Lopez, A., & Ireland, J. L. (Eds.). *The Handbook of Collective Violence: Current Developments and Understanding*. Routledge.

VanderEnde, K. E., Yount, K. M., Dynes, M. M., & Sibley, L. M. (2012). Community-level correlates of intimate partner violence against women globally: A systematic review. *Social science & medicine*, *75*(7), 1143-1155.

Viner RM and Barker M (2005) Young people's health: the need for action, *BMJ, 330*(7496), 901–903.

Voith, L. A., Topitzes, J., & Berg, K. A. (2020). The transmission of violence and trauma across development and environmental contexts: Intimate partner violence from the perspective of men with histories of perpetration. *Child abuse & neglect, 99*, 104267.

Walker, K., & Sleath, E. (2017). A systematic review of the current knowledge regarding revenge pornography and non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit media. *Aggression and violent behavior*, *36*, 9-24.

Wesche, R., & Dickson-Gomez, J. (2019). Gender attitudes, sexual risk, intimate partner violence, and coercive sex among adolescent gang members. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 64*(5), 648-656.

Wheeler, N.J., Carlson, R.G., Sami, W.Y., and Hipp, C. (2021). Adverse Childhood Experiences as Predictors of Differences in Intimate Justice, Conflict, Control, and Power in Intimate Relationships. *Journal of Family Violence,* 1-11.

Wilson, N. (2016). Socioeconomic status and intimate partner violence. *Reed College working paper*.

Yakubovich, A. R., Heron, J., Feder, G., Fraser, A., & Humphreys, D. K. (2020). Long-term Exposure to Neighborhood Deprivation and Intimate Partner Violence Among Women: A UK Birth Cohort Study. *Epidemiology (Cambridge, Mass.)*, *31*(2), 272–281.

Zweig, J. M., Yahner, J., Dank, M., & Lachman, P. (2014). Can Johnson's typology of adult partner violence apply to teen dating violence?. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 76*(4), 808-825.