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Policing Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children: Children's and Police Officers' Experiences

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Policing Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children: Children's and Police Officers' Experiences

By

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A dissertation submitted as part of the requirements for the
Doctorate of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

Aim: This research represents a ‘first look’ at ‘emotional intelligence’ (EI) (Goleman, 1996); and how EI may mediate police-child interactions at incidents of domestic abuse (DA). **Background:** It is now widely accepted that very few children and young people (CYP) living with DA remain unaffected, the effects of which may be carried into adulthood (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012; Radford, 2011; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Wolfe et al. 2003; Holt et al., 2008; Levendosky et al., 2002). The common conceptualisation of children as passive ‘witnesses’ of DA and the failure to recognise them as direct ‘victims’ in their own right, separate from adult victims can act as a major barrier for professionals responding to children within this context (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Children are almost always represented as outside the violence between adults, a representation that is often reproduced in academic and professional discourses e.g. ‘victims and their children’ (HMICFRS, 2017, p. 36). The first professional many child victims of DA often come into contact with are members of the police. This represents a ‘key moment’ to enhance the welfare and safety of many children (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). **Methods:** Semi-structured interviews with police officers and children were carried out, as well as two case study interviews using a ‘Think Aloud’ protocol. A major consideration for this research was the development of a research philosophy that explicitly privileges the voice of the child and a children’s rights-based approach (Lundy, 2007; UNCRC, 1989). **Sample:** 20 semi-structured interviews with police officers and 15 semi-structured interviews with children were carried out. Five children aged 4-7 and ten children aged 8-15 participated in individual art-based interviews using ‘draw and talk’ technique. Two police officers and two children (aged 12 and 14 years old) took part in the case study interviews. **Analysis:** Thematic Analysis explored police officers and children’s responses that were illustrative of Goleman’s constructs of EI. **Findings:** Children reported significant differences in empathy, a key tenet of EI, which impacted children, especially younger children’s perceptions of the police as a “helping” profession and feelings of safety and visibility at incidents of DA. This study found evidence of important differences in the level officers reported and made use of emotional knowledge and understanding in response to children at incidents of DA. **Recommendations:** EI appears

to offer an important contribution to the overall efficacy of officers at incidents of DA involving children. This offers challenges for officers' and organisational perceptions' which view these "soft skills" as ancillary to the role of policing.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
CAADA	Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse
CJINI	Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland
CNR	Catholic, Nationalist, Republican
CDC	Center for Disease Control
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CS	Case Study interview
DA	Domestic Abuse
DAO	Domestic Abuse Officer
DASH	Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DOJ	Department of Justice
EBP	Evidence-Based Policing
EI	Emotional Intelligence
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

IP	Injured Party
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LPT	Local Policing Team
NPT	Neighbourhood Policing Team
NI	Northern Ireland
PPO	Personal Protection Order
PUL	Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RTA	Retrospective Think-Aloud
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SCR	Serious Case Review
SS	Semi-Structured interview
TA	Thematic Analysis
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WHO	World Health Organisation

Details of Conference Papers and Publications

Conference Papers

Paper presented to ‘Violence: children, family and society’ conference, Northampton (June 2015)

Paper presented to Northern Ireland Division of British Psychological Society ‘Every Voice Counts: Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland’ (August 2015)

Paper presented to European Conference in Domestic Violence, Belfast (September 2015)

Paper presented to Northern Ireland Division of British Psychological Society: ‘*We are trained to look at things differently*’: *Emotional Intelligence and the Relevance for Police officers* (March 2017)

Southern Trust Child Protection Conference ‘Neglect under the microscope’: conducted a workshop ‘*Please Listen Please Help: Don’t neglect children’s voices*’ (April 2017)

Paper presented to ResilienceCon, Nashville, TN, USA: ‘*We are trained to look at things differently*’: *Emotional Intelligence and the Relevance for Police officers*. Strength-based approaches to understanding, preventing, and responding to violence (April 2017)

Paper presented to European Conference in Domestic Violence, Porto (September 2017)

‘See, Hear, Act’: Women’s Aid Conference Children & Domestic Violence (February 2018) – conducted a workshop based on the findings of this thesis.

Publications

Special issue 'European Research on Children, Adolescents and Domestic Violence: Impact, Interventions and Innovations' at the Journal of Family Violence (JOFV).
Title: "Emotional Intelligence: Challenging the Perceptions and Efficacy of 'Soft Skills' in Policing Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children".

Adversity becomes traumatic when it is compounded by a sense that one's mind is alone: normally. An accessible other mind provides the social referencing that enables us to frame a frightening and otherwise overwhelming experience.

(Allen & Fonagy, 2010)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Globally, reported levels of Domestic Abuse (DA) are on the increase, with one in four women experiencing DA over their lifetime (Council of Europe, 2002). This high rate of violence against women has seen DA characterised as a ‘significant public health problem’ (WHO, 2013, p. 2). In Northern Ireland (NI), the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) responded to 29,166 incidents of DA during the financial year 2016-2017, including three murders with a domestic abuse motivation (PSNI, 2017a). These figures represent a growing increase in the number of DA incidents reported to the PSNI over the last decade (PSNI, 2017a). Similar patterns exist across other jurisdictions in the UK. DA represents a third (33%) of violent crime, while 11% of all crime (excluding fraud) recorded by the police was domestic abuse-related (ONS, 2017). The results of a European wide survey (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2017) indicated that close to one third of women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. Analysis of ten separate prevalence studies found one in four women experience DA over their lifetime (Council of Europe, 2002). This European Union data, in which the prevalence of physical violence was differentiated by perpetrator, showed higher rates of physical violence by a previous partner than by a current partner. DA can and often does continue even after a couple have separated. Women’s Aid UK compiled details between 1994-2014 of 29 children from 13 families who were killed as a result of child contact arrangements in England and Wales. In five of these cases, contact was court-ordered (Saunders, 2004). These findings are indicative of the significant risk and disruption many women and children face because of DA.

However, official statistics for DA are likely to significantly underestimate the true prevalence of DA due to a tendency for this behaviour to go underreported. DA is the least likely of all violent crime to be reported to the police (ONS, 2017). According to a recent report by the Scottish Crime & Justice Survey (MacQueen, 2014), while 64% of respondents who experienced DA in the past 12 months had told at least one person or organisation about the abuse, only 13% reported the incident to the police. Of the 29% who did not tell anyone, 30% believed it was a private matter, 25% said the matter was too trivial, 8% said the police could not have done anything and 5% said the police would

not have been bothered (MacQueen, 2014). In NI, the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) 2015/16, found that ‘The police in Northern Ireland were only made aware of around one-third of all “worst” cases of domestic partner abuse (36.6% in NICS 2015/16), meaning that they were unaware of the experiences of six-in-ten victims (63.4%)’ (DOJ, 2017, p. 12). It is estimated that the economic cost of DA in NI for 2011/2012 was £674 million, the burden of which fell mainly on the victims and their families (DHSSPS & DOJ, 2016). Most significantly, these figures represent only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ due to the underreporting of DA-related crime to the police and the possible failure of the police to record the DA-related crime that is reported (Mooney, 2000).

Obtaining a clear understanding of the prevalence of DA is further complicated by the lack of an international agreed terminology, as the use of different conceptualisations and terminologies are evident within and across different disciplines and diverse cultural settings (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). This is important because how DA is conceptualised and defined determines its prevalence and nature – what is visible and known, and importantly, how it is understood and explained – and therefore what is and is not done about it through policy and practice (Itzin, 2000).

1.1 Defining ‘Domestic Abuse’

DA terminology has emerged from radically different social and political contexts, which has important implications for not only how DA is represented but how developing contexts have informed police attitudes. Bacchi (1999) refers to this as ‘problem representation’. In the US and Canada, the term ‘intimate partner violence’ (IPV) is most often used (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC, 2017]). In Scotland, the definition focuses on ‘partner abuse’ (MacQueen, 2014). In Australia, the term ‘family violence’ is applied as it encompasses all forms of violence in intimate, family and other relationships of mutual obligation and support (Australian Law Reform Commission & New South Wales Law Reform Commission, 2010, p. 188). On a symbolic level, the term ‘family violence’ attempts to decentre the focus of abuse as solely between partners to

include all family members, including children. In NI, the term ‘domestic violence’ tends to be used and has been defined as:

Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former partner or family member. (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety & Department of Justice, 2016, p. 2)

Women’s Aid Federation NI, the primary organisation working to support child victims of DA, offers the only definition of DA to include a focus on children: ‘The intentional and persistent physical or emotional abuse of a woman, or of a woman and her children in a way that causes pain, distress or injury’ (WAFNI, 2017). While terminology is undoubtedly a highly contested issue, the term “domestic abuse” (DA) will be used in this study as it is applied by Women’s Aid Federation NI. It is acknowledged that the term “domestic” has been linked to the trivialisation of DA by police and that not all abuse occurs within the home. However, for the purposes of this study, it was considered important to retain the focus on the “domestic” as the term goes some way to acknowledge the corruption of a foundational location and relationships that form an intrinsic part of children’s sense of safety, functioning and development. This was evidenced by Wardhaugh (1999), who coined the phrase ‘homeless-at-home’ in reference to female victims experiencing DA which can be applied equally to child victims of DA. The reference to “abuse” removes any assumptions with regard to the topology of abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, verbal or financial. Victims often talk about the range of abuse they suffer, with a large proportion stating that the relationship did not involve physical violence (Armour & Sleath, 2014). Research has shown that ‘living in an emotionally charged and violent household has negative implications for children’s emotional and mental health in both the immediate and longer term’ (Devaney, 2015, p. 3). DA is located within a gendered landscape; ‘Western industrialised nations are inherently patriarchal, and as such policy makers, service providers and researchers must engage with seeing domestic violence as gendered’ (Devaney & Lazenbatt, 2016, p. 6). Feminist theory argues that patriarchal societies place men in positions of power over women, which operates in ways to perpetuate and condone violent behaviour by men toward women in the public and private sphere; ‘[...] violence continues to reflect and

also serves to maintain structural gender inequalities' (Skinner, Hester & Malos, 2005, p. 2). This creates a culture which increasingly denies accountability concerning male perpetrators and increases accountability concerning female victims. Such constructions of DA suffuse discourses and responses to DA of 'gender blaming' (Scourfield & Coffey, 2002). Evidence of 'gender blaming' was found in a recent government report investigating the police response to victims of DA, which can have critical implications for the treatment of victims and professional responses (HMIC, 2014, p. 51). Alongside this it is important to see gender as just one of a number of structural issues impacting on the occurrence and responses to DA, 'intersectionality' (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2010, p. 3) – issues of race, poverty and sexual orientation to name three others which should be of interest to society if it is to find an effective remedy (Devaney & Lazenbatt, 2016).

Reflecting a gendered perspective of DA, The Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) (a representative, continuous, personal interview survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime of approximately 4,000 adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland) the most comprehensive statistics on DA found that women were twice as likely as men to be victims of DA (5.9 per cent compared to 2.5 per cent) (Campbell & Rice, 2017). Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (ONS, 2017) reported that just over half (54 per cent) of violence against the person offences involving female victims were flagged as DA-related compared to 20 per cent of offences where the victim was male.

A number of leading researchers and feminists argue that the 'further fracturing of the definition of DA, in order to be more inclusive / representative, has led to less not more clarity and confusion' (All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2014, p. 8). Feminists strongly argue that the multitude of different definitions used in this area can obscure and subjugate the gendered nature of violence and conflate types of violence between intimate partners and family members, each of which may involve different factors and have different needs (Mooney, 2000). Importantly, they contend that these definitions 'remov[e] references to the gendered nature of domestic violence from discussion of provision for survivors' (APPG on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2014, p. 8).

DA is widely acknowledged as a leading cause of long-term problems for women and their children (Felitti et al., 1998; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Wolfe et al., 2003). It is the most common form of abuse against women and children which is in stark contrast to men, who are more likely to be attacked by a stranger (WHO, 2002, p. 89). Martin (1978, as cited in Smith, 1989, p. 3) described the accepted practice of ‘wife beating’ as ancient and deep; such practices continue to be reaffirmed in today’s society. Researchers have argued that DA is one of the most toxic form of violence that children can experience (Hughes, 2003; Överlien, 2010), and a stark reminder that home is often the most dangerous place for many children to be. The physiological connection between DA and negative health outcomes for children is well established in the literature (Kitzmann et al., 2002 & Wolfe et al., 2002). DA is considered one of the most serious burdens facing our society; supported by the findings of one of the single largest studies conducted into adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) which includes DA (Felitti et al., 1998), discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Accordingly, addressing DA has become a key government issue in most countries, leading to the development of worldwide policies to prevent DA and mitigate its effects, such as the recent adoption of the ‘Istanbul Convention’ (2011) by the Council of Europe, as well as policies at a domestic level, such as *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls* (VAWG) (Her Majesty’s Government, 2016), *Equally Safe: Scotland’s Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls* (2016) and *Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland – A Seven Year Strategy* (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) & Department of Justice (DOJ) NI, 2016).

DA affects women and children regardless of geographical boundaries, age, ethnicity, religion or economic status. However, a strong body of evidence in the form of a literature review undertaken by Action for Children (Burgess et al., 2012) indicates a strong association between DA in households where mental ill-health, substance misuse and unemployment are also present. These three are commonly referred to as the ‘toxic trio’. The presence of one, two or all three elements is viewed as an indicator of increased risk of harm in children (Edleson, 1999). Multiple studies now indicate that DA often co-occurs with child maltreatment (Hamby et al., 2010; Radford et al; 2011). Some studies estimate that 45-70% of children who experience DA are also abused (Holt et al., 2008;

Överlien, 2010). In the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) in the US, nearly two-thirds of children who reported direct victimisation (64.5%) experienced more than one type of abuse (Finklehor et al., 2011). It is important to remember that DA is not a homogeneous mono-dimensional phenomenon but is often characterised by one or more forms of abuse such as physical, sexual, emotional and psychological harm (Radford et al., 2011); this phenomenon is known as "poly-victimisation" (Sabina & Straus, 2008). "Poly-victims" have been shown to have higher levels of trauma symptoms than those experiencing repeated victimisations of a single type (Turner et al., 2010). Moreover, the environments in which children are embedded have a differential impact on adjustment outcomes (Jouriles et al., 1998; Lagdon, Armour & Stringer, 2014). Thus, DA is a significant factor in child protection (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA), 2014).

In population-based studies, it is estimated that 6-15% of DA occurs during pregnancy (WHO, 2002, p. 101). However, a major limitation of most crime surveys is the lack of data on children's victimisation (Devaney, 2015). Other methodological issues associated with research in this field are over-sampling from shelter populations, who are by definition some of the most vulnerable individuals; reliance on the perceptions of adults and other professionals regarding children's experiences of DA; and overlap between child maltreatment and the 'toxic trio' of DA, mental health and substance abuse, although this has been taken into account in some studies (Edleson, 1999; Kitzmann et al., 2003).

1.2 Beyond 'Witnessing': Children's 'Experience' of Domestic Abuse

Research interest in children's experience of DA has risen dramatically since the first scientific publication on children and DA in 1975 (Levine, 1975). Various studies and surveys have shown that children, especially young children, are frequently present at and directly involved in these incidents (Clarke & Wydall, 2015; Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Radford et al., 2011). Families involved in documented incidents of DA have a significantly higher number of children in the home, especially children younger than age

five (Fantuzzo et al., 1997). It is estimated that 11,000 children and young people are living with DA in Northern Ireland (NI). Women's Aid Federation NI reported that the organisation provided refuge services to 710 women and 568 children in 2016/17, leading the organisation to conclude that the presence of so many children argues for greater attention to their needs (WAFNI, 2017). Recent prevalence studies by Radford and colleagues (2011) commissioned by the NSPCC in the UK indicate that 12% of children aged 11 and under, 18% of 11-17-year-olds and 24% of 18-24-year-olds had been exposed to DA between adults in their homes during childhood (Ibid, p. 47). Worldwide, one in four children (176 million) under the age of five live with a mother who is a victim of intimate partner violence (UNICEF, 2017). These statistics serve to remind us that home is often the most dangerous place for children to be (Lombard, 2015).

The social construction of DA as an adult defined issue is central to the debate surrounding children's experiences. The common conceptualisation of children as passive 'witnesses' of DA and the failure to recognise them as direct 'victims' in their own right, independent from adult victims, can act as a major barrier for professionals responding to children within this context (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). For example, the development of policies recognising that children are independently affected by DA was first introduced by Women's Aid Federation of England, the primary organisation working with adult and child victims of DA in 1986 (Hague et al., 2000, p. 117). Spurious representations of children are often reproduced in academic and professional discourses; examples include 'victims and their children' (HMICFRS, 2017, p. 36), 'children who have witnessed domestic abuse' (ONS, 2017, p. 14). Defining the term 'witnessing' or 'witness' as it applies to children remains a significant challenge for those conducting research in this field, and also for those working with children in a professional capacity (Överlien, 2010). Research with children has demonstrated that *witnessing* is multifactorial and encompasses not only being a direct eye-witness but being exposed prenatally, watching, hearing, direct involvement and/or experiencing the aftermath of DA (Edelson, 1999; Överlien, 2010). Outcomes for children who are present during the abuse are similar to those in which children are also directly physically abused (Kitzmann et al., 2003). Challenging the notion that children are 'passive victims' or 'silent witnesses' (Mullender, 2002, p. 2), there is considerable data to show their involvement

is significant and direct (McGee, 2000; Radford et al., 2011). A recent study investigating children's exposure to DA found that approximately two thirds of children were directly harmed, most often physically, emotionally or through neglect (Stanley et al., 2010). Drawing on interviews with children aged between 5 and 17, McGee (2000, p. 61) reported that 85% were physically present while their mothers were being abused in some way. More recent work, framing children's experiences of living with DA as coercive controlling behaviour against their mother, including psychological/emotional/verbal and financial abuse, isolation and monitoring activities; illuminates the complexity of how children experience DA beyond the 'violent incident model' guiding the policing and criminal justice response to DA (Stark, 2012, p. 199; Katz, 2016), 'that equates DA with discrete assaults and gauges severity by the degree of injury inflicted or threatened'. This work and expanding children's experiences of DA more generally, has important implications within the context of this study – creating a tension between the criminal justice system's need for evidence and the nuance and complexity of children's experiences of DA (discussed further in Chapter 2): 'Reframing domestic violence as coercive control changes everything about how law enforcement responds to partner abuse' (Stark, 2012, p. 213). Shifting the policing of DA from a violent incident-specific model to a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviours is 'far more sophisticated' in terms of the policing work (Stark, 2016, p. 215) and requires enhanced skills from officers; both professional and interpersonal skills.

Consequently, a number of researchers now prefer to use the term 'experience' to describe the active nature of children's involvement in DA (Överlien, 2010). The child, these researchers argue, is not a passive recipient, but an active agent in his or her life where DA is an important experience (Callaghan et al., 2015). For these reasons, the current study chooses not to use the terms 'witnessing' 'witness' or 'exposed' when reporting the experiences of children.

As a result of these studies, and campaigns in the UK such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)'s 'A Cry for Children' (1995), children who have experienced DA are recognised in law as having experienced a form of 'significant harm' (Adoption and Children Act, 2002, s120). This has consequences in both the immediate and longer term for their physical, psychosocial, emotional, behavioural,

developmental and cognitive wellbeing and functioning (Fantuzzo & Mohr; 1999; Rossman, 1998; Stanley et al., 2010).

The first professional with whom many child victims of DA come into contact are often members of the police. This represents a ‘key moment’ to enhance the welfare and safety of many children (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221); it represents one of the first opportunities for professionals to become aware of their experience and to offer help and support and how this moment may influence future interactions with professionals and the willingness of victims to share their experiences. To highlight this, on average some victims of DA will suffer 50 incidents before getting the help they need (SafeLives, 2015, p. 6). However, police intervention is typically not a positive experience for children (Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012)

1.3 Police Response to Children

Protecting children is one of the most important tasks the police undertake. Every officer and member of police staff should understand his or her duty to protect children as part of his or her day-to-day business. It is essential that officers recognise the needs of any children they may encounter. This may be in the home, the school or on the street. (HMIC, 2015a, p. 5)

Prior to the 1970s, the accepted police response to DA was to ignore it and accept it as a private matter (Smith, 1989). Under pressure from feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s and from organisations such as Women’s Aid, successive British governments were forced to act and introduce legislative measures such as the Domestic Violence Act 1976, the Children Act 1989 and the Family Law Act 1996 to protect both adult and child victims. Private law legislation such as the Domestic Proceedings (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 allowed individuals to apply for personal protection orders (PPO) and exclusion orders. PPOs were designed to protect the applicant from further abuse by the perpetrator, while exclusion orders prevented the perpetrator from entering defined areas. This legislation offered little in the way of meaningful protection from DA, however. It was not until the introduction of the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 that a breach of these orders became a criminal offence, giving police

the powers of arrest. Civil interventions in DA significantly transformed the role and responsibilities of the police service for those living with and experiencing DA, resulting in a stronger “pro-arrest” policy at incidents involving DA and sending a clear message that it was being taken more seriously.

Despite significant research on the conceptualisation of and legal developments in relation to DA, there is still a common tendency amongst police officers to treat DA as a trivial, ‘monolithic phenomenon’ centred on physical violence, which can have important implications for how officers investigate these incidents and treat adult and child victims (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2010, p. 2). As HMIC (2014, p. 9) states:

Many frontline officers, and in some cases specialist police officers, lack the skills they need to tackle domestic abuse effectively. Officers are often ill-equipped to identify dangerous patterns of behaviour in domestic abuse perpetrators accurately, in particular where there is no overt physical violence but instead there is psychological intimidation and control, which can also have fatal consequences.

Since the introduction of criminal justice measures, police officers represent the front line in the fight against DA and arguably are most accountable for the success or failure of those measures (Smith, 1989). The first professional that many children encounter in these situations is the police (Finkelhor & Turner, 2015). As previously mentioned, such encounters represent a ‘key moment’ in which to enhance the welfare and safety of many children (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221). The introduction of legislation (specifically, the Children Act 1989 & 2004 and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 offered children legal protection from harm such as DA. Children do not have to be directly involved in DA to be harmed by it (Holden, 2003). ‘Witnessing’ DA has now been recognised as a form of ‘significant harm’ under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Section 28, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 Section 120 (England & Wales) and the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 Section 24, placing new obligations on agencies such as the police to promote and secure the welfare and safety of children (Jaffe et al., 2004; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

Despite some progress in this regard, however, children remain the ‘silent’ and ‘hidden’ victims of DA (Edleson, 1999, p. 839). As a result, ‘Children’s experiences and voices are underrepresented in academic literature and professional practice’ (Callaghan et al., 2015, p. 1). Children often report that they are ignored and not taken seriously by the police (Holt et al., 2008; McGee, 2000; Mullender, 2002; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012) and importantly, that their understanding of their experience is neglected. Research has found that children who are exposed to the arrest of a family member experience mental health difficulties (Roberts et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the primary focus of attention and communication for the majority of police officers remains on the adults involved. Unless they have been physically injured or are witnesses to the abuse, children are perceived as outside the abuse and therefore the responsibility of other professionals, such as social workers. This tendency demonstrates what Stanley (2015, p. 235) refers to as a lack of ‘institutional empathy’. With some exceptions, most of the harm suffered by children is emotional and/or psychological in nature; few officers seem to have the training or the skills necessary to deal with this effectively, and thereby fail to uphold their professional duty and responsibilities with regard to children (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), 2014; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). This failure is particularly concerning, as we know that timely and sensitive intervention by professionals such as the police can make a significant difference to the lives of children and their families:

The importance of the quality of police interaction with victims cannot be overstated. Good, sensitive police work can, of itself, set the child on the road to recovery, and may have a greater contribution to make to future wellbeing than therapeutic or other services. (HMIC, 2015a, p. 13).

In 2015, in the context of the government’s action plan to end violence against women and girls, the then-Home Secretary Teresa May stated, ‘I have been absolutely clear that we must get the police and criminal justice response right’ (HM Government, 2015, p. 5). There have been various critiques, largely from victims, of the efficacy of the legal responses to DA (APPG, 2014). HMIC (2014, 2015) for example, maintains that while police service may establish procedures for dealing with domestic violence, it is still the approach of the individual officers that is the most crucial aspect of the response. Likewise, Holder (2001, p. 8), whilst acknowledging that the introduction of criminal justice measures is an integral part of an overall response to addressing DA, asserts that

this is ‘a resource, not a solution’. From this perspective, despite considerable progress with regard to strengthening the law with new police powers relating to coercive control, the policing response often fails to protect either adult or child victims of DA or to provide ‘justice’, which may or may not involve recourse to the criminal justice system (Lewis, 2004, p. 205).

Research conducted with women and children experiencing DA has found that a much more nuanced, victim-centred approach, which respects and understands the complex environment in which DA takes place and supports women’s agency, is urgently required (APPG, 2014). Logan, Shannon and Walker (2006, p. 1371) note the significance of officer attitudes at incidents of DA, arguing that ‘officer attitudes may be a silent contributor to situation interpretation and enforcement responses’. Foremost for victims is the need to be believed, listened to and not judged (HMIC, 2014), thereby providing a critical source of emotional and social justice for the victim. A recent, high-profile report commissioned on behalf of the Home Secretary by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) described the overall police response to DA as ‘not good enough’ (HMIC, 2014, p. 6). One of the major factors contributing to this finding was the poor attitude of officers, who were found to lack empathy, impacting significantly on the service response given to victims:

Victims described a *lack of empathy* demonstrated by officers, particularly when a victim remained with their partner or was perceived not to be actively supportive of police action. In some cases, officers were said to have framed questions in a way that made victims feel it was their fault that abuse has occurred. Of those victims responding to our survey who were dissatisfied with the police response, 31 percent gave the reason that the police were not sympathetic. (HMIC, 2014, p. 51; original emphasis)

The report drew attention to the need for training that targets ‘developing communication skills, including a specific focus on *empathy* with victims’ (HMIC, 2014, Recommendation 7, p. 23; emphasis added). Communicating empathy with victim’s helps them feel their experiences are important and will be taken seriously. Empathy is a core tenet of ‘emotional intelligence’ (EI) (Goleman, 1996). EI is defined as:

‘the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions effectively in ourselves and others. An emotional and social competency is a learned capacity, based on

emotional intelligence, which contributes to effective performance at work’ (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2011, HayGroup, p. 4).

EI is strongly associated with an individual capacity and/or organisational capacity for empathy. Empathy refers to the ‘ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion’ (Baron-Cohen, 2011, p. 11, as cited in Howe, 2013, p. 9). Empathy is rated as a key attribute of highly effective people (Covey, 1990; Goleman, 1996, 1999). Indeed, empathy is viewed as a critical element of more effective policing and leadership; ‘[...] leadership is an emotional process and that the context for police leadership is defined by the emotional orientation of the organisation, the wider culture, and the interpersonal relationships that permeate both’ (Drodge & Murphy, 2002, p. 421). In the context of DA, the ability to perceive thoughts and feelings that are often difficult to articulate and hidden by adult and child victims is critical to providing a positive and effective police response.

Much of the concern about improving the police response to DA is less about the lack of laws and policies than it is about the human element, such as the attitudes of attending officers (HMIC, 2014). A positive and effective police response involves not only professional skills but the ability to display empathy with victims and the self-awareness to recognise and manage the intense and challenging emotions that officers often report experiencing in response to attending incidents of DA (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012; Smith, 1989). Historically, officer training has focused primarily on managing the criminal justice and legislative aspects of DA, which may be a factor in reflecting officers’ attitudes to DA and to their policing role which has ‘skewed attention to process over the quality and effectiveness of help given’ (Munro, 2011, p. 6). Significantly less attention is given to developing personal qualities such as EI to deal with the complexity of DA and the human processes involved to ensure there is a focus on victim care and safety and to handle the ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) that is central to the service orientation of policing. Given that a service orientation is an intrinsic part of their role (Rowe, 2014), policing organisations ought to be concerned with how officers manage the emotional load associated with the job. EI positively predicts job performance in a number of occupations that have high levels of interpersonal contact and emotional labour (Morrison, 2007). This point was raised by Southall Black Sisters, a non-profit, all-Asian

organisation in the UK defending the rights of women against DA, whose position was expressed in the HMIC report:

Our concern about the policing of violence against women is not so much about the lack of laws and policies but about the implementation of these laws and policies. Consistently effective and sensitive implementation of criminal law and policies on domestic violence remains an elusive goal. (HMIC, 2014, p. 122)

However, recommendations that seek to improve empathy of officers are less clear about how this will be achieved. A robust, consistent and (emotionally) intelligent policing response is essential to protect all victims.

As this current study is conducted in NI, these issues are further complicated by the unique history of policing in NI and how the role of the policing during the conflict in NI has left a legacy which continues to affect how men, women and children interact with the PSNI today.

1.4 Policing in Northern Ireland: Conflict and Reform

The period commonly referred to as “The Troubles” had a direct effect on the delivery of policing in that it ‘distorted the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary]’s approach to policing and the community’s attitude to the policing of its streets and neighbourhoods’, leading to a more militaristic style of policing (Patten, 1999, p. 3). During the conflict, this led to significant challenges for the policing of certain communities in chiefly Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) areas. Compared to other parts of the UK and the Irish Republic, this created significant barriers to reporting and responding to DA during this time, especially in so-called ‘No Go’ areas in which police were reluctant to enter due to the risk to their lives they faced when they did so (Garrett, 1999; McWilliams & Ni Aolain, 2003).

The Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, chaired by Conservative politician Chris Patten, produced a report in 1999 that is known generally as the Patten Report (Patten, 1999). Among its 175 recommendations was the introduction of measures

to reform and ‘reorient’ the ethos and culture of policing in NI in an effort to move away from a security-driven policing model to a community policing model (Patten, 1999). These measures included a change to the name and symbols of the reformed police service and strategies to increase recruitment of individuals from Catholic/Nationalist communities. Importantly, the Commission also recommended the development of mechanisms and structures to create a more accountable police service, such as the establishment of a Police Ombudsman to investigate complaints about policing, and a Policing Board to oversee the delivery of policing. Integral to the success of these measures was a change in the ‘style of policing’ beginning with the management of the new police service, the aim being to move away from a ‘policing organisation which is commanded rather than managed’ (Patten, 1999, p. 57).

Prior to the Patten Report (1999), 92% of officers came from a Protestant background. While measures introduced to increase the number of Catholic applicants had some degree of success, the PSNI still is comprised mainly of individuals from a Protestant background (67.15% Protestant, 30.73% Catholic) (PSNI, 2018). Other developments, in part as a consequence of reforms introduced in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) (1998) which impacted traditional Orange Order marching routes and the flying of flags, have brought the police into new, sometimes violent conflict with working-class Protestant communities that traditionally were supportive of the police (Mastors & Drumhiller, 2014). At the same time, there has been an influx of newcomers to NI, some with cause to distrust the police in their home countries (NISRA, 2017), while dissident Republicanism continues to actively resist police involvement in the community. Consequently, as a symbol of law and order, policing in NI continues to be contested, often violently, by certain groups despite implementation of many of the reforms recommended by Patten (1999). All these factors can have an impact on the willingness of individuals to engage with the police and report DA.

In addition, this history may help to explain the findings of a recent Police College Review regarding the prevailing culture at the police training college: ‘The regime in the College was found to have elements more associated with a ‘pseudo-militaristic style’ based on punitive measures to gain compliance’ (Gibson, 2016, p. 2). This may have important implications for officers in their role going forward, including their

professional approach to DA. The PSNI outline six core behaviours prospective officers are expected to display: accountability; openness to change; service delivery; courtesy, fairness and respect; collaborative decision making; and working with others. These core behaviours are integral to Goleman's model of EI. Yet, despite the apparent value placed on these attributes, the current culture of policing in Northern Ireland does not appear to nurture these qualities in officers (Gibson, 2016). All of these issues may shape how the police respond to adult and child victims of DA in NI. Yet, little is known about how the police respond to child victims of DA in NI or whether the unique history of policing in NI is affecting how children perceive and interact with police when they attend DA incidents.

1.5 Study Rationale and Research Questions

DA is a major social issue that affects significant numbers of children worldwide. The main aim of this research is to explore how police officers can respond more effectively to children living with DA. Drawing on the theoretical framework of EI, this study will explore how police officers understand and respond to children living with and experiencing DA, and how officers could be more effective in dealing with DA in ways that are helpful to children. It seeks to explore how EI impacts officers' attitudes toward the policing of DA and to assess the extent to which children in NI view the police as a "helping" profession (Connelly et al., 2002). In this way, this study seeks to fill a significant gap in our understanding of how children and police officers experience these encounters and how the responses of police officers at DA incidents may be improved through the use of EI. In addressing these gaps, this research will also make an original theoretical and methodological contribution to research in this area. It will be the first study to examine if the theoretical framework of EI can usefully be applied to police officer interactions with children at DA incidents and enhance our understanding of how police respond to these children and how we can improve the ability of these officers to respond in a more empathic way to these children. Moreover, the research will make an original methodological contribution to work in this area by demonstrating how younger

children can be involved and consulted in developing more effective police responses to DA incidents. The research will also enhance our understanding of how children in NI respond to police officers and if the unique history of policing in NI affects how children perceive and interact with police responding to DA.

The focus of this study is informed by discussions with Women's Aid NI, the local Policing and Safety Partnership in Armagh and Down and initial desire to explore how police officers understand and respond to children living with and experiencing DA, and how officers can be more effective in dealing with DA in ways that are helpful to children within a local context. More specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do children perceive the role of the police in society and the purpose of police intervention at incidents of DA?
2. How do children experience the response of police officers at incidents of DA?
3. How do police officers describe their professional role and how do they experience, understand and respond to incidents of DA involving children?

The approach adopted by this study recognises children as individuals in their own right, with their own experiences, even though they are intimately tied to their family relationships. This reflects my biographical positioning as I approach this research.

1.6 Biographical Positioning: 'New Sociology of Childhood' and Children's Rights

As a researcher I acknowledge the role of my personal biographical positioning in the development of this thesis. The opportunity to conduct this doctoral research afforded myself a valuable opportunity to study an important issue with children and police officers in NI. I have a background in psychology and had conducted research (quantitative) and worked with children with additional support needs prior to conducting this research. At the beginning of this research, my knowledge of the field of domestic abuse and children was not as informed as my knowledge and

understanding of children and their development. Alongside this, I hold a strong professional interest in working with children and adopting a children's rights ethos. These interests informed the approach to this research in terms of the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings and methodology. A genuine desire to understand and learn about the experience of children and officers was an equally important factor in shaping the research objectives and design of the study.

This study was influenced by two key conceptual/theoretical frameworks which have had a significant impact on the lives of children, giving justification for the research approach taken here: the 'new sociology of childhood' proposed by James et al., (1998) and the introduction of the concept of children's rights through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). By uniting both approaches, a dynamic and empowered research process can be created that seeks to give equal voice to adult and children's experiences of policing in the context of DA, with the potential to inform both policy and practice (Lombard, 2015).

How researchers view children and childhood has direct implications for how they conduct research (Kellett, 2010). The approach taken by the current study, 'new sociology of childhood' (James et al., 1998), repositions children and young people as 'subjects' of research as opposed to 'objects' of research (Tisdall et al., 2009). Inherent in this approach is a view of children as 'active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live' (Winter, 2014, p. 481). This approach acknowledges that research with children is characteristically different from, not inferior to, research conducted with adult participants.

From a theoretical perspective, Jenks (1996, p. 7) contends that 'childhood' is 'delineated by boundaries that vary through time and from one society to another, but which are incorporated into the social structure and thus manifested through and formative of certain typical forms of conduct. Childhood then always relates to a particular cultural setting'. As such, definitions and experiences of childhood are not universal but rather are bound by time and culture:

Each new construction may be observed in approximate chronological order as: the Romantic child, the Evangelical child, the Factory child, the Delinquent child, the

Schooled child, the Psycho-medical child, the Welfare child of the era just prior to the First World War. Between 1914 and the late 1950's further developments produced what might more accurately be described as two 'reconstructions', such as they depended so much on their nineteenth century heritage, namely, the child of psychological jurisdiction – meaning child guidance clinics, psycho-analysis, educational psychology and Bowlbyism; and secondly, the family child (which included the 'public' child, usually children in care). (Hendrick, 1990, pp. 36-37)

Hendrick (1990) goes on to state that perceptions of childhood in the last 40 years have been harder to distinguish; this is in part due to a paradigm shift in how children are constructed in society, policy and research. There is a tension between nostalgic traditions and young people's independent status as recognised in law (UNCRC, 1989). This tension is also evident in discourse with and research involving children in situations of DA, which perceive children as 'vulnerable' or 'lacking in capacity'. Themes which are discussed further in Chapter 2.

A major consideration for the current study was the development of a research philosophy that explicitly privileges the voice of the child and a children's rights-based approach (CRBA). CRBA posits that 'The voices of children themselves must be prominent in [the] exploration of what is going on in their lives – we must approach children as knowing subjects' (Children's Rights International, 2005, p. 27). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most ratified international convention (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC (1989) make clear that children are not only *able* but are *entitled* to engage in 'the construction of meaning in their own lives' (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012, p. 129):

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (Article 12, UNCRC, 1989)

Moreover,

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form

of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice. (Article 13, UNCRC, 1989)

Article 12 is significant ‘not only for what it says, but because it recognises the child as a full human being with integrity and personality and the ability to participate freely in society’ (Freeman, 1996, p. 37). Article 12 can therefore be seen as a lynchpin right, underpinning all other participation rights of the convention.

Lundy (2007) argues that a focus on “voice” in research with children is not enough as it fails to capture adequately the social context, which gives rise to children’s participation (as cited in Winter, 2014, p. 482). Conceptualising Article 12 as four separate yet interconnected concepts – space, voice, audience and influence – assists children to fully exercise their participation rights under its provisions. To ensure their right to *space*, children must be given the opportunity to express their views; to have a *voice*, children must be supported to express their views; to have an *audience*, the view of the child must be listened to; and to ensure that children have *influence*, their views must be acted upon (see Figure 1).

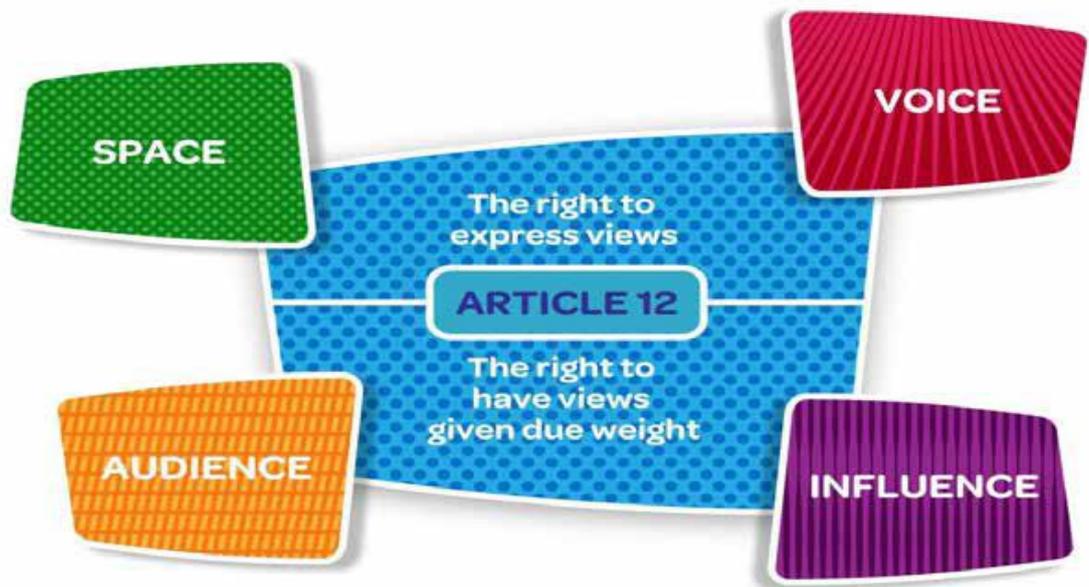


Figure 1.1: Lundy’s (2007) Model of Participation

In NI, children form over a quarter of the population, yet still have limited opportunities to influence policies and services that impact on their lives (OFMDFM, 2006, p. 20). At a domestic level, a recognised commitment by the government to safeguard and promote the rights of children and young people is central to implementing a framework to ‘produce improved outcomes for *all* children and young people’ (OFMDFM, 2006, foreword). A key part of local government strategy recognises that ‘[Children’s] views and needs must be listened to and respected, as their unique perspective will support the development of innovative solutions and better services’ (Northern Ireland Executive & Department of Education, 2016, p. 1). An aim of the current study is to develop a methodological framework aligned to the domestic strategy and the principles of the UNCRC in order to conduct research which will enable children, especially younger children, to contribute to the wider DA agenda on a domestic and international level.

1.7 Overview of Thesis

This thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 1 presents the introduction to this study and outlines the rationale and key research questions. The chapter gives a brief background, giving context to the topic of children and DA, providing definitions of key terms as they are applied in this study; exploring the term ‘witness’ or ‘witnessing’ as it is applied to children, prevalence and context of DA are also summarised. Chapter 1 also explores the significance of police attitudes in responding to domestic incidents involving children and their relevance to EI, which provides the theoretical framework for this study. A brief overview is provided of the policing context within which this study is situated - placing this research in a local context that of Northern Ireland, in light of the country’s history with regard to policing during the period known as “The Troubles” and a brief outline of the development of legislation pertaining to DA and its implications for policing and children. The chapter concludes by stating the study’s rationale and key research questions and the author’s biographical positioning which was integral to the development of this thesis.

Chapter 2 begins with a brief discussion on the conceptualisation of children and the voice of the child in the literature on DA. A review of the literature related to outcomes for children living with/who experience DA is then outlined, highlighting the importance of this research. The chapter includes a discussion of a key theoretical approach within the field of child development, *attachment theory* (Bowlby, 1969), which is related to the understanding of outcomes for children who experience DA. The chapter concludes with a review of the empirical and theoretical literature regarding children and the police response to DA and provides an outline of the aims of this study and research questions.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework of EI (Goleman, 1996) in more detail. Noting key theories and authors, the concept of EI, its history and development are outlined, followed by a detailed description of EI and its key constructs. A brief discussion relating to the Sociology of Gender and Policing is included. The chapter concludes with a literature review of EI and policing.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design and data collection methods. Chapter 4 begins by examining the ontological and epistemological orientation which underpins this study. It is important to stress that the assumptions on which the design of qualitative research is based are not equivalent. Integral to the selection of the research design was an ontology and epistemology underpinned by two key theoretical approaches to children in this study: A new sociology of childhood (James et al., 1998) and a children's rights-based approach based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Both approaches transform both the social and political status of children, and importantly the position-participation of children in the research sphere under the UNCRC, especially Article 12 (Lundy, 2007). Chapter 4 also argues for the importance of a qualitative/participatory approach. As part of this process, the key challenges associated with implementing a participatory framework with children are outlined.

Following a description of the ontology and epistemology underpinning this thesis, this chapter provides a description of the qualitative data collection methods utilised to explore the research questions with children and police officers. In this study, data collection involved two levels: semi-structured interviews and a case study approach using a 'Think Aloud' protocol (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2012; Van Someren et al., 1994).

The chapter begins by describing the research sample and the inclusion and exclusion criteria considered. The recruitment process for children and police officers is then outlined, followed by a description of the data collection methods employed during the semi-structured and case-study interviews and the procedures followed while conducting interviews with children and officers. Finally, the method of data analysis (thematic analysis) is clarified. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of the key ethical considerations involved in the study, including the application for ethical approval from the researcher's university and the dissemination of the research.

The findings from the case study interviews are presented in Chapter 5. Alongside semi-structured interviews, a case study approach was utilised to explore the most recent interaction between a child and police officer from the same incident. This methodology was designed to provide a more contextual and intensive focus and analysis of EI.

The findings and discussion from the semi-structured interviews with children and the key themes that emerged are presented in Chapter 6. These findings are presented in two sections, addressing each of the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Although the findings presented in Section One are peripheral to the main aim of the research, they have strategic value in that they provide the basis for critical thinking about the role of the police, the type of person who is attracted to joining the police service and its impact for professional practice and service delivery. Section Two presents the findings in relation to the experience of children in relation to DA. All these findings are discussed in the context of the theoretical framework, EI.

Chapter 7 presents the findings and discussion from semi-structured interviews with police officers. The findings address the third research question.

Chapter 8 presents some 3 key messages outlining the contribution from this thesis. The research limitations are discussed. The author includes some personal reflections on conducting this research. As the first study in this research field to explore the police response to DA and children in NI and the first to examine the role of EI in police officers who respond to DA incidents, this project makes a unique contribution to the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining how children are conceptualised in the literature on DA. How children are conceptualised plays a major role in what is known and unknown about their experiences within the context of DA. This was an important aspect for this study and for the research process. A review of the literature related to outcomes for children who experience DA is summarised, highlighting the importance of this research. Related to the understanding of this work, a brief discussion on attachment theory is provided. Following from this, a systematic review of the empirical and theoretical literature regarding children and the police response to DA is discussed.

2.2 The Voice of the Child

As stated in Chapter 1, the orientation taken by this study conceptualises children as social agents and rights-holders which acknowledges their full personhood. This study aims to make an important contribution to the literature which seeks to elevate children's voices. Historically, within the field of DA research, children's voices have occupied a 'muted' position (James, 2007, p. 3) in the literature until the publication of *Children of Battered Women* (Jaffe et al., 1990) in the 1990s. This seminal publication, together with a number of other influential studies (for example, Morley & Mullender, 1994; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002), highlighted the importance of listening to children's perspectives when investigating matters that affect them, such as DA. These pioneering studies clearly demonstrate not only that children's understanding of DA differs significantly from adult interpretations of their experience (Edleson, 1999; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2012), but that children exercise great agency and resilience in their own lives, even in the context of DA (Callaghan et al., 2015). As such they have the capacity to engage in the 'construction of meaning in their own lives' (Fraser & Robinson, 2004, p. 76).

A significant issue within the field of DA research has been the lack of (qualitative) research conducted directly with children, particularly younger children. Children are frequently conceptualised as passive recipients of abuse (as highlighted in Chapter 1) and/or too young to know or talk about violence in the home (Mullender et al., 2002, p. 19), therefore meriting separation and protection from the adult world of DA. This has acted as a significant barrier to children's representation and voice in private and public discourse, as well as research around DA, and fails to recognise their full personhood. Importantly, this lack of recognition as victims of DA in their own right means children are not getting the appropriate services or attention.

Emerging contemporary research now clearly demonstrates that children, even younger children, are not 'passive victims' and have both the capacity to be powerful participants, when empowered to do so, to participate in research even in sensitive situations such as DA (Buckley et al., 2007; Callaghan et al., 2015; Cater & Överlien, 2014; Katz, 2016; McGee, 2000; Mullender, 2002). Some examples which involve talking to children around issues that might be painful, complex or non-normative, such as those in which children with a diagnosis of cancer describe their experiences of hospital care (Gibson et al., 2005) or in which children talk about their attitudes towards and awareness of ethnic divisions (Connelly et al., 2002) are becoming much more common. Children often report that, rather than experiencing or re-experiencing negative feelings as a result of participating in research, children find it a positive, empowering and *protective* experience (Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2012) (SCCYP). The findings from these studies highlight how children can and should be involved in DA research so that their voices can be heard and used to policy and service provision to ensure services are appropriate for their needs and do not cause further harm.

2.3 Living with Domestic Abuse

Research conducted with children demonstrates their experiences of DA is complex and must go beyond the 'violent incident model' (Stark, 2012) in order to understand how DA impacts upon children and their lives: 'the concept of coercive control is increasingly

being applied to women's experiences of domestic violence, the field of domestic violence and children is often still primarily grounded in the physical incident model' (Katz, 2016, p. 47). This more insidious aspect of living with DA as coercive controlling behaviour of mothers, can have significant implications on the health and wellbeing of children. A recent study by Edleson and colleagues (2011) highlights some of the concrete and unique ways in which living with DA impacts children – such as impacting the amount of time spent with their friends or doing family activities. Another revealing aspect of this research talked about the complexity of bearing witness to a father who alternates between physical violence and loving care. Observing these behaviours between adults and not fully understanding the problem can create confusing and difficult emotions for children (Mullender et al., 2002). In the UK, Emma Katz's (2016) study, exploring the impact of coercive control with children aged between 10 and 14 years of age, spoke of how non-physical, control-based DA prevented children from spending alone time with their mothers, restricting movement around the family home, visiting grandparents or peers, going on 'days out' and from participating in extra-curricular activities which may contribute to the significant emotional and psychological harm children experience.

It is now widely accepted that children living with DA are also at greater risk of experiencing other risk factors such as neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse (Hamby et al., 2010). For example, in the UK the NSPCC prevalence study found there is a substantial overlap between DA and the most severe forms of child maltreatment resulting in the death of a child (Radford et al., 2011). A considerable and growing body of research demonstrates the significant impact of DA on long-term health (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). Various conditions including cardiovascular disease, autoimmune diseases and cancer are much more prevalent in individuals who have experienced multiple forms of childhood adversity such as DA – these multiple forms of childhood adversity are now commonly referred to by professionals and academics as Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs. ACEs is a term used to describe a traumatic experience in a person's life that occurring before the age of 18. The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study (Felitti et al., 1998), one of the largest studies (17,000 individuals) to investigate associations between childhood maltreatment such as DA exposure and health in later life, concluded

that adult diseases should be viewed as developmental disorders (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). So compelling is the research surrounding ACEs and public health, safety and wellbeing that it has become a key priority for government and policy and in many ways has helped bring much needed attention to the issue of DA for children. Despite the significant mental and physical health risks for children who experience DA, only a fraction is receiving help from specialist services. According to a report by CAADA (2014, p. 8) only 9% of children were in receipt of specialist support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

It is now widely accepted that very few children living with DA remain unaffected, and that the effects of the experience may be carried into adulthood (Edleson, 1999; Holt et al., 2008; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Levendosky et al., 2002; Radford et al., 2011; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012; Wolfe et al., 2003). Evidence shows that the interfamilial, interpersonal nature of trauma caused by one's attachment figure(s) causes greater distress and intensifies symptomatology than trauma without this factor (Hughes, 2003; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Överlien, 2010; Radford et al., 2011). Previous studies with children as young as seven who experienced DA reported various responses including suicide, anxiety and fear (McGee, 2000). Children exposed to DA have increased activation/dysfunction of neural systems related to threat and emotion regulatory processes compared to non-exposed children (Perry et al., 1995; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). Recent innovative research using scanning techniques has revealed that children with experiences of maltreatment in the home, including DA, show the same pattern of activity in their brains as soldiers exposed to combat (McCrary, 2013).

The most commonly reported effects of DA can be grouped into three general categories: emotional, behavioural and social. There is now compelling research evidence from a series of research studies and meta-analyses supporting the causal relationship between DA and the development of neuro-psychiatric disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicide ideation, eating disorders, ADHD and borderline-personality disorder (BPD) (Fonagy et al., 2000; Kitzmann et al., 2003; Kuhlman et al., 2012; Schore, 2001; Schutte et al., 2007; Wolfe et al., 2003).

The high degree of diversity in adjustment outcomes for children suggests a complex pathway. Developmentally informed research shows that the age at which abuse begins, and the frequency, chronicity and subtype of abuse are important indicators of adjustment outcomes (Överlien et al. 2010; McGee, 2000; Sanchez & Pollak, 2009). As Rossman (2001, p. 58) has noted, ‘Exposure at any age can create disruptions that can interfere with the accomplishment of developmental tasks, and early exposure may create more severe disruptions by affecting the subsequent chain of developmental tasks’. Likewise, research by Wolfe and colleagues (2003) revealed that the early onset of abuse in the life of a child predicted greater symptomatology than abuse that begins later. Infants as young as 12 months of age have been found to show poor affect regulation (Levendosky et al., 2011), while the severity of emotional and physical abuse in pre-school children was predictive of externalising behaviour and aggression during the school years (Manly et al., 2001). Individuals who were abused early on in life demonstrated higher levels of anxiety and depression in adulthood, while individuals who were older at the time of the abuse were more likely to display symptoms of aggression and substance abuse (Kaplow & Widom, 2007).

The high levels of aggression, social withdrawal and atypical emotion perception found in children who experience DA can have a significant impact on their ability to establish and maintain peer and romantic relations (especially during adolescence), which in these circumstances often serve as a protection against the negative effects of DA (Camacho et al., 2012; Rogosch & Cicchetti, 1994). Children who experience DA are three times as likely to be involved in physical aggression at school (Dauvergne & Johnson, 2001) putting these children at greater risk of expulsion from school (Gilliam, 2008). Furthermore, the learning potential and performance of such children are often compromised due to anxiety, exhaustion and absenteeism (Holt et al., 2008). In addition, living with DA in childhood can have intergeneration effects on children – men who experienced DA in childhood were found to be more likely to become perpetrators and women were more likely to become victims (Edleson et al., 2011).

However, not all children who experience DA suffer poor outcomes. Research evidence now shows that the relationship between DA and psychopathology cannot be attributed to the trauma of DA alone, given the significant diversity in outcomes for children (Read

et al., 2014). A significant body of research indicates that the greatest resource protecting children from the negative effects of DA is a strong, secure relationship with/attachment to a non-abusing, responsive and caring adult, usually but not always the mother or in some cases an older sibling (Holt et al., 2008; Levendosky et al., 2002; Osofsky, 1999). The theoretical framework used to understand these findings and how strong, secure relationships may protect these children for suffering poor outcomes is *attachment theory* (Bowlby, 1969).

Attachment theory has moved beyond the early approach taken by Bowlby (1969; 1974) towards a more psycho-neurobiological approach. Over the last ten years of the twentieth century, designated by the National Institute of Health as the ‘decade of the brain’ (Schore, 2012; Shonkoff & Levitt, 2010), there was a significant paradigm shift that moved beyond the conception of attachment relations as essential for a fundamental sense of security to an understanding of attachment relations as a major organiser of early brain development across multiple domains including learning, memory, attention and behaviour control but especially in the domain of emotional development, providing a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities (Schore, 2001, Schore & Schore, 2008; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Thompson, 2000; Wolfe et al., 2003).

The neuroscientific evidence for attachment theory has now become a key driver for government policy, promoting attachment-informed services and training aimed at building professional capacity to support vulnerable children and their families. The coalition government led by the Conservatives sponsored two major reports, both chaired by Graham Allen MP in 2011, which featured attachment and early intervention as an area for ‘key change’:

Early Intervention can be targeted at just about every problem that now requires a response from modern health, *policing* and children’s services agencies: behavioural and emotional problems, failure to perform well in school, poor parenting (including child protection challenges and major dysfunction in relationships) and antisocial behaviour (including crime). It is worth repeating that breaking the cycle of dysfunctional behaviour not only helps the individual child but also stops the replication of dysfunction in succeeding generations. (Allen, 2011, p. 73; emphasis added)

Unsurprisingly, a key focus for organisations supporting women and children in the context of DA is developing programmes/services aimed at supporting the mother-child relationship (Edleson et al., 2011).

The basic premise of attachment theory as outlined by Bowlby (1969) is that in times of stress and/or perceived threat, the attachment system in infants is activated to increase proximity to the caregiver in order to receive protection and relieve stress. As caregivers comfort the distressed infant, they are effectively building the healthy development of neurological systems, such as the amygdala, hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) stress axis, autonomic nervous system (ANS) and central nervous system (CNS) required primarily for emotion regulation (Schore, 2012). As children develop, they slowly learn to recognise and regulate their own emotions/physiology; this leads to greater autonomy from the caregiver, growing the capacity to behave in an organised fashion, which leads to increased self-regulation (Levendosky et al., 2012). Children who receive consistent, sensitive and responsive caregiving are classified as having a *secure attachment*. A secure attachment is associated with positive psychosocial development (Fonagy & Target, 1997; Thompson, 2000). Such children learn that the world is a safe place. By contrast, children exposed over long periods to inconsistent parenting and ‘toxic stress’ arising from DA, develop significantly weakened neurological systems due to operating on a constant state of ‘high alert’ and ‘hypervigilance’ (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Moreover, a number of studies have demonstrated that DA significantly impacts the quality of parent-child relations, largely due to its harmful effects on maternal mental and physical health and wellbeing (Boeckel et al., 2017; Levendosky et al., 2003, 2011). Studies examining the effects of DA on attachment have found higher rates of disorganised, insecure attachment styles in children with experience of abuse compared with children from non-abusive homes (Zeahah et al., 1999). Over 30% of DA begins in pregnancy (Devaney, 2015), disrupting the earliest form of parenting and ‘the normative process of the pregnant women’s development of maternal mental representations about her foetus as child and self as mother’ (Levendosky et al., 2011, p. 513). The level of empathy – ‘the ability to feel for and with another’ (Allen, 2011, p. 17), which is a core tenant of emotional intelligence (EI), expressed by the caregiver(s) is a critical feature of the child-caregiver environment. Empathy not only is associated with healthy social and

emotional competence in children but is ‘a key inhibitor to the development of the propensity to violence’ (Allen, 2011, p. 17). Consequently, how children *feel* should be of prime concern to those tasked with safeguarding children.

In addition, children living with and experiencing DA employ a complex range of active coping strategies (Callaghan et al., 2015). The term “coping” is used to refer in a more general sense to how children respond to DA (Överlien & Hyden, 2009, p. 481). These coping strategies stress ‘domestic violence is not something the children ‘witness,’ in the sense that they watch it passively from a distance. Children who experience violence in their homes *experience* it with all their senses. They hear it, see it, and experience the aftermath’ (Överlien & Hyden, 2009, p. 480). Coping strategies can be both short-term (during the incident) and long-term (after the incident) and differ by age. Infants and pre-school age children, for example, often cope by crying, lack of emotionality and cuddling, using toys and pets (Hague et al., 2002; McGee, 2000). Older children cope during the incident by “tuning out”, by listening to music, reading, playing on the computer and hiding. Other strategies involve distancing themselves from the abuse by ‘trying not to care’ (Överlien & Hyden, 2009, p. 484).

More active strategies may involve trying to intervene and or distracting the perpetrator, protecting the mother and siblings or escaping from home to a safe haven such as a friend’s house (Hague et al., 2002; Holt et al., 2008; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Hyden, 2009). Some adolescents seek to cope by using alcohol or drugs or by adopting a care-taking role in relation to the mother and siblings (Mullender et al., 2002). Longer term strategies involve ‘imagined coping’, such as planning to ‘take a stand against their father’s actions’ (Överlien & Hyden, 2009, p. 188); getting help from the police or other agencies; and engaging in a lot of activities outside the home (Överlien & Hyden, 2009). Across studies, children of all ages expressed a strong need for someone to talk to and to listen to them and for active involvement in making decisions that affect them (Mullender et al., 2002).

Importantly, professionals responding to children at DA incidents therefore need to consider what children are saying and respond with empathy; not only does this help them

cope with the effects of DA and lessen its more negative outcomes but also because it recognises the voice of children and that they are victim of DA in their own right.

2.4 Existing Literature on Children and Domestic Abuse and Policing

Responding to DA is a core part of police business (HMIC, 2014). DA cases can present some of the greatest challenges to police officers, who often are not trained to recognise or respond to the distress of the children they encounter (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). A recent government report described the police response to DA as a ‘lottery’:

All too often, the quality of the service that a victim receives is entirely dependent on the *empathy*, understanding and commitment of the individual attending. Without effective supervision and training in place forces are leaving the matter of the competence and capability of the responding officer almost entirely to chance. (HMIC, 2014, p. 11; emphasis added)

In a follow-up review of the police response to DA, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue (HMICFRS, 2017, p. 44) stated that whilst there are elements of good practice, there is considerable room for improvement. While ‘officers are aware of their responsibility to undertake safeguarding activity, including talking to children if they are present at a domestic incident or checking on them if officers are told children are sleeping upstairs’, this is not happening on a consistent basis (HMICFRS, 2017, p. 44). The report concluded that officers are asking all the right questions when it comes to children at DA incidents but are reluctant to check on children physically. However, it does *not* appear to be the case that officers are ‘asking the right questions’ regarding children, as the next statement in that report demonstrates:

Officers, at times, need to be more proactive about establishing the safety of children and in considering the effect that *witnessing* a domestic abuse incident may have had on them. (HMICFRS, 2017, p. 44, emphasis added)

The rhetoric surrounding children as “witnesses” of DA is reproduced repeatedly within this report and the term “victim” is used in reference to adult victims only (HMICFRS, 2017). This is an issue that must be addressed. In its review of the handling of domestic abuse cases, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) (2010) found that student

officers in Northern Ireland were given just one day's training on DA during their initial training at Police College. This training provided no information relating to children, and no consistent training was provided following graduation (CJI, 2010). A more detailed account of the training received by PSNI officers in relation to DA and children is provided in Chapter 6.

To date, there have been few research studies which examine the police response to child victims in the context of DA. Most of the research literature exploring the police response focuses on the perceptions of adult victims (Horwitz et al., 2011; Logan et al., 2006; Robinson & Stroshine, 2005; Stalans & Finn, 2006; Stephens & Sinden, 2000). Of those studies that have touched on this issue, it is believed that 'children's readiness to call and engage with police will be mediated by their attitudes and expectations concerning the police' (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221). Space restrictions limit discussion of children's perceptions of the role of police in society;¹ however, children typically focus on the punitive role of the police. In the context of DA, police must be aware that young children often blame themselves for the abuse, which could potentially intensify their fear of police authority (Holt et al., 2008). A US study by Finklehor and colleagues (2001) exploring the attitudes of child crime victims to police, reporting violent crime and help-seeking, found that children fear that the police will be unable to protect them from the offender, especially in the most serious kinds of abuse. Only 28% of violent crime suffered by young people was reported to police compared to 48% of violent crime suffered by adults (Ibid., p. 18). Children may also be reluctant to talk to police officers about DA for fear of reprisals by the perpetrator when the police leave.

In addition to these issues, the unique history of "The Troubles" in NI, discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.4) has important consequences for the attitudes of adults and children toward the police, especially those children from a CNR community. Statistics published by the Northern Ireland Policing Board found that a majority of the 2486 young people aged 14-17 surveyed held negative views of the police (NIPB, 2005). Over a quarter (27%) thought it was acceptable to throw missiles/objects at the police compared

¹ For a thoughtful treatment of the subject, see Powell et al. (2008).

to 1% who thought it was acceptable to attack ambulances (Ibid. p. 5). These findings have important implications for this study when exploring children's perceptions of the police.

Research has also raised expressed a fear that the concerns of children are often being ignored or becoming 'invisible' to professional attention (Devaney et al., 2013). Analysis of the Serious Case Reviews (SCR) of Daniel Pelka, a three-year-old who died after experiencing severe abuse and neglect, identified serious errors in the police response to DA in the family home. References to the whereabouts of Daniel and other siblings were inconsistent on a number of occasions and included comments such as 'none the wiser' and 'safe and well' despite both parents presenting with substance abuse. Overall, police reports indicate a lack of contact with children and lack of understanding of the emotional impact of DA on children. One SCR concluded that police needed to 'think the unthinkable' (Coventry Safeguarding Children Board, 2013, p. 6). One of the key learning points from these reviews is the need for professionals such as the police to see and speak to children (Devaney et al., 2013).

The focus of this study is on examining the police response to child victims of DA and while all children are of interest to this study, a special effort was made to include younger children (4-11 years old) as they are often overlooked. Furthermore, in previous research, police officers articulated that they experienced specific age-related barriers when communicating with younger children (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Younger children are also more likely to be the subject of age-related discrimination in a society which has served to restrict their autonomy and self-expression (Winter, 2014). The involvement of young children in developing a reliable evidence base is increasingly emphasised as a prerequisite for the development of social policy (Downes et al., 2014). This study aims to fill a concerning gap within the research literature regarding the involvement of younger children, as well as children more generally, in DA research. This will be the first study to examine EI in the context of DA that involves police officers, and the first study to examine the police response to children in Northern Ireland. In light of the significant body of research evidence documenting the deleterious effects of DA on children's development, this study offers a unique contribution to knowledge development and practice in this field.

2.4.1 Identifying literature on children, domestic abuse and policing

A systematic review of the empirical and theoretical literature regarding children and the police response to DA was undertaken. The framework for this review was designed to enable a broad search and synthesis of the literature relating to this study. Towards this end, the review methodology included:

- A search of relevant electronic databases
- Hand searching of relevant journals
- Citation searches for primary studies and prior reviews
- A search of Open Grey Literature
- Review of thesis and dissertations: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses: UK & Ireland; EThOS and DART-Europe E-Thesis Portal
- Internet searching (via Google Scholar)

This literature sought to identify literature, both national and international, that examines children's experiences of police response in the context of DA or explores how the police understand and respond to children living with DA. Searches were limited to articles written in the English language.

2.4.2 Selection of electronic databases

An initial search was conducted on five key social science and multidisciplinary databases: International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), PsychINFO, Scopus, Social Care Online (SCIE) and Social Policy and Practice. These were accessed on March 2015 and revisited and updated on July 2017.

A hand search was then conducted of key journals relating to this area of study. These journals, which were accessed on March 2015 and updated on July 2017, are as follows:

Child Abuse and Neglect (<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/child-abuse-and-neglect/>)

Child Abuse Review ([http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)1099-0852](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1099-0852))

Journal of Family Violence (<http://link.springer.com/journal/10896>)

Journal of Gender-Based Violence (<https://policypress.co.uk/journals/journal-of-gender-based-violence>)

Journal of Interpersonal Violence (<http://jiv.sagepub.com/>)

Police Practice and Research: An International Journal (<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gppr20>)

Policing & Society (<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gpas20>)

Psychology of Violence (<http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/vio/>)

Trauma, Violence and Abuse (<http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200782>)

Violence Against Women (<http://vaw.sagepub.com/>)

Finally, a search was conducted (accessed March 2015 and revisited and updated July 2017) for theses, dissertations and open grey literature using the key concepts related to this study.

A word search for each of the key concepts related to this study was developed in order to formulate a comprehensive search statement and thereby increase the precision of the review process (Kugley et al., 2011). Initially, the key search terms “domestic violence” AND police AND child* were entered into the IBSS database. Relevant texts were identified and key terms for each concept were recorded. The relevance of each key search term was tested by joining each of the terms one at a time within each concept with the Boolean operator “OR” and entering it into the IBSS database (e.g. “domestic violence” OR “domestic abuse” OR “intimate partner violence” OR “family violence”). The complete search statement included the search terms combined below and was limited to a text search of title, abstract or subject terms to ensure comprehensiveness. Key word

searches were also conducted within databases where advanced search options were not available. There were no exclusions in terms of timeframe.

Search 1

“domestic violence” OR “domestic abuse” OR “intimate partner violence” OR “family violence”

AND child* OR (child* and youth)

AND polic* OR “law enforcement”

2.4.3 Selection of studies for review

Inclusion criteria

Once relevant abstracts/papers were identified, each was assessed for its relevance to the objectives of this research and if appropriate, selected for inclusion in this review. A study was included if it concerned children under the age of 18 with experience of police involvement in the context of DA or police experiences of children in the context of DA, or if it involved direct assessment of children in the context of DA. Although there were few studies in this area, this study was focused on research that involved a qualitative element (e.g. qualitative research or mixed-methods) given the focus on children’s voices and lived experience of DA.

Exclusion criteria

A study was excluded if it did not involve children under the age of 18, did not involve DA or policing and was not written in the English language. A study was also excluded if it was not qualitative or mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative).

Results

Using the search terms described above, the initial literature search produced 4872 articles. Article titles were screened for relevance, with the most relevant articles retained for abstract review. This process reduced the number of articles to 65. The references in these articles were transferred to a web-based reference management software system (RefWorks) through which duplicates were removed. A further 53 articles were excluded on the basis of irrelevance following a second round of observations. The full text of each of the remaining 12 studies was obtained and assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study. After reading the full text of these articles, a further seven articles were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria, resulting in a final sample of five articles. Their details are summarised in Table 2.1. The steps in the selection process are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Flowchart of Literature Search Process

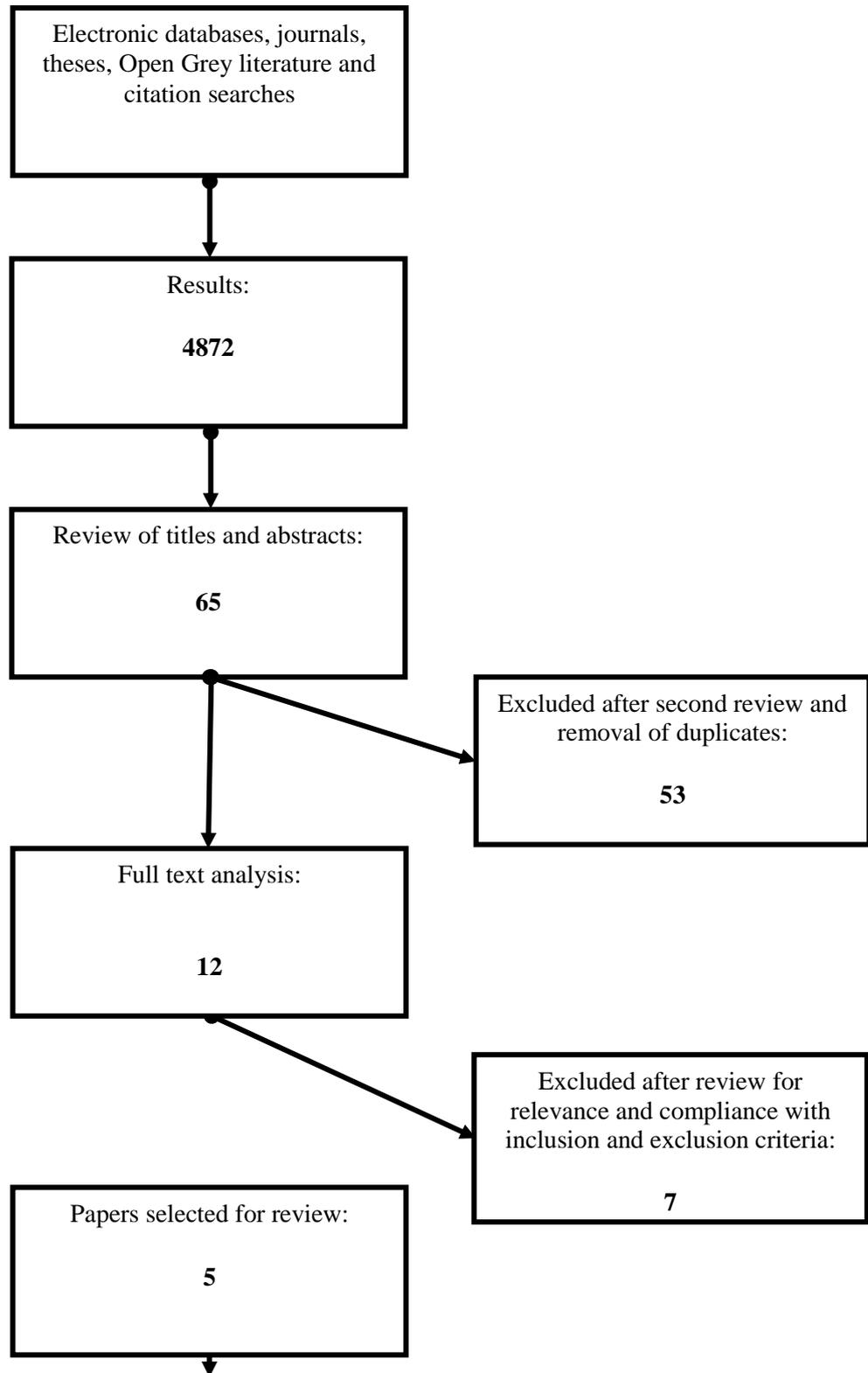


Table 2.1: Studies Included in the Literature Review

	Country/Date	Authors	Title	Sample Size	Design/Methods
1*	Norway, 2016	Överlien, C. & Aas, G.	Police patrols and children experiencing domestic violence	Police officers (n=24); children 8-20 years old (n=25)	Qualitative/Interviews
2*	UK, 2012	Richardson-Foster et al.	Police intervention in domestic violence incidents involving children	Police officers (n=33); children 10-19 years old (n=19)	Mixed Methods Quantitative - Qualitative/Interviews
3	Republic of Ireland, 2007	Buckley et al.	Listen to Me! Children's experiences of domestic violence	Children 8-17 years old (n=22)	Qualitative/Interviews
4	UK, 2002	Mullender et al.	Children's perspectives on domestic violence	Children 8-13 years old (Phase 1: n=1395; Phase 2: n=54)	Mixed Methods Questionnaire - Qualitative Interviews
5	UK, 2000	McGee, C.	Childhood experiences of domestic violence	Children 5-17 years old (n=54)	Qualitative/Interviews

* Key study: Focus primarily on the police response

2.5 Children's Experiences of Police in the Context of Domestic Abuse

This section summarises the five studies identified in this literature review and their key findings. Three of the five studies were carried out in the UK. The majority of child participants were aged between 8 and 20 years old. Three studies examined children's experiences of a range of agency responses within the context of DA, including that of the police, while two focused solely on the police response (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012 & Överlien & Aas, 2016).

A leading study by Richardson-Foster et al. (2012) employed a mixed-method approach to explore the police response to children. Their findings were based on quantitative file data from police reports of DA across two sites in northern and southern England, supplemented with 33 in-depth qualitative interviews with officers. The file data consisted of 251 incidents of DA during January 2007, involving 460 children or young people under the age of 18. Twenty-nine percent of children were under the age of two and 44% were under the age of five. Almost half (45%) of the children in this study witnessed the incident, and in 53% of cases, the abuse was rated as medium/high. Children were directly involved in a number of incidents, in which they were described as being physically and verbally abused, threatened, intimidated and dragged (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

Police reports were frequently inconsistent in terms of children's exact whereabouts during incidents (for 26% of the children in the sample, the location of the child was not clear or omitted), but generally children were recorded as 'present' with no additional comments. Officers rarely documented the emotional state of these children, despite the extent and gravity of their involvement. In one incident, for example, an 11-year-old girl had witnessed the physical and verbal abuse of her mother and she also had been dragged downstairs during the incident (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

In a recent study in Norway, Överlien and Aas (2016) conducted in-depth interviews with 24 police officers and 25 children and adolescents about their experiences of DA. Their findings are comparable to those of Richardson-Foster and colleagues (2012). Interviews from that study revealed a number of reasons why officers failed to speak directly with

children, including the perception of children as ‘witnesses’ to, rather than victims of, DA, the view that this was ‘not their role’ and fear of opening ‘Pandora’s Box’. Findings from interviews with officers revealed that what was considered ‘witnessing’ violence in the home depended on the attending officer’s understanding of DA and the impact on children and therefore varied significantly. Generally, this understanding reflected a narrow definition focused on directly witnessing or being directly involved or physically harmed in the violence. The majority of officers felt it was ‘not their role’ and therefore unnecessary to talk to children at incidents unless they had been witnesses or they had been physically harmed (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 229); as they saw it, their ‘role’ focused on enforcing the law while the Social Services were perceived to be responsible for providing emotional support.

Perceiving children as witnesses created a tension and uncertainty around speaking with them within this context. This reluctance was underpinned by officers’ lack of training in ‘achieving best evidence’ (ABE) interview techniques. In Norway, officers who talked to children about criminal activity came under heavy criticism from professional experts on judicial examination (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 440). The perception of children as ‘witnesses’ created and supported a number of beliefs; most importantly, it negated children as ‘victims’. From this perspective, there is a greater likelihood of children going unnoticed by police during this critical period:

When you communicate with the family you communicate with the adults generally speaking and you don’t communicate with the children, the only time that you communicate with the children generally is when they are suspects [...] or they’re witnesses. (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 231)

Another major influence on officer attitudes towards and communication with children to emerge from these interviews was an unwillingness to engage with children for fear of ‘opening a Pandora’s box of overwhelming need in children’ (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 230). Almost half of officers in this study expressed feelings of unease about talking to children at the scene of DA. This acted as a barrier to exploration of children’s

needs, a feeling exemplified by the following thought-provoking observation by a female officer:

What strikes me is that we often seem so damn scared to talk to children (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 443)

A further concern for officers was placing an additional emotional burden on children by talking about the abuse in the home, which could result in the arrest of a parent. There is also evidence from the analysis of police file data that professionals such as police officers feel ‘overwhelmed’, as their reports rarely contain descriptions of children’s emotional states (Richardson-Foster, 2012, p. 229).

All five studies outlined traumatic incidents and provided evidence of the significant suffering that children experience within the context of DA. Some children described incidents in which they felt their lives, or the life of their mother were at risk (Buckley et al., 2007; Överlien & Aas, 2016). Overall, the children involved in these studies reported negative experiences with the police and expressed a great deal of ‘uncertainty and concern’ about what they expected from the police (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 437). Across all studies, few children reported contact and communication with police. Children often found that the police did not take their concerns seriously and demonstrated a lack of empathy; they felt invisible to police attention and sometimes reported feeling at greater risk as a direct result of police action (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016). One young woman, for example, ran a mile and a half to the Garda’s (police officer in Ireland) house in her bare feet, convinced her father was going to kill her mother, only for her concerns to be later dismissed, resulting in a failure to investigate the situation or take it seriously (Buckley et al., 2007). Another young woman called the police, who arrived at the home and informed the perpetrator that the child had called them, placing her in grave danger (McGee, 2000).

Such findings demonstrate a significant lack of empathy and concern by officers with regard children’s emotional experience:

[They came to the house] many, many times. [...] They took Mom and brought her to a cell to sleep it off, and I slept without my mother. She was gone. [...] I slept in

my room, my stepfather was at home, sleeping. They came, got Mom, and left. (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 438)

Usually I wouldn't phone the police because I know that makes it worse. The police just come to the door and then they go and leave him in the house, which means that my mum's getting in trouble, I'm going to get in trouble. (McGee, 2000, p. 141)

Such experiences do little to challenge children's stereotypes of police (Powell et al., 2008), who can often make things worse for children rather than better. Officers who displayed empathy by speaking with children directly and offering support were found to be associated with positive experiences, and more importantly were found to impact on police communication with other agencies, in particular with children's Social Services (Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al. 2012). During Överlien and Aas's (2016) investigation, for example, several specialist police officers recognised the benefits of police response officers conducting initial conversations with children during this acute stage for any subsequent investigation or support, sharing the responsibility of helping children with agencies such as Social Services. The testimony of children is an important basis for officer's immediate decisions: whether it is justifiable to allow the child to remain at home, for example, or whether the child needs to be moved into the custody of other caregivers immediately. In addition, the officer used conversations with children as a basis for deciding whether it is necessary to call in welfare or health care services. Risk assessments with children were little more than a tick-box exercise, simply serving as an administrative record for the system. One boy who had been the primary victim described the police as being 'nice' to him and having asked him what he wanted, which was to be taken to a safe place with his mother (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 439).

This and other studies demonstrate the importance of officers speaking with children directly about their experience:

She was really helpful, she spoke to me rather than just my mum, she was the one that gave us the number for the NSPCC. She was just good at listening to us and that. (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 227)

In particular, interviews with children found that arresting/removing the perpetrator is only part of an overall response that restores children's sense of safety (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et

al., 2012). Police attitudes were once again a key theme to emerge from research conducted with children exploring the police response. Children often talked about how the police response lacked empathy, how their concerns were not taken seriously and how they were ignored and excluded from participation (Buckley, et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). These factors may be key in shaping children's perceptions (e.g. of policing as a 'helping' profession) and their experience of police in the context of DA. Moreover, in the longer term, negative police attitudes, may perpetuate erroneous attitudes toward the self and the abuse enacted in the home, preventing children from talking about the abuse or seeking help from the police or other service professionals in the future. For example, research with children reveals they often blame themselves for the abuse in the home and feelings of shame and stigma believing it is something that only happens to them can leave children feeling alone and isolated; 'Endeavouring to make sense of complicated and frightening realities is obviously much more difficult in the absence of information' (Mullender et al., 2002, p. 96).

It is also worth noting, that the studies by Richardson-Foster and colleagues (2012) and Överlien and Aas (2016) found that a much smaller number of police officers displayed much greater levels of understanding and empathy toward children. These officers described children as 'victim[s]' independent from adult victims, which appeared to influence how they interacted and communicated with children at DA incidents. These officers had a much broader understanding of how children experience DA, beyond the 'violent incident model' (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012), to encompass emotional and psychological harm as well as acknowledging that children have equal rights to adults involved, respecting the child's right to information. During Överlien and Aas's (2016) investigation, for example, several specialist police officers recognised the benefits of police response officers conducting initial conversations with children during this acute stage for any subsequent investigation or support, in terms of what Stanley (2015, p. 235) refers to as 'institutional empathy':

I think the victim has a right to be heard – then I think it would be dereliction of duty not to talk to the child. (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 441)

Kids are our witness and our victims. It is important to explain everything to the children, they have a right to know what is happening. (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 229)

As these findings indicate, contact with police is emotionally laden and emotionally important for children. Importantly, the evidence presented here suggests the competencies developed within Goleman's (1996) model of EI, such as empathy, may help to understand differences between officers and their capacity to recognise children's experiences and meet their needs, alongside fulfilling professional duties and obligations within this context. A lack of training which focuses on personal qualities such as EI, may be hindering the development of policing DA and importantly for this study, a focus on children – providing support for the need for this study to be undertaken.

2.6 Overview of Study Aims and Research Questions

The overall aims of this study are to contribute to the development of new knowledge regarding the efficacy of EI and policing incidents of DA involving children and inform policy and practice, to include children within the context of DA - challenging common myths that perceive children as passive witness and lacking capacity. Findings from the available research on children and the police response (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012) reveal a clear and consistent message. There is a significant and troubling gap between what children say is helpful (i.e. being acknowledged as victims of DA and listened to, validated and believed) and what they currently report receiving from the policing response. Evidence from previous studies reveals limited direct contact and communication between police and children when police are called to respond to incidents of DA. These studies support the view outlined at the beginning of this chapter; DA is often framed using a 'violent incident model'; children are often positioned as outside the abuse between adults and there is a failure to recognise their full personhood in the majority of cases – however, some of the reports suggests this is slowly changing. The evidence from the studies reviewed indicates that police attitudes towards children vary in important ways which are likely to shape their experience, understanding and

response to children; especially their ability to convey *empathy*. As highlighted in Chapter 1, recent inspection reports found empathy a key factor in the policing response to DA (HMIC, 2014).

Richardson-Foster and colleagues (2012) cite the lack of skills, training and confidence as principal factors in the disparity in police attitudes towards children. Whilst valid, these explanations may not adequately account for that disparity. It is not easy for officers to remain neutral in such an emotionally and professionally challenging context and difficult for some officers to achieve. However, that is the nature of the job; it requires that officers ‘remain aware of their own emotions and emotional responses, and also that they are able to control the responses, at least to the extent that their own emotions do not interfere with the quality of their professional practice.’ (Ashurst, 2011, p. 102). A positive police response may be due not only to a high level of job-related skills but to an ability to recognise and regulate their own emotional engagement with others. Goleman’s (1996) model of EI offers a strongly validated framework which helps to understand individual differences in empathy, as well help policing organisations develop future training/recruitment practices aimed at developing/improving job-related skills such as empathy contributing to effective performance at work. Historically, as an organisation the ‘cult of masculinity’ (Silvestri, 2017) within policing has not been conducive to developing EI (Rowe, 2014), as discussed in the following chapter (Section 3.3, ‘Sociology of Gender and Policing’). Furthermore, the unique history of policing in NI may also have limited displays of empathy or be a contributing factor to the development of EI (Gibson, 2016).

Little attention has been paid to the psychosocial correlates of police attitudes. Work is taking place with police in the US and Canada that is almost unknown in the UK (Jaffe et al., 2004). The Child Development Community Policing Programme (CD-CP) in collaboration with mental health clinicians, provides officers with increased knowledge about child development and the potential impact of trauma which helps officers to take children’s needs into account within the context of DA. The study reported here is an attempt to construct a psychological understanding of the police response to incidents of DA involving children. The research to date highlights a need for further investigation into factors such as ‘Emotional Intelligence’ (Goleman, 1996) that help police to manage

the ‘emotional labour’ associated with DA involving children and to improve the ways in which they relate to children.

This research seeks to assist the police to develop an understanding and more effective responses to dealing with children at DA incidents by answering the following research questions:

1. How do children perceive the role of the police in society and the purpose of police involvement at incidents of DA?
2. How do children experience the response of police officers at incidents of DA?
3. How do police officers describe their professional role and how do they understand and experience their response to incidents of DA involving children?

CHAPTER 3: THEORY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) (Goleman, 1996), with particular focus on its history and development, noting key theories and authors, and finally, its relevance and application to policing and this study. As part of an investigation which seeks to understand the experience of policing DA through the lens of EI, a brief discussion on the sociology of gender and its relevance to policing will also be discussed.

3.2 Emotional Intelligence: A New Perspective

Limited attention has been paid to the role of emotions and how they may operate adaptively or maladaptively in the context of domestic abuse (DA) and professional responses. The operation of emotions may become vitally important in occupations such as police work that are characterised by high levels of interpersonal contact and ‘emotional labour’ (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Yancey Martin, 2005). Despite the limited availability of research evidence, in theory there are numerous reasons why EI is essential for police work. These include the potential of EI to encourage collaboration with co-workers, improve written and oral communication, boost engagement, facilitate planning and organising, promote discipline, enhance customer service provision, as well as achieve goals by increasing decision-making ability and adaptability. In addition, EI positively predicts job performance in a number of occupations that have high levels of interpersonal contact, emotional labour and uncertainty (Morrison, 2007).

A number of prominent inquiries into serious child abuse, such as those of Victoria Climbié (2000) and Baby P (2007), which also often involves incidents of DA in the home and some level of police involvement, have highlighted poor professional practice (Munro, 2011). In preventing such tragedies Laming (2003, p. 13) states; ‘I am convinced that the answer lies in doing relatively straightforward things well. Adhering to this

principle will have a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable children'. Nevertheless, they do not reveal how practitioners 'made sense of the work and, crucially, how they make judgements about cases at the initial point of referral' (Cooper & Lousada, 2005, p. 148). Later reports examining these serious cases (for example, Laming, 2003) identified evidence of an emotional disconnect between the professionals and the children involved:

The idea of emotional intelligence [...] tells us that how we think, how we make decisions and how we conduct our personal and social lives are inseparably bound up with what we think, decide and do. (Cooper & Lousada, 2005, p. 166)

Exploring police understanding and response to children through the lens of EI may provide insight into the mechanisms through which the important differences in police practice and *empathy* that have been identified in the literature may occur (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Given the importance of the police response for children, this research may create new understandings and, importantly, inform training and capacity building designed to improve the ability of officers to relate to children in ways which are perceived as helpful.

The following section outlines the theoretical framework of EI (Goleman, 1996, 1999; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2011) and explains how it will be applied in this study. As Ashurst (2011, p. 111) has observed, 'Goleman's conceptualisation of EI as learned skills and personal competencies is perhaps the most widely used in applications to improve EI outside of the academic setting'. It is on this basis that the researcher considered this model to be the most appropriate for this study.

3.2.1 Defining 'Emotional Intelligence'

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions effectively in ourselves and others. An emotional and social competency is a learned capacity,

based on emotional intelligence, which contributes to effective performance at work. (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2011, HayGroup, p. 4)

In scientific terms, EI is still a relatively new psychological concept. Despite numerous indirect references to EI and psychological functioning in the literature, it was not until the publication of *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner, 1984) and Goleman's seminal book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1996), that it began to gain serious attention from the academic community. At the same time, recent developments in neuroscience transformed the way we theorise about the role of emotion and human behaviour (Schoore, 2012). EI brings new depth to the concept of traditional cognitive intelligence, conveying the intrinsic relationship between emotion and thinking (Matthews et al., 2002). As Nussbaum (2006, p. 3) argues:

If we think of emotions as essential elements of human intelligence, rather than just as supports or props for intelligence, this gives us especially strong reasons to promote the conditions of emotional wellbeing [...] for this view entails that without emotional development, a part of our reasoning ability [...] will be missing.

A large body of research now demonstrates a link between EI across a number of important domains, including health (Martins et al., 2010), education (Petrides et al., 2004), social behaviour (Petrides et al., 2006) and importantly for this study, job performance (O'Boyle et al., 2011). There are three dominant theoretical frameworks of EI – firstly, an *ability* model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) conceptualises EI as an innate mental ability, applying knowledge and understanding of emotions to 'enhance cognitive activities and facilitate social functioning' (Rivers et al., 2007, p. 230). This model has been developed to objectively measure individual differences in performance analogous to standardised ability-based intelligence tests; which focus on maximal attainment (Cronbach, 1970). Secondly, *Trait* theories conceptualise individual differences in EI as a factor/dimension of personality structure as opposed to an ability or skill (Bar-On, 1997; Petrides & Furnham, 2001). The third and final approach, and the approach taken by this study, is based on a *mixed* model (trait and ability) which conceptualises EI as a 'learned capability' (Goleman, 1999, p. 24): 'Scientific inquiry strongly suggests that there is a genetic component to emotional intelligence. Psychological and developmental research indicates that nurture plays a role as well. [...] Research and practice clearly demonstrate that emotional intelligence can be learned' (Goleman, 2015, p. 8). Goleman's approach

postulates that personal competencies demonstrating EI differentiates individual differences; furthermore, behaviours underlying these personal competencies can be improved and/or developed through targeted training. Differences in the definition and theoretical conceptualisation of EI as an ability model (Salovey & Mayer, 1997), a trait model (Bar-On, 1997, 2000) or a mixed model (Goleman, 1996) has led to the development of various measures. In some ways, this has also contributed to the debate within the research community regarding EI as a scientifically valid construct (Matthews et al., 2002).

The psychologist Daniel Goleman is largely responsible for introducing the concept of EI into public discourse. He proposed that emotion and cognition can and must act synergistically for adaptive outcomes across multiple domains, describing EI as ‘a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, either facilitating or interfering with them’ (Goleman, 1996, p. 80). The extensive empirical research studies carried out by Goleman and colleagues spanning more than four decades found that personal competencies demonstrating EI can matter up to twice as much as cognitive ability and technical skills promoting greater effectiveness and engagement at work:

[W]hen I calculated the ratio of technical skills, IQ, and emotional intelligence as ingredients of excellent performance, emotional intelligence proved to be twice as important as the others for jobs at all levels. (Goleman, 2015, p. 3)

In general, the belief that emotions interfere with thinking and performance may still be widely held; and yet, without emotion we are unable to manage our lives in an adaptive fashion, as evidenced by the case of individuals with *alexithymia*, a term coined by Nemiah & Sifneos (1970), which is characterised by a dysfunction in emotional awareness and empathy and is associated with elevated rates of depression (Honkalampi et al., 2000) and mortality (Tolmunen et al., 2010). Counterintuitively, research evidence now indicates that emotions are ‘typically *indispensable* for rational decisions’ (Goleman, 1996, p. 28; original emphasis), and also that ‘there is intelligence *in* the emotions and the sense in which intelligence can be brought *to* emotions’ (Goleman, 1996, p. 40; original emphasis). As Goleman postulates, it is emotional intelligence that really matters.

Boyatzis and Goleman's model of EI (HayGroup, 2011) consists of four key constructs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management; together contain a subset of 12 *emotional competencies*, which summarises behavioural indicators associated with each competency (Table 3.1): 'An emotional competence is a learned capacity based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work' (Goleman, 1999, p. 24). The early work of David McClelland was highly influential in Goleman's theoretical conceptualisation of EI. McClelland's (1973) seminal publication challenged the conventional wisdom surrounding intelligence tests; arguing for a 'competence' based approach which possesses greater predictive validity in the workplace beyond that of ability models: '[I]t may be desirable to assess competencies that are more generally useful in clusters of life outcomes [...] such as leadership, interpersonal skills etc' (McClelland, 1973, p. 9). A *competency* based-framework has been developed and tested by Goleman and colleagues in a large number of business organisations, building on his early research to identify core emotional competencies which promote effectiveness at work (Goleman, 1999; 2015). Goleman's framework has been revised and updated as a result of this work.

Emotional intelligence determines the potential for learning the practical skills that are based on its four constructs: 'Simply being high in emotional intelligence does not guarantee a person will have learned the emotional competencies that matter for work; it means only that they have excellent potential to learn them' (Goleman, 1999, p. 25). Importantly, by treating EI as a 'learned capacity' or competency, we can treat it as an area that can be developed or improved through training or personal development and not some innate quality captured by the motto 'you have either got it or you don't'. Each construct, whilst distinct, remains related to the others: 'Emotional competencies cluster into groups, each based on a common underlying emotional intelligence capacity' (Goleman, 1998, p. 25). For example, the most visible and discussed element of the EI model, *empathy* (social awareness) (Titchener, 1909), the ability to sense others' feelings and perspectives, is built upon an individual's ability to perceive and understand their own emotions (*self-awareness*): 'Empathy builds on self-awareness; the more open we are to our own emotions, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings' (Goleman, 1996, p. 96). Goleman goes further, stating the construct *self-awareness* lies at the heart of the

EI model and, to a great extent, influences the ability to develop the other competencies. Goleman’s model demonstrates the relationship between constructs is one based on *independence, interdependence* and *hierarchical*. Training which aims to promote and/or improve empathy in officers within the context of DA (HMIC, 2014, p. 23) must therefore look beyond a narrow view of this concept and seek to increase self-awareness and understanding of emotion in the first instance: ‘If they have little self-awareness, they will be oblivious to their own weaknesses and lack the self-confidence that comes from certainty about their strengths’ (Goleman, 1998, p. 25).

Golman and Boyatzis (2011) personal competency framework assesses EI using a self-report measure. This relates to the authors’ theoretical conceptualisation of EI as a mixed model, as discussed earlier. ESCI is a 68-item questionnaire, aimed at assessing the 4 key constructs and 12 competencies (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: EI Constructs, Competencies and Capsule Descriptors comprising the ‘Emotional and Social Competency Inventory’ (ESCI) 2 (HayGroup) (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2011)

Construct/Construct Competencies	Capsule Description	Categorization Scheme
Self-Awareness	Recognising and understanding our own emotions; captured in the competency:	
Emotional self-awareness	The ability to understand our own emotions and their effects on our performance	SA1
Self-Management	Effectively managing our own emotions; captured in the competencies:	
Emotional self-control	The ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses in check and maintain our effectiveness under stressful or hostile conditions	SM2
Achievement orientation	Striving to meet or exceed a standard or excellence; looking for ways to do	SM3

	things better; setting challenging goals and taking calculated risks	
Positive outlook	The ability to see the positive in people, situations and events; persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks	SM4
Adaptability	Flexibility in handling change; juggling multiple demands and adapting our ideas and approaches	SM5
Social Awareness		
	Recognising and understanding the emotions of others; captured in the competencies:	
Empathy	The ability to sense others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns and picking up cues to what is being felt and thought	SOA6
Organizational awareness	The ability to read a group's emotional currents and power relationships, identifying influencers, networks and dynamics	SOA7
Relationship Management		
	Applying our emotional understanding in our dealings with others; captured in the competencies:	
Influence	The ability to have a positive impact on others, persuading or convincing others in order to gain their support	RM8
Coach and mentor	The ability to foster the long-term learning or development of others by giving feedback and support	RM9
Conflict management	The ability to help others through emotional or tense situations, tactfully bringing disagreements into the open and finding solutions all can endorse	RM10

Inspirational leadership	The ability to inspire and guide individuals and groups to get the job done, and to bring out the best in others	RM11
Teamwork collaboration	& The ability to work with others toward shared goals, participating actively, sharing responsibility and rewards, and contributing to the capability of the team	RM12
TOTAL COMPETENCIES		12

Each item within the questionnaire asks respondents to rate how consistently they demonstrate the behaviour described by each item, on a five-point scale ranging from ‘Never’ to ‘Consistently’. In this way scores indicate how characteristic or typical a behaviour is for an individual across the 4 constructs and 12 emotional competencies. EI competencies are considered a strength if they are observed consistently. Each of the key constructs underlying this model has been carefully tested, analysed and defined to ensure they identify specific behaviours related to EI. *Self-Awareness* is the first component of EI. Individuals with this skill recognise how their feelings affect them, other people, and their job performance. It is being able to recognise how you respond to cues in the environment, it is about knowing your inner resources, strengths and limits. Goleman’s (1996, 1999) research demonstrated the importance of self-awareness and its relationship to the other competencies. It is apparent how this ability would be critically important for the role of police officers within the context of this study. The ability to be aware of situations that may trigger intense and/or negative emotions in the course of your job and manage them appropriately is highly valuable for the individual and for the organisation: ‘[S]elf-regulation [...] is not only a personal virtue but also an organisational strength’ (Goleman, 2015, p. 13). *Self-Management* draws on each of the competencies within this construct as well as self-awareness. It includes being able to manage difficult situations and people more effectively, firstly by anticipating situations that may cause you to react and changing how you respond to them. Individuals with this skill also often seek alternative explanations/perspectives in challenging situations, which may be different from their own. Shifting focus away from personalisation is a key component of self-

management. This in turn, helps to maintain a positive outlook and adapt to the unexpected and handle change more effectively when new information is available or needs change:

Self-control is crucial for those in law enforcement. [...] Competence studies in law enforcement organisations find outstanding officers use the least force necessary, approach volatile people calmly and with a professional demeanour and are adept at de-escalation. (Goleman, 1999, pp. 87/88)

For the large number of officers who reported feeling overwhelmed and fearful of opening ‘Pandora’s Box’, (as found in the literature in Chapter 2), the ability to manage these feelings would be of great benefit to officers and assist them in their interactions with children. *Social Awareness* and *Relationship Management* is where emotional intelligence becomes most visible to others and impacts our relationships with others. The social awareness competency is about understanding others (empathy) and the ability to hear and understand others’ thoughts, feelings and concerns, even when partly expressed or unspoken. Research demonstrates that social awareness is based on the competencies self-awareness and self-management. Goleman and colleagues found that individuals who demonstrate self-awareness were more likely to show strength in 10 out of 12 ESCI competencies (Table 3.1). People with this skill pick up on emotional cues. They are able to understand not only what people are saying but *why* they are saying it. Individuals with this skill ask questions to understand what others are really thinking, feeling or needing rather than making assumptions based on their own thoughts and feelings. It is apparent why this ability is at the heart of the police response to DA incidents involving children – in a majority of cases the impact of DA is emotional/psychological which is not always physically visible. Furthermore, children are often too frightened to verbalise how they are feeling as this may put them at further risk. *Relationship Management* - The ability to work effectively with others and have a positive impact on others is not only a person virtue but an organisational strength. Relationship Management is strongly connected to the six core behaviours officers in NI are expected to display (accountability; openness to change; service delivery; courtesy, fairness and respect; collaborative decision making; and working with others) (see Chapter 1). This competency is not just a matter of ‘friendliness’:

Social skill, rather, is friendliness with a purpose [...]. Social skill is the culmination of the other dimensions of emotional intelligence. People tend to be very effective at managing relationships when they can understand and control their own emotions and can empathize with the feelings of others. (Goleman, 2015, p. 19)

People with this skill view building and maintaining relationships and bonds as a key part, not ancillary to their job role. This skill becomes highly valuable for understanding the police response to DA involving children – having a positive impact and helping them through an emotional situations and gaining the trust of children is an important objective. EI framework can help officers develop the self-knowledge to manage the intense emotional responses to incidents of DA where children are present and develop empathy which helps officers respond more effectively and sensitively to the needs of children. This framework can provide valuable insights into the development and teaching EI with officers. Any approach to develop empathy (HMIC, 2014, 2015) must start with a careful assessment of the capacity for self-awareness and self-management as clearly argued by Goleman and colleagues.

EI is not a new concept; however, the importance of emotions and their significance across multiple domains is being increasingly emphasised. EI and emotional competencies have direct relevance for police officers responding to DA incidents, creating the opportunity for a new, and unique perspective.

3.2.2 Qualitatively assessing Emotional Intelligence

This section outlines the significance of using a qualitative approach and research design to examine EI, when EI has generally been assessed using a quantitative measure (e.g. ESCI) as outlined in the sections above. Quantitative studies have found consistently strong evidence for the conceptualising and measurement of EI as consisting of 4 key constructs made up of 12 competencies (see Table 3.1). However, given the focus of this study on prioritising children's experiences of DA, in line with a children's rights framework, as well as the small sample size of police officers involved in this research, adopting a quantitative approach to assessing EI was inappropriate. It is not possible to

undertake any meaningful quantitative analysis if questionnaire responses are only available for a small number of police officers. For these reasons, it was decided to adopt a qualitative approach to assessing EI. The detailed description provided of EI's 4 key constructs and 12 competencies provided in the quantitative measurement of EI, alongside the substantial body of research validating this approach to conceptualising and measuring EI, providing the basis for the coding framework used to qualitatively analyse the data collected in this study. Police officer interviews were thematically examined for reference/evidence of these key constructs and competencies. In this way, this study is also offering new knowledge by investigating if EI can be assessed qualitatively.

Given the nature of this study, a qualitative approach was appropriate to elucidate a deeper, more meaningful analysis, to help connect what is traditionally measured quantitatively in the 'social and cultural contexts within which emotions are experienced' (Corcoran & Tormey, 2012, p. 219). An important objective of this study was to obtain evidence by analysing the responses of officers, to examine *how* (if at all) the 4 key concepts (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management) and emotional competencies, within Goleman's model operate at DA call outs where children are present - (a more detailed discussion of this methodology is provided in Chapter 4). This would not have been possible using a quantitative approach, due to the small sample of police officers in this study. This is the first study that the author is aware of to explore EI within this uniquely emotionally challenging context. A qualitative methodology Denzin (1984, p. 7) argues that multiple methods are critical when working on emotion:

Human emotional interaction must be situated in the natural world. That is, interaction must be confronted and examined in its natural fullness in the world of lived experience [...]. The use of multiple, triangulated methods is required.

Others highlight the importance of 'crossing methodological boundaries when conducting research on emotion...to make sense of what is actually being measured by such psychometric approaches' (Corcoran & Tormey, 2012, p. 215). In the current study, this will be achieved by exploring the attitudes of response officers toward children within the parameters of the theoretical framework, EI. A qualitative approach is crucial to explore how EI (present/absent) in police officers impacts the emotional experiences and

meaning children attribute to their encounters with the police. This informed the methodological framework of this study which is outlined in Chapter 4 (Section 4.13). Without this perspective, we are able to obtain only a limited understanding of how best officers relate to children living in what is an emotionally complex environment.

As discussed previously, because the concept of EI is still relatively new; it was considered relevant to this study to review the literature on EI and policing.

3.3 Literature Review: Emotional Intelligence and Police

The process for the literature review outlined in Chapter 2 (Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2) was repeated for the search relating to police officers and EI. As before, an initial search was conducted on five key social science and multidisciplinary databases (on March 2015 and updated on July 2017): International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), PsychINFO, Scopus, Social Care Online (SCIE) and Social Policy and Practice. A hand search was also conducted of key journals in this area (see below) on March 2015 and updated on July 2017:

Child Abuse and Neglect (<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/child-abuse-and-neglect/>)

Child Abuse Review ([http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)1099-0852](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1099-0852))

Journal of Family Violence (<http://link.springer.com/journal/10896>)

Journal of Gender-Based Violence (<https://policypress.co.uk/journals/journal-of-gender-based-violence>)

Journal of Interpersonal Violence (<http://jiv.sagepub.com/>)

Police Practice and Research: An International Journal (<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gppr20>)

Policing & Society (<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gpas20>)

Psychology of Violence (<http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/vio/>)

Trauma, Violence and Abuse (<http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200782>)

Violence Against Women (<http://vaw.sagepub.com/>)

Lastly, a search was conducted on March 2015 and updated on July 2017 for theses, dissertations and open grey literature. Searches were limited to articles written in the English language and the following key search terms were used:

- polic* OR “law enforcement”
- AND emotional intelligence

3.3.1 Selection of studies for review

Inclusion criteria

Once relevant abstracts/papers were identified, each was assessed for its relevance to the objectives of this research and if appropriate, selected for inclusion in this review. A study was included if it involved EI within the context of policing. Although there were few studies in this area, this study was focused on research which explored how EI impacts police practice and performance with front-line/response officers.

Exclusion criteria

A study was excluded if it was not written in the English language.

Results

Applying the search terms described above, generated an initial pool of 414 articles (Figure 3.1). Article titles were then screened for relevance to this study, with the most relevant articles retained for abstract review. Thirty-one (31) articles remained following this step in the process. Article references were transferred to a web-based reference management software system (RefWorks), through which duplicates were removed. A further 20 articles were excluded on the basis of irrelevance following a second round of observation, which principally involved reviewing the abstract. The full text of each of

the remaining 11 studies was obtained and assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this study. Four studies ultimately were included in the final review as these studies looked at EI of front-line/response officers (Table 3.2). All four studies used a traditional quantitative approach to measure the relationship between EI and job performance in front-line officers. To date, no study has examined the role of EI in response officers in the context of DA. Due to the variety of data collection methods employed in these studies, it was not possible to combine the data from them. As an alternative, a narrative synthesis was conducted in order to identify relevant information with which to address the research objectives. Although none of the studies included in the review applied Goleman's framework of EI, these studies can still inform our understanding and relevance of EI to policing.

Figure 3.1: Flowchart of Literature Search Process

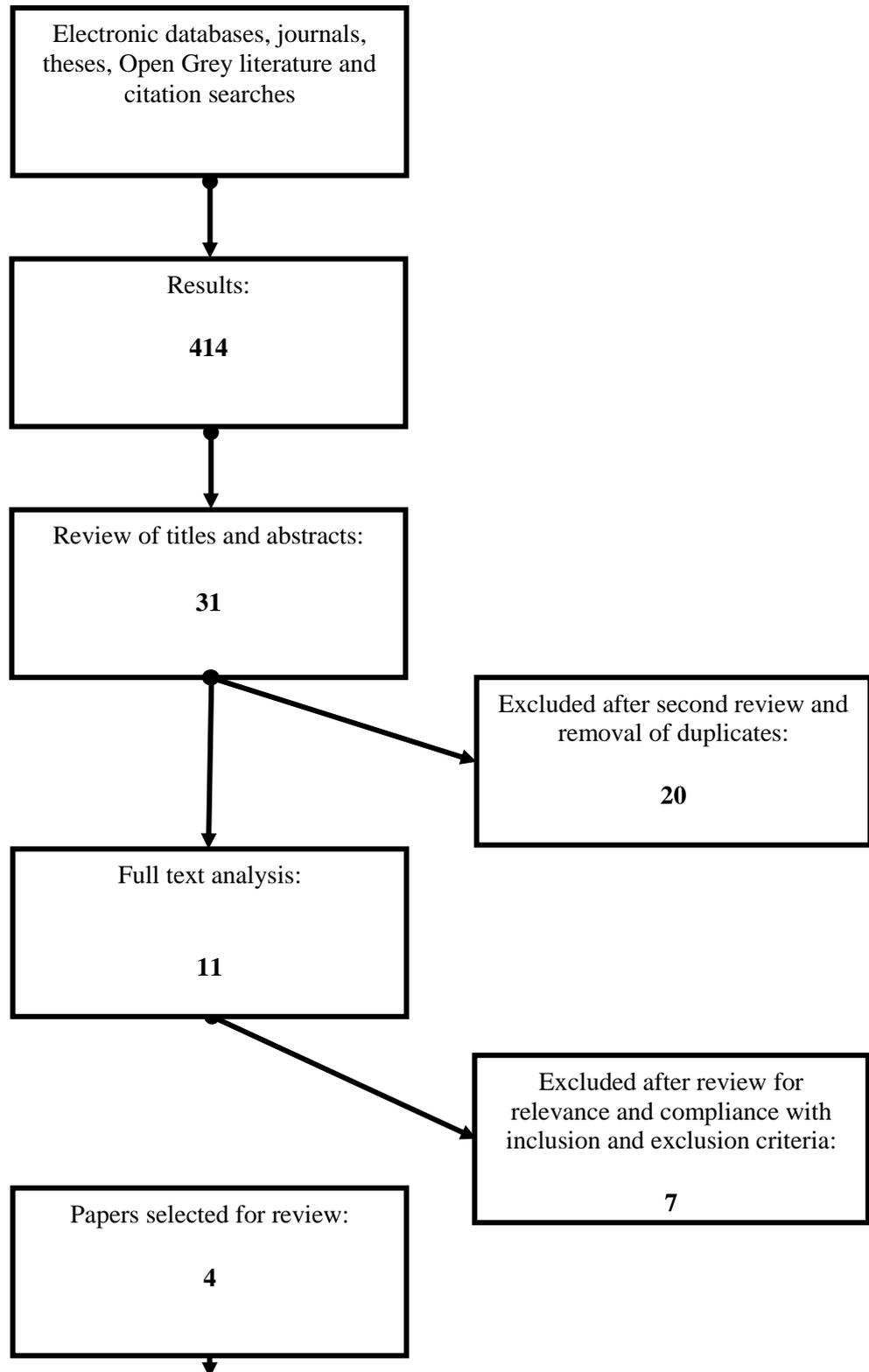


Table 3.2: Police and Emotional Intelligence

	Country/Date	Authors	Title	Sample Size	Design/Methods
1 +	Nigeria, 2016	Adetula, G. A.	Emotional, social and cognitive intelligence as predictors of job performance among law enforcement personnel	Police officers (n=56), prison warders (n=76), court officials (n=22)	Quantitative/Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey & Mayer, 1990); Tromso Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS); Multiple Intelligence Test (MIT); Employee Work Behaviour Scale (EWBS)
2	United Arab Emirates, 2012	Ebrahim Al Ali, et al.	An exploration of the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job performance in police organisations.	Police officers (n=310); 258 males (83.2%), 52 females (16.8%)	Quantitative/ Self-Report Emotional Intelligence test (Schutte, 1998) Job performance assessment in line with organisational appraisal system
3	Australia, 2012	Brunetto et al.	Emotional Intelligence, job satisfaction, wellbeing and engagement: explaining organisational commitment and turnover	Police officers (n=193)	Quantitative (EI scale, employee engagement, affective commitment, wellbeing & turnover intentions)

			intentions in policing.		
4	Nigeria, 2008	Oyesoji Aremu, A. & Oluwayemisi Tejumola, T.	Assessment of emotional intelligence among Nigerian police	Police officers (n=105); non- police personnel (n=180)	Quantitative/ Self-Report Emotional Intelligence test (Schutte, 1998)

A number of recent studies looking at emotional intelligence and policing across a number of domains (leadership, wellbeing and job satisfaction and performance) were identified. Whilst not considered directly relevant to the key objective of the review, a brief discussion of these studies was considered valuable within the field of EI and policing. Five of the eleven studies examined the relationship between EI and leadership and leadership style. These studies demonstrated that emotions are a necessary component of and not peripheral to effective leadership. EI is significantly correlated with a transformational leadership style, which is associated with greater organisational effectiveness compared to other leadership styles (Campbell, 2013; Drodge & Murphy, 2002; Fuzie, 2017; Pallas, 2016). According to Drodge and Murphy (2002, p. 428),

A number of changes have occurred in Western policing cultures during the past decade that stimulate the need for a greater understanding about the role of emotions in police leadership [...] [and] require a shift in the way that emotions are acculturated and understood if policing organisations are to successfully navigate these new policing landscapes.

Research conducted as part of the Scottish Police Leadership Study (SPSLS) (Hawkins & Dulewicz, 2007) found support for Goleman's (1996) proposition that EI explains more variance in performance than IQ (intellectual competence) or MQ (managerial competence).

A survey of 193 police officers in Australia (Brunetto et al., 2012) found that EI increased wellbeing and job satisfaction, which was associated with increased job commitment and engagement (the antithesis of 'burnout'; Ibid, p. 430), thereby reducing turnover intentions. The authors of this study concluded 'It may be just as important for a modern-

day police officer to be emotionally aware as it is for them to be physically fit and knowledgeable about the law' (Ibid, p. 436). Other studies conducted in the US with front-line officers and police sergeants, found a positive relationship between EI, negative mood regulation and burnout and stress management (Ricca, 2004; Vuzzo, 2010).

All four studies (see Table 3.2) examined how EI relates to the practice of front-line officers, including the Australian study outlined above (Brunetto et al., 2012). All four took a traditional quantitative approach in assessing EI and police work. Although Oyesoji Aremu and Oluwayemisi Tejumola (2008) found no relation between EI and the five independent variables used in the study (gender, age, job status, marital status & work experience), this provided evidence of the relevance of EI for Nigerian police officers, due to the high levels of corruption within the service and poor interpersonal relations in the communities in which they serve.

A second study of police officers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) also adopted a quantitative approach to assessing EI. After controlling for general mental abilities and personality traits, EI was found to explain additional incremental variance in predicting several job performance criteria (collaboration with co-workers, written and oral communication, enthusiasm, planning, organising, discipline, and customer service provided to the public, achievement of goals, decision-making abilities and adaptability). By contrast, research conducted by Adetula (2016) found no significant relationship between EI and job performance in law enforcement officers; however, the generalisability of this study may be limited due to the small number of participants involved (n=56).

Despite the utility of these studies, which demonstrate the importance and relatedness of EI and policing, knowledge in this area is limited firstly by the small number of studies and secondly by a lack of research looking at factors such as EI and how it may operate within the context of DA call outs. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates the efficacy of EI in professions, such as policing which involve high levels of interpersonal contact. EI is required to assist officers manage their own emotions and the emotions of others as a critical part of their job, helping to build trust and integrity and

accountability. EI may offer a valuable opportunity to improve outcomes for children living with DA.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, in a study which seeks to conduct an in-depth exploration of the policing response to incidents of DA through the lens of EI, it was appropriate to provide a brief discussion (due to space restrictions) on the sociology of gender and its relevance to this study. Empathy has been identified as a key factor in the policing response to DA – developing empathy and EI may be especially important considerations within a job and organisation culture that has traditionally been male and conform to male norms and/or (latent) rules regarding displays of emotion, discussed in the following section: ‘These rules vary from job to job and organisation to organisation, telling people whether an emotion is appropriate and, if it emerges, how to handle it’ (Yancey Martin, 2005, p. 191).

3.4 Sociology of Gender and Policing

One of the most significant social structures in society is gender. Most societies view gender as a binary concept – you are either male or female, based on an individual’s reproductive functions. Gender powerfully influences our psychological and behavioural tendencies regarded as testimony to our “essential natures” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.129) thus creating highly conventionalised gender norms and stereotyped ways of being: ‘Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine or feminine “natures” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). Violations of gender are often met with resistance and sometimes violence – acting as a powerful form of social control (Goffman, 1976). Emotion(s) are an inherent part of what it means to be human. Emotion is one area where there are clear and robust gender differences: ‘As adults, females display more intense facial expressions of emotion, discuss emotions more, report experiencing emotions more frequently and more intensely than do males’ (Fivush et al., 2000, p. 234). Researchers now argue that much of our emotional evaluation and expression is socially-culturally mediated, challenging a long-held view that these

differences were largely determined by biological processes. Men grow up to learn not to listen to their emotions. Men have learned to view their emotional lives as ‘elements of an ‘animal’ nature that needs to be controlled [...] identification of masculinity with self-control, men learn to related to their emotions as threats to their male identities’ (Siedler, 2006, p. 95).

Policing has historically and contemporaneously been perceived as a male occupation (Rowe, 2014). Pervasive stereotypes affected not only who joined the police but the provision of service to the public; ‘there is a symbiotic relationship between the lack of female officers and the failure of the service to understand the nature and impact of sexual offences and domestic violence’ (Rowe, 2014, p. 131). This ‘cult of masculinity’ (Silvestri, 2017) may affect officers in relation to the theoretical framework of this study, EI – there is a general perception within policing that ‘female officers and older male officers were better suited to cases of domestic abuse’ (Smith, 1989, p. 58; Rowe, 2014). Female officers are often associated with “soft” policing models characterised by a more compassionate, collaborative mode of policing, which is contrasted with a masculine model of policing associated with more legitimate, coercive crime fighting tasks (McCarthy, 2013). As highlighted in Chapter 1, a recent report investigating the police response to DA revealed a lack of empathy, a key tenet of EI, toward female victims (HMIC, 2014). At present, 28.8% of PSNI officers are female.

To date there have been no studies examining differences in response to DA incidents between male and female officers and/or how the institutional approach to training police officers may be impacting on their ability to understand empathy and EI as a learned capacity.

Goleman and Boyatzis (2011) model of EI provides a robust framework to explore the research aims and research questions related to this study. Furthermore, by taking a different approach to the application of EI in a qualitative way, this study will provide greater insight and a nuanced understanding of how EI of officers operates within the context of DA which could not be achieved by using a quantitative approach. This study represents a unique and important opportunity to fill an important gap within the research

which to date has not received adequate attention by both researchers and policing organisations, which has a wide application, both at a domestic and international level.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Children help to shape society; their contribution cannot be unravelled until they are studied as individuals and not merely as members of the procession through childhood. (Reynolds, 1990, p. 330)

This chapter begins by describing the research methodology from a theoretical perspective and as such serves as an introduction to the data collection methods. Drawing from both ontological and epistemological positions and informed by the findings from the literature review (Chapter 2) this chapter outlines the data collection methods in this study to explore the research aims and questions outlined in Chapter 1 (Section 1.5). In addition to the methods of data collection and analysis, particular reference will be made to the sample selection and recruitment of participants and consideration of ethical issues related to this study.

4.2 Research Design

A qualitative approach involving participatory research with children is crucial to exploring the aims and objectives of this study. Qualitative methods have been described as the only 'suitable' methods for research with or about children (Ghate, 2002, as cited in Lombard, 2015, p. 34) and have been critical in providing a space whereby the unique perspectives and rights of children can be articulated and heard.

Qualitative approaches have an 'equalizing' effect by making the child visible as an agent (Ulvik, 2014, p. 6). Qualitative research is distinctive. It was born out of the belief that we can learn something new and valuable about a particular experience or event in the life of the individual(s) and thereby providing new knowledge for theory and policy development that could not be achieved through any other method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research is concerned with *processes* as opposed to outcomes. A major

influence on this process is the theoretical position adopted by the researcher. This has important implications for what can be studied and how it can be studied and the nature of knowledge claims that can be made.

Historically, research with children in the context of DA largely followed a positivist approach, reporting mainly the negative effects on cognition, emotional wellbeing and behaviour. Quantitative approaches are a part of the story but are intrinsically problematic for capturing children's lived experiences in the context of DA. Later studies using qualitative methodologies with children are part of a 'new wave' (Kellett, 2010, p. 7) of research aimed at understanding those lived experiences by allowing children to be more actively engaged in sharing their perspectives on complex issues such as DA.

Taking a qualitative approach to explore this study's research questions recognises that the relationship between the individual and society should be understood – *Verstehen*, to use a term coined by the pioneering sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), a proponent of 'interpretivism' – by interpreting the purpose and subjective meaning that individuals themselves attach to their actions, which constitute a key source of knowledge.

4.2.1 Ontological orientation: Constructionism

The theoretical approach taken by this study is underpinned by a *social constructivist* philosophy of children's experiences of police intervention in the context of DA. Constructionism emphasises that 'social actors socially construct their reality. They conceptualise and interpret their own actions and experience, the action of others and social situations' (Blaikie, 2007, p. 22). Therefore, one way of exploring their reality is to rely on the views of the participants being studied (Creswell, 2002). As highlighted at the beginning of Chapter 2, the voices of children who experience DA have historically occupied a 'muted' position however this position is gradually changing; contemporary (qualitative) research/researchers now demonstrate children's capacity to construct and bear witness to their own lived experiences of DA when empowered to do so, challenging and expanding our knowledge and understanding in a meaningful way. These studies

have powerfully shown that children are not passive witnesses to DA but active agents, who experience the impact of living with DA in the home. Studies have also demonstrated children's resistance strategies to mitigate the impact of DA on their own lives and the lives of others in the family – these children are not acting passively but in an active manner with agency (Callaghan et al., 2015). Notably, such studies aim to challenge the misconceptions of children as lacking in capacity and 'overcome the oppression that is the institution of childhood' (Byrne, 2016, p. 114).

This study seeks to add to the growing body of qualitative work that engages with children, especially younger children, as active research participants in the field of DA, thereby contributing to the small methodological knowledge in this area (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

4.2.2 Epistemological orientation: Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a central concept for understanding the purpose of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 192). Taking an interpretivist approach to this study enables the researcher to adopt an 'empathetic identification with the actor. It is kind of a psychological re-enactment – getting inside the head of an actor to understand what he or she is up to in terms of motives, beliefs, desires, thoughts, and so on' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 192). This process produces a 'double hermeneutic', which represents 'a location of interpretation within a specific social and historical context' (Bryman, 2012, p. 60). By adopting this position, this study aims to build on previous research using this methodology to elucidate a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the interpretative meaning(s) attached to children's perceptions and experiences of police and police intervention and the views and experiences of front-line police officers within the theoretical framework.

Qualitative studies have played a unique role in the context of DA. From a theoretical perspective, and in light of the diverse representation of children's experiences in the

context of DA, a qualitative approach provides the flexibility in the research process to ensure that children's voices and 'the child' are not viewed simply as a 'singular category position' (James, 2007, p. 262). It has been argued that qualitative methods within an interpretivist framework have an epistemological advantage in producing data that is closer to the realities of children (Tisdall et al., 2009). Research with children has been effective in changing the conceptualisation and definition of abuse in law to include 'impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another' (Adoption and Children's Act 2002, s120). This has resulted in not only increasing the visibility of children in the context of DA but enhancing the professional response and services available to children and their families. This re-positioning of children is happening at a crucial juncture, given the increasing rate of family breakdown, poverty, and stress over academic attainment, child exploitation, increasing levels of global conflict and decreasing physical and psychological wellbeing. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002) predicts that by 2020, childhood depression will be the second highest cause of disability. With research evidence documenting the negative outcomes for children of living with and experiencing DA, there is an urgent need for governments to develop policies and practice in relation to DA that create structures to listen to and include the voices of children.

4.2.3 Participatory methods: Opportunities and challenges

Under the combined influence of evolving constructions of children and the UNCRC (1989), children's status became politically and culturally symbolic of their new position within contemporary society. This has had important implications for research processes. Not only has it resulted in a significant increase in research with children, but it also led to the development of child-centric participatory research strategies that have empowered children to express their views through, for example, photography, drama, storytelling,

mosaics and drawings. According to Mayall (1996, as cited in Mullender et al., 2002, p. 7):

[P]lacing children at the centre of research requires three methodological shifts. It means regarding children as competent and reflexive in reporting on their own experiences, giving them a voice and taking seriously what they say, and working for children rather than on them in ways that may lead to the betterment of their social worlds.

Although the UNCRC reformed the status of children in society within a legal framework, much research has continued to be carried out *on* children rather than *with* them (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Kellett, 2010). Children exposed to DA have significant experience of not having their voices heard (Cater & Överlien, 2014). Evidence from previous studies has shown a universal need among children living with DA to be ‘listened to, believed and supported. They usually are not looking for solutions but an opportunity to share their fears’ (Mullender, 2002, p. 18). A participatory framework underpins the ontology, epistemology and children’s rights orientation taken by this study.

Participation in this context is defined as ‘The direct involvement of children in decision-making about matters that affect their lives, whether individually or collectively’ (Hill et al., 2004, p. 83). In the current study, such involvement is defined in terms of Hart’s (1992, p. 8) ladder of participation, specifically Stage 6 of 8: ‘adult initiated, shared decisions with children’. Premised on Hart’s (1992) framework, this study provides a genuine opportunity for children, especially younger children (those under eight years old) who are at a greater risk of social exclusion, to fulfil their participation rights under the principles of the UNCRC (1989) by ‘considering them as a social group capable of influencing social policy and practice’ (Leonard, 2005, p. 153). Participatory research, as defined by Lundy (2007, p. 931), must go beyond simplistic ‘the voice of the child’ rhetoric; to embracing the concepts within the author’s reconceptualization of article 12 (UNCRC, 1989) (space, voice, audience and influence). Careful consideration was given to each of Lundy’s key concepts in the research design – for example in the design of information leaflets, data collection methods and the capacity building element of the interview process, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (Section 4.8): ‘The achievement of [children’s] participation rights requires adults to show patience and creativity by adapting their expectations to a young child’s interests, level of

understanding and preferred ways of communication’ (Lundy, 2007, p. 937). Promoting the participation of children in research requires a significant commitment by the researcher throughout the research process. The ‘spadework’ described by Lombard (2015, p. 41) in her recent research with children and DA, is often a much more arduous and overlooked aspect of research with children.

Horstman et al. (2008) identifies four key challenges when using participatory methods with children: the balance of power, the psychological climate in which data collection takes place, the voluntary nature of consent and the skills the researcher possesses to work with children. The nature of each of the challenges and how they were addressed in this study will be discussed in some detail in the following sections, as well as some of the opportunities afforded by participatory research with children.

4.2.3.1 Opportunities and challenges of participatory research with children

‘Childhood is the time of the greatest psychological development in any person’s life; the things that a child experiences during the early years of their lives will have a major and lasting impact on them and the people around them’ (Faulconbridge et al., 2015, p. 8). A quarter of children in the UK who are living with high-risk DA are under the age of three years old (SafeLives, 2015, p. 5) and therefore face an increased risk from the negative effects of DA. The inclusion of children younger children was an important focus for this study and an important opportunity for knowledge mobilisation with this population.

The greatest barrier to children’s participation is adult conceptualisations of children as ‘too vulnerable’. This view may be premised on the dominant ideology that civil rights are a preserve of adulthood which children are not yet able to exercise, and that the provision of such rights to children would in some way undermine adult rights and authority (Hill et al., 2004). Research carried out with young children demonstrates that they are capable of participating in research and influencing policy when they are provided with the appropriate conditions to do so (SCCYP, 2012). Among the arguments in favour of greater consultation with children are that it embodies an important principle

(enshrined in the UNCRC), that it improves policy (for example, by making it more sensitive to social needs or more likely to succeed), that it contributes to the health of democracy and that it helps policymakers better understand the lives of children and young people (Cockburn, 2005).

Another opportunity afforded by participatory research with children is its potential psychological benefits. Whilst it is acknowledged that research with children is not a therapeutic context, there are undoubtedly potential benefits for children who participate in research that provides an opportunity for them to talk about issues related to DA, which can serve as a protective and empowering factor against the negative effects associated with DA. Children often report that sharing their experiences earlier would have helped them to 'make sense of what was happening and to feel less isolated, sad and overwhelmed' (Mullender et al., 2002, p. 19). Leaving children to manage negative thoughts and emotions associated with DA on their own can result in higher levels of psychopathology (Graham-Bermann et al., 2011). Being asked for one's views can have intrinsic value, instilling pride and demonstrating respect for their experiences, though many make clear that the instrumental value is also essential: for the exercise to be truly meaningful, their views should have an impact (Hill et al., 2004; Lundy, 2007). Despite these opportunities, the challenges associated with doing participatory research with children must also be acknowledged. For example, concerns have been expressed about the degree to which children can fully exercise agency within an adult-devised/adult-led participatory framework, and the reliability, validity and generalisability of data produced. Various critics of participatory methods have argued that representations of the child's voice as autonomous and independent within an adult-devised/led framework is inherently problematic for the participatory paradigm:

Although new approaches in the study of childhood and children's everyday lives have opened up a theoretical and conceptual space in which children can speak as participant-observers about their experiences of the world, this is not in and of itself sufficient to ensure that children's voices and views are heard. (James, 2007, p. 262)

The structural and cultural norms which operate within this context further complicate the ability of the method to produce 'authentic' knowledge claims. James (2007) suggests that more critical attention to the dynamics between the researcher and the researched is

essential for understanding how children's voices are expressed (and diminished) in child-led (visual) methods.

The concept of "scientific rigor" is also a perennial concern in qualitative research. Bryman (2012) maintains that the criteria of reliability and validity used for assessing much of social science research are not always applicable to qualitative research, and when applied to research with children, have been used as a means to assert its unreliability and invalidate the opinions expressed. Qualitative evidence is distinctive, and it is clearly not appropriate to evaluate qualitative research using conventional statistical concepts such as objectivity, reliability and validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that alternative terms be used when assessing qualitative research, such as 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' (as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 49). Reliability in qualitative/participatory research typically refers to 'adopting research methods that are accepted by the research community as legitimate ways of collecting and analysing data' (Winter, 2014, p. 511). Validity means selecting the right method for the given question and applying that method 'in a coherent, justifiable, and rigorous manner' (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008, p. 391). Achieving a high standard of rigour depends on an 'adequate description of the research collection methods and frameworks used for analysis; attention to the ways that the trustworthiness of the data was assessed; discussion of alternative explanations; and explanation of authors' philosophical perspectives and conceptual frameworks' (Thyer, 2012, p. 123). As for generalisability, because research with children 'is a complex, dynamic, relational and contingent process' (Winter, 2014, p. 512), we must accept that there is not one objective reality which the researcher seeks to place in the public domain; instead, the researcher seeks to illuminate aspects of children's experiences while accepting the limitations of this perspective: 'the findings of qualitative research are to generalise to theory rather than populations' (Bryman, 2012, p. 406).

Accordingly, these are just some of the challenges involved in conducting participating research with children which must be borne in mind when using this approach to collect data.

4.3 Data Collection Methods: Semi-structured and Case Study Interviews

In this study, data collection took place on two levels: semi-structured interviews (SS) and a case study approach (CS) with police officers and children. The concepts of space, voice, audience and influence described in Lundy's (2007) model informed the qualitative/participatory element(s) of this study with children. Careful consideration was given to the data collection methods and the author's engagement with children. Commenting on Lundy's model, Winter (2014, p. 482) states that 'It is the indivisible relationship between all four of these factors that facilitates and supports children to exercise their participation rights'. Informed by findings from the literature review (Chapter 2), an important element in this study was the inclusion of children's voices, especially those of younger children, in the context of domestic abuse (*space*). This had important implications for the second concept in Lundy's model (*voice*); careful consideration therefore was given to how information such as leaflets containing details of the study was presented to children, taking into account their age and also the methods employed ('draw and talk') to support young children to 'freely' express their views. As part of this process, children were assisted to build their capacity to share their views, emotions and feelings as part of semi-structured and case study interviews (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). Children affected by DA have extensive experience of not being listened to (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012); therefore, a key element of this study was providing an environment in which children would be listened to (*audience*) and heard (*influence*).

Data collection commenced with in-depth, art-based ('draw and talk' technique) SS interviews with children aged 4-15 years old; these were followed by SS interviews with police officers. Data collection concluded with the CS interviews involving both children and police. The 'draw and talk' technique was used to explore the research questions with young children. This method is based on the premise that drawing is a participatory activity which children of varying age and ability can enjoy. Interestingly, research with children aged 5-12 found that drawing while talking increased the amount of verbal information that children reported during an interview compared to children who talked

only (Woolford et al., 2013). The sessions with each child and the police were voice recorded for later transcription and analysis.

These methods are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Data Collection Methods

Participant Group	Method
Children aged 4 - 7 years old	5 individual semi-structured interviews using play and art materials to facilitate children to express themselves and to explore their perceptions of the role of police in society and their personal experiences of police involvement relating to DA.
Children aged 8 - 15 years old	10 individual semi-structured interviews using play and art materials to facilitate children to express themselves and to explore their perceptions of the role of police in society and their personal experiences of police involvement relating to DA. 2 children participated in a case study interview based on a reported incident of DA; each case study included a child and police officer from the same incident.
Police Officers	20 individual semi-structured interviews to explore perceptions of the professional role of the police in general and in responding to DA specifically, and their experiences of responding to incidents of DA involving children. 2 police officers participated in a case study interview based on a reported incident of DA; each case study included the officer and child from the same incident. <i>'Think Aloud'</i> protocol was used for the case study interview with police officers.

The interviews with police officers and children were semi-structured. This allowed the preparation of an interview schedule (Appendix F). The topic guide and questions for semi-structured interviews were derived from the research questions and from previous research (Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Semi-structured interviews provide sufficient flexibility to ensure that any unique or new insights provided by the participants can emerge and be explored by the interviewer (Wengraf, 2002). The

interview questions addressed issues surrounding police officer attitudes to their professional role and to police work in general, with a specific focus on DA and how this may inform their experience, understanding and response to children at incidents of DA. The interview questions were exploratory in nature and sought to understand police officers' own lived experiences in the context of DA and the theoretical framework. In relation to children, the research questions addressed issues surrounding their perceptions and personal experiences of police and police involvement in the context of DA.

A case study approach was used alongside semi-structured interviews to explore police officers' and children's experiences regarding their most recent interaction, which provided an intensive focus and an opportunity for analysis of the theoretical framework.

The 'draw and talk' technique was used during SS interviews with children aged 4-15 years was used as a methodological aid, to facilitate children to talk about their experiences (Appendix F) (Horstman et al., 2008). Methods such as drawing are considered to be child-centred as they enable children to participate freely, through an activity which they enjoy, and which is claimed to be in line with their capabilities (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999). Furthermore, drawings are a conduit through which children are able to represent experiences unrestricted by language or literacy (White et al., 2010). This is especially valuable when researching with younger children and/or sensitive or taboo subjects such as DA. Reflecting on their research, White et al. (2010) suggested that 'participative techniques did facilitate, to a point, communication in children's own terms' (Ibid., p. 153).

In many ways, drawing reflects the ideals of a participatory framework, which are interpreted as giving children a 'voice' (Lundy, 2007), releasing control of the research and enabling the diversity of experiences that make up children's lives to be represented (White et al., 2010). This technique has been found to be more effective than writing alone or drawing alone (Pridmore & Lansdown, 1997): 'Introducing the opportunity to draw to young children before they are interviewed appears to be a robust strategy with a large effect size' (Winter, 2014, p. 490). This study recognises children's 'talk' is a fundamentally symbolic and instrumental form of participation; the child is verbally the subject of the conversation (Ulvik, 2014, p. 6). In recognition of the significance of

children's 'voices' within Lundy's (2007) framework (space, voice, audience and influence), this method was used to provide a space in which children could articulate their experiences freely. While a critique of this technique is the extent to which they either aid communication or allow researchers to identify children's 'real' ideas and beliefs (Angell, 2015). This is based on the assumption that children's drawings are a direct representation of their own thoughts and feelings. This assumption is flawed, because children's drawing, especially that of young children, may be influenced by 'pictures' in their environment (Thomas & Silk, 1990). It is important to note, too, that drawings are used as a method to facilitate discussion and, as in this study, it is the children's commentary or talk which is of primary consideration for research findings.

A case study approach was used alongside semi-structured interviews to explore police officers' and children's experiences regarding their most recent interaction, which provided an intensive focus and an opportunity for analysis of the theoretical framework. Previous research exploring the police response to children has been based on retrospective reflective accounts that give a general idea of what happens (i.e. children may be overlooked or inadequately engaged with by police). This study seeks to explore whether EI can improve knowledge and understanding of how police experience and relate to children. Towards this end, this research utilised a case study (CS) approach to connect police officers and children involved in the same DA incident in order to achieve a closeness to practice and a more contextual exploration and analysis of EI-based competencies. It has been established that many everyday activities can be successfully replicated outside their original reactive social setting in order to reproduce thinking processes which capture competence and performance in that domain (Ericsson & Smith, 1991). The narrative for the case study was constructed on the basis of police incident reports. Case study design, argues Eisenhardt (1989, pp. 548-549), is '[p]articularly well suited to new research areas or research areas for which existing theory seems inadequate'.

A core philosophy of the approach to this study and the methods used recognises children to be 'knowing subjects' in all aspects of their lives (James et al., 1998). Accordingly, it was important to hear children's voices without reference to their mother's narrative, congruent with the ontological and epistemological position taken by this study. This

decision was also premised on an awareness, reflected in the literature, that children observe that adults (e.g. police officers) often prioritise the thoughts and feelings of adults over those of children, if they consider them at all (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2012; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

4.4 Sample Selection

In conducting this research, the researcher was interested in children who have had experience of DA and police involvement. Women’s Aid agreed to facilitate the recruitment of children into the study, and formal written permission was received (Appendix A). Children were recruited on a voluntary basis supported by Women’s Aid, Newry, Mourne, South Down and South Armagh, who are partners in this research. While it is impossible to capture the full range of children’s experiences in any study, a number of factors were relevant and have been incorporated into the research design, such as age and gender. For many living in Northern Ireland (NI), one’s cultural background (Catholic/Protestant) has been and remains a powerful influence on one’s perceptions of policing and forms an important aspect of analysis. It was therefore critical in the recruitment of participants to consider each of the aforementioned factors through purposive sampling.

The procedure used to recruit children for both the SS and CS interviews is outlined later in this chapter. Fifteen children were recruited and took part in SS interviews while two were recruited and took part in CS interviews (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Participant Demographic Data – Children

Age Group	N	Age (M)	Gender (F:M)
4-7 years	5	6.4	1:4
8-15 years	10	11.4	4:6
Total	15	9.9	5:10

N: Total number in each age group

M: Average age in calendar years/months

While small, the size of the sample is comparable to previous research in this area using a qualitative methodology (Buckley et al., 2007; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). This study had a particular emphasis on including younger children, defined as being under eight years old; as previous research had found that police officers experienced specific age-related barriers when communicating with younger children (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). All research participants had experience of DA and experience of police involvement in such incidents. The participant sample for this research was stratified according to chronological age. The stratification system used is reflective of the developmental stages identified by Piaget (1896-1980).

Ten of the children identified as Catholic and four identified as Protestant, which was reflective of the community background of the areas covered by this study; data was missing for one child. None of the children were still living with the perpetrator. A large number of the children in the sample had experienced police intervention on more than one occasion. Three sibling groups (totalling seven children) participated in this study. One of these consisted of three children, who were interviewed together because the youngest of the siblings preferred to have her siblings present. Siblings in each of the other two family groups were interviewed separately. Two children were recruited separately to participate in case study interviews; these children did not participate in semi-structured interviews (Case Study 1: female aged 12 years old; Case Study 2: male aged 14 years old).

Exclusion Criteria

As the efficacy of the research methods selected for this study depended on children's verbal ability, children whose first language was not English were not included in the research sample due to the lack of interpreting facilities. Likewise, children with speech/communication and/or significant learning difficulties were also excluded. At a "pre-interview" meeting with the children and their mothers, the researcher determined each child's understanding and competence to give consent and participate in the research.

Because police officers are in a unique position to intervene in the lives of children who are exposed to DA in their homes, this study has sought firstly to explore how EI impacts the way in which police officers experience and respond to the impact of DA on children, and secondly, to propose ways in which police can respond that are perceived as helpful by children who have experienced DA.

Twenty response officers and specialist police officers were voluntarily recruited to take part in the SS interviews (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Participant Demographic Data – Police Officers

Gender	N	Age (M age)	Time in Service (MT)
Female	9	34.9	7:7
Male	11	33.1	6:4
Total	20	33.11	6:11

N: Total number in each group

M: Average age in calendar years and months

MT: Average length of service

Data for three officers was incomplete/missing. Two officers in this sample were specialist Domestic Abuse Officers (DAO). Ten officers identified as Protestant and eight identified as Catholic; data for the remaining two officers was incomplete/missing. The average time in service was 6 years 11 months. Two response officers were recruited separately to participate in case study interviews (Case Study 1: age = 24 years old, male, time in service 6 years; Case Study 2: age = 25 years old, male, time in service 2 years).

The procedure for recruiting response officers for both semi-structured and case study interviews is outlined later in this chapter. Gender and cultural background were salient factors in the recruitment process, with consideration given to each of these aforementioned factors via purposive sampling. The inclusion criterion was a minimum of two years' experience in the police service.

Police officers with less than two years' experience in the police service were excluded from this study.

Theoretically, qualitative studies contain significantly smaller number of participants than quantitative studies. Decisions with regard to sample size are debated in the literature. Warren (2002, as cited in Mason, 2010) states that the broader the scope of a qualitative study and the more comparisons drawn between groups in the study, the greater the number of interviews required. He suggests that for validity, between 20 and 30 interviews are sufficient. Others argue that 'fewer than 60 interviews cannot support convincing conclusions and more than 150 produces too much material to analyse effectively' (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 223). Mason (2010) theorises that the guiding principle should be the concept of saturation, which cannot be pre-determined (Mason, 2010). Green and Thorogood (2004) argue that the saturation criterion is conceptually useful, but has several weaknesses for funded research, which is often required to stipulate from the outset who is going to be interviewed, the number of participants and the timeframe. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue against the saturation criterion in qualitative research on the grounds that there is always the potential for "new" data to emerge, asserting instead that saturation is reached when the new does not add anything to the overall story. An analysis of PhD studies found that most included samples of between 30 and 50 participants (Mason, 2010).

Given that the current study was exploratory and therefore a "first look" at a complex issue and given both the time constraints and complex research design, 20 interviews with police officers, 15 with children and two case study interviews were deemed to provide sufficient data to facilitate the aims of the study. 'Methodological triangulation – the use of multiple methods to study a single problem' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 391) – provided an alternative form of validation. The inclusion of both police officers and children was also an important form of data triangulation.

4.5 Recruitment: Semi-structured and Case Study Interviews

Because DA is a hidden social problem and because of time restraints, the sample of children was accessed through Women's Aid, who are partners in the research. Utilising only Women's Aid as the sample source is recognised as a potential limitation of this study, as participants may disproportionately come from a lower socio-economic background (Edleson, 1999; Kitzmann et al., 2003). This has consequences for the representativeness and generalisability of the findings.

Prior to the start of the recruitment process, the researcher held two meetings with key staff members of the Women's Aid centre who support women and children in accessing services. These meetings afforded an opportunity not only to provide information about the aims and objectives of the study and the inclusion/exclusion criteria for potential participants but also to build trust with key staff members (Bryman, 2012). The meetings were recognised by the researcher as an important first step in creating a relationship with staff who already occupy an important position of trust with parents/guardians and children. The ongoing relationship between the researcher and the centre staff was recognised as integral to the research process. The researcher collaborated closely with the key children's worker in the centre throughout the development of this study to build a network of trust for the children and mothers involved in the research.

Suitable research participants were initially identified by the gatekeepers at Women's Aid. Support worker staff then provided children and their mother with information sheets describing the research (Appendix B & D). This material was left with them for a period of a week or more, if necessary, for their consideration. The information provided an explanation of the purpose of the study and detailed the nature of participant involvement in the research. If mothers wished to obtain further information regarding the potential involvement of their child in the study, they completed their contact details on the reply slip attached to the information sheets and returned it to the support worker. The researcher then approached the mother via a safe method, which in all cases was by telephone, to arrange an informal "pre-interview" meeting. These took place at a

Women's Aid centre, a location which was already familiar and convenient to the women and children. These measures were taken to facilitate the children and their mothers.

The "pre-interview" meeting provided an important opportunity for both the child and their mother to gain further information about the research and to meet the researcher. At this meeting, the child's mother was asked to give her verbal permission for the researcher to discuss the research with the child. Only once verbal permission had been secured from the child's mother was the researcher able to approach the child to discuss taking part in the research. Also, during this meeting, if the child then wished to take part in the study, a date and time was arranged for the research interview. The consent of the mother and not fathers was sought only because the research sample was accessed through Women's Aid and fathers were predominately involved in committing acts of DA. The issue of informed consent is discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.11).

The sample of police officers was identified, approached and recruited on a voluntary basis via the District Commander of District E, located in Newry, Northern Ireland. Prior to the commencement of the research, the researcher and the principal supervisor at that time (Dr John Devaney) met with the District Commander of E District to discuss the aims of the research which was supported with great interest and enthusiasm. Formal written approval was obtained from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to carry out this study (Appendix A). The District Commander of E District provided access to the sample of officers. The sample of police officers was recruited on a voluntary basis from 'E District', which comprises Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon and Newry & Mourne.

Information leaflets were distributed via the District Commander by means of an internal email system to section officers and distributed to officers in their section (Appendix B). (Section officers have responsibility for officers in their section.) The District Commander provided the researcher with the telephone details of section managers; the researcher then contacted the section officer to discuss a suitable date and time for conducting the interviews given the officers' shift patterns. Those officers interested in taking part in the study were allocated the necessary time off from duty to be interviewed. This method was thought to enhance the autonomy and safety of each officer. All

interviews were conducted during the officer's normal hours of work and in their place of work. This is acknowledged as a potential limitation in terms of confidentiality. However, given the security threat from dissident Republicans, this arrangement was considered necessary. From a research perspective, it was considered more important that each participant's identity and responses during the interview and any subsequent publications remained anonymous and confidential. This priority was highlighted in any information provided to participants (Appendix B).

Consent was discussed prior to the commencement of research interviews and written consent was obtained (Appendix C). Because the confidentiality and safety of participating officers was of paramount importance, any contact details provided by police officers were kept in a secure location and the information was limited to their name, station and telephone number.

Whilst the strengths of working with gatekeepers and accessing participants is acknowledged, there are also a number of challenges in using gatekeepers to gain access to research participants (Bryman, 2012; Singh & Wassenaar, 2016). Reiner (2000) suggests that the police are usually concerned about how the organisation are going to be represented in publications in case they are portrayed unfavourably (discussed in Section 4.4). The principle of *autonomy* for the researcher was integral to this study. Negotiating and maintaining relationships with gatekeepers throughout the research process involves what Bryman (2012, p. 151) names as 'the research bargain'. The most problematic in this study occurred when the gatekeeper for Women's Aid was unavailable which caused delays in accessing participants.

4.5.1 Recruitment for case study interviews

Two children and two officers were recruited for CS interviews; to reduce the burden of being involved in the research twice, no child or police officer was involved in both the SS and CS interviews. Children and police officers were initially recruited using the same recruitment methods as those used for SS interviews. However, in the case of the CS

interviews, it was crucial that both the child and the police officers were matched to the same incident.

If the mother and child were happy to take part in the study after the ‘pre-interview’ meeting, the researcher conducted a brief conversation with the mother and child to obtain accurate details regarding a specific incident of DA and to ensure that the child was likely to recall the specific incident in question. After verbal permission was secured from the mother and child, the researcher passed the details of the incident to the secretary of the District Commander, who then located the officer and provided an information leaflet explaining the purpose of the study and the nature of their involvement in the research (Appendix D). Officers interested in taking part in the study then contacted the researcher directly by telephone, using details provided in the leaflet. If the police officer involved wished to take part, the researcher then carried out the interview with the officer in the first instance. This helped to avoid a situation whereby the researcher conducted an interview with a child only to discover subsequently that the officer involved did not wish to participate in the case study interview. Prior to the commencement of interviews, consent forms were signed independently by each participating parent/guardian, child and police officer (Appendix C). A separate protocol was developed to manage this process (Appendix E).

4.6 Procedure: Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews offer the researcher an opportunity not only to gain an understanding of what people think, but to develop an understanding of the reason(s) people feel and act in the way they do, which was an important objective of the research (Bryman, 2012). Whilst in the context of this research, the semi-structured interview provided participants with the privacy to discuss sensitive issues such as DA, it was important from a research perspective to consider that some children could be uncomfortable with the one-to-one setting, particularly if previously they had had experience of interviews with other service providers in the context of DA, such as police, social workers and teachers. To mitigate this, the ‘draw and talk’ technique was used.

This provided a concrete focus that minimised the formality of the research context (Kellett, 2010).

Location was an important factor when interviewing children. The interviews were held on Women's Aid premises, a familiar location to children and importantly, a place in which they felt safe and comfortable talking about issues relating to the research. The use of this location also meant there was immediate support available for children if required. All the children in this study were receiving support within Women's Aid and all were familiar with the support worker who was present, in another part of the building, when interviews took place. During the interviews, a large number of children spoke with high regard and affection for the support worker, reporting how much it had helped to have someone outside the family that they could trust and talk to about how they were feeling, and how they often looked forward to meeting with the support worker.

Before beginning interviews with children, the researcher discussed consent with and obtained written consent from both the child and their mother (Appendix C). The child's mother then exited the research interview room. Children were made aware of the exact location of their mother during the interview process.

Prior to the commencement of each interview, children were reminded of their right to withdraw from the research at any point without giving the researcher a reason for doing so. Children were also asked to give their consent for the interview to be tape recorded, and a brief rationale for this was given. On a few occasions, children asked for a demonstration of the audio recorder, to which the researcher happily agreed. Because children are often told by adults not to discuss the abuse in the home with others (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002), the children were also informed that their mother was aware they were talking to the researcher about the time the police came to their house when the adults were fighting and arguing.

The researcher also reminded children about the issues of confidentiality and unsought disclosures, and that it was okay for children to stop talking at any point without giving a reason. It was verbally explained to children by the researcher if they mention anything which means they might not be safe, the researcher would talk to their support worker

about this, but the researcher would talk to the child about this before doing so. This was important as it is acknowledged that within the context of DA, children have extensive experience of not being listened to and not being provided with information. The issue of disclosures is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 (Section 4.11). The researcher explained that the children's real name would not be used unless they wished it to be. Most children were happy to use their own name, emphasising that this was important as means of recognising their contribution to this research. The children were asked to practice refusing to answer a question so that if a question came up during the interview that the child was not happy to answer, they would feel confident to refuse. It was stressed to children that the conversation between them and the researcher was NOT a test. The interviews were never rushed; rather, care was taken to provide enough time and space for children to reflect on the questions and articulate their responses. Individual interviews lasted between 16 minutes and 46 minutes, with an average duration of 32 minutes.

To reduce any anxiety or uncertainty they might feel around the research process, the researcher outlined the phases of the process with children prior to commencing the interview to ensure they had some idea as to what the process would entail. The first phase of the interviews explored children's perceptions of the police (Appendix F). Children were shown two pictures of police officers (Appendix H), one male and one female, and asked if they knew who they were and what they did.

The second phase explored children's experiences of police and police intervention. The researcher's significant expertise in the field of child development and experience working with children was utilised throughout this process to facilitate an environment wherein it was hoped that children would feel relaxed, safe, valued and understood. A majority of the children found it easy to talk; however, one child appeared to monitor what she said as she often responded to questions with the phrase "I don't know", a strategy often used by children to protect themselves or others living with DA (Callaghan et al., 2015). This child was part of a sibling group that were interviewed together. It has been noted that among sibling groups, one child is often more talkative than the others, a pattern which often develops in the context of DA (Mullender et al., 2002, p. 41). Finally, at the end of the interview children were asked to think about three things that they felt was important to tell the police when attending other incidents of DA involving children.

4.6.1 Engaging in capacity building with children

A key element of Lundy's (2007) model and a participatory methodology, focused on assisting children in the formation of views regarding their experiences: '[B]uilding capacity on the substantive research issues enables children to contribute more confidently (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012, p. 129). Before commencing phase two of the interview exploring children's experiences of police intervention, the researcher spent some time engaging in capacity building around the concept of emotion. It is important to acknowledge that each person's experience and understanding of emotion is a highly subjective enterprise and represents a 'function of their general language skills and the specific vocabulary they have for describing emotions' (Ashurst, 2011 p. 107). In order to build capacity within children to talk about their emotions, children were encouraged to discuss the formation of their experiences and emotions to police intervention and the police using figurines of the characters from the 2015 Disney Pixar film, *Inside Out*. *Inside Out* was a popular children's movie during the research which was set in the mind of a young girl and involved five personified emotions (Anger, Disgust, Fear, Joy and Sadness). The figurines used in this research were of the five different characters playing these emotions (see Appendix I). The capacity-building aspect aimed to provide children with a conceptual framework which would 'enable [them] to reflect on their own experiences and to locate this within the wider knowledge associated with the research questions' (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012, p. 134).

To begin, the researcher introduced the small figurine characters (Anger, Disgust, Fear, Joy, and Sadness) to the children and asked if they recognised them. This immediately started a very animated discussion around each of the characters and who they were. Interestingly, a number of the boys commented on Anger being their favourite character because 'he smashes'. This then led onto a discussion about why we need these emotions and where in the body we feel them: 'Yeah and this is fear, that's why he is crippled because when you are scared you go ahhh' (Emily, age 8, L289). Children felt emotions were important as they signal to others how we are feeling 'If someone was sad, they would start crying, or if someone was fear, they would probably scream, something like

terror, or if they were angry, they would probably punch with their fists' (James, age 12, L 175-177). One child was able to say how emotions help keep her safe: '[W]hen you are scared it is just your body telling you something bad might happen, and I think that you get butterflies in your tummy and it is a good thing because it can warn you if something bad is going to happen' (Emer, age 9, L 226-228). A number of children discussed emotions, with great insight, within the context of the DA in the home and how this had impacted them emotionally:

[A]nger is one of my hardest emotions [...] it took me near two years to try and control my anger because I was lashing out [...] joy would be another one because now since I have turned over this new leaf whenever I moved in with my mummy [...] I am more happy, I am more open about myself. (Caoimhe, age 12, L 265-269)

Introducing the figures with children was a highly effective strategy, facilitating an animated and nuanced discussion with children of the highly abstract and often demanding concept of emotion and made it concrete. Children's insight into their emotional lives was revealing and powerful.

Children could also use the available art materials as part of the 'draw and talk' technique adopted during the interviews, but most were comfortable talking without the use of the art materials. At different points during the interview some of the younger children would use drawing as a means to take a break from discussing interview questions. Interviews were very much taken at the speed at which children were most comfortable; interviews were never rushed, and children were given the opportunity and space to ask questions or discuss topics of interest to them. One child, for example, talked passionately about tractors, while another chatted about his imminent birthday party and another was happy to draw pictures for her mum. Two older boys, siblings whose mother had been a victim of domestic homicide, felt it was important to take part in the study to improve the police response for other children.

4.6.2 Procedure with police officers

Before commencing the interview, the researcher gave a brief summary of the purpose of the research interview, which was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of individual response officers in NI within the context of domestic abuse where children are present. Officers read and signed a consent form (Appendix C); they then were reminded that they could withdraw at any point and were again informed of the protocol regarding confidentiality, anonymity and unsought disclosures. Officers were also reminded that there were no right or wrong answers to the interview questions.

Verbal consent was sought from each officer to audio record the interview; none refused. As was done with the children, the researcher outlined the phases of the research process with officers (Appendix F) prior to commencing the interview to ensure they had some idea of what the process would entail, thereby reducing any anxiety or uncertainty they might have around the process. Individual interviews lasted between 32 minutes and 1 hour 42 minutes, with an average duration of 1 hour 2 minutes. Time was provided at the end of the interview for officers to ask the researcher any questions about the study.

4.7 Procedure: Case Study Interviews

The ‘Think-Aloud’ methodology, also referred to as ‘protocol analysis’ has a long history in the field of psychology (de Groot, 1946/1978). Its two major areas of application are research on cognitive processes and knowledge acquisition. There are two main approaches to implementing the method: concurrent think-aloud (CTA) protocol and retrospective think-aloud (RTA) protocol (Koro-Ljungberg, 2012; Van Someren et al., 1994). The RTA protocol provides a reliable and valid method through which to study police practices at incidents of DA involving children, through the lens of the theoretical framework EI. The RTA protocol can generate data that is ‘unfiltered and unprocessed’, which in a traditional interview setting may otherwise be left unsaid (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2012, p. 737).

In this study, the RTA protocol was reproduced by focusing on a most recent interaction between police and children in the context of a DA incident. In accordance with this protocol, participants were interviewed individually and simply asked to provide an account of their experience of the specific incident in terms of what they were feeling (affect), thinking (cognition) and doing (action). According to Ericsson and Simon (1998, p. 182), ‘When participants are thinking aloud, their sequences of thoughts have not been found to be systematically altered by verbalization. When participants are asked to describe and explain their thinking, their performance is often changed – mostly it is improved’. In the current study, the accuracy of the findings is enhanced by including both police and children from the same incident.

CS interviews were conducted first with police officers then with children. This sequence was chosen to avoid a situation whereby the researcher conducted an interview with a child only to later discover that the police officer involved did not wish to be interviewed. The procedure involved in conducting the CS interviews was similar to that previously described for the SS interviews for police officers and children, except for the focus on a particular incident and use of the RTA protocol. CS interviews with children and police officers followed a similar schedule to semi-structured interviews (see Appendix G), with interviews lasting approximately one hour for both children and police officers.

To familiarise themselves with the RTA protocol, officers were asked to practice an unrelated TA activity, enabling the participant to model the desired level of detail and type of reflection that was required from the process. After the warm-up activity, each participant was invited to talk about a specific incident of DA. The officer was provided with details relating to when the incident occurred, who was involved and any outcome. The researcher took written notes during the process, which were used after the exercise had been completed to further explore or seek additional information regarding specific aspects of the officer’s account.

4.8 Locating the Researcher within Qualitative Research: Professional and Emotional Reflexivity

It is important to clearly locate the researcher and subjectivities within the analytic process, which included both professional and ‘emotional reflexivity’ (Collins & Cooper, 2014, p. 90). The researcher acknowledged the importance of being conscious of and explicit about her personal values, interests and subjectivities when conducting qualitative research, of engaging in what Bryman (2012, p. 40) calls ‘conscious partiality’. As Turnbull (1973, p. 13) has argued, ‘the reader is entitled to know something of the aims, expectations, hopes and attitudes that the writer brought to the field with him, for these will surely influence not only how he sees things but even what he sees’.

The researcher is a 47-year-old female who is from and living in NI. Although brought up in the Catholic faith, she identifies as atheist. Of particular relevance to this study and especially to the interviews with response officers is the researcher’s recognition that ‘cultural membership’ in NI is premised on division based on religious identity. A committed advocate for children and children’s rights, the researcher has significant experience working with children in a school and research setting. Her research interests lie in clinical psychology. She briefly joined the PSNI in 2002 but left later that year after completing student officer training. For two years she has been a volunteer with Women’s Aid working with children and young people.

Being a ‘cultural member’ (Holloway & Biley, 2011, p. 972) provides access to a shared language with the participant that may cause the researcher to (unconsciously) make assumptions about the content of the participant’s statements which may or may not be true. When evaluating the data, this may result in the researcher forcing ‘the data to conform to *their* experiences’ (Storey, as cited in Lyons & Coyle, 2007, p. 54; original emphasis). Cultural membership may be perceived on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion, age, accent or even something as simple as clothing.

At the same time, conducting research with individuals or groups of individuals with whom the researcher does not share a common language (Lyons & Coyle, 2007) involves the risk of letting non-evidenced assumptions affect how those participants are represented. This presents a major challenge for qualitative researchers, not only in

situations where findings may have important social or political implications for certain individuals or groups, but for the integrity of the research process.

Regardless of the presence or absence of commonality with participants, researchers must always ensure that accounts are relevant to the research question and recognisable to the participants. Personal 'reflexivity' therefore is highly important when evaluating data. As Bryman (2012, p. 393) explains, 'reflexivity entails sensitivity to the researcher's cultural, political and social context. As such, "knowledge" from a reflexive position is always a reflection of a researcher's location in time and space'. Reflexivity enables researchers to be conscious of the ways in which their values may (positively and negatively) influence the research process. With this in mind, the researcher maintained a diary to reflect and record thoughts and experiences after each interview.

Collins and Cooper (2014, p. 89) argue that personal reflexivity does not go far enough, and that 'researchers frequently do not enhance their interpersonal abilities in order to learn to connect with participants in ways that strengthen the findings of qualitative studies'. Qualitative research is concerned with processes as opposed to outcomes. The relationship between the researcher and the researched plays a major role in this process (Collins & Cooper, 2014). The emphasis placed on this relationship varies from method to method in qualitative research, but the challenge is always to strike the balance between empowering the participant to talk openly and getting so close that the boundary between the researcher and the researched may blur, potentially undermining the integrity of the research process.

In this study, a close, 'relational' subject position was integral to the theoretical/experiential element of interviews with children and police officers. The strengths of a relational position lie in its implicit acknowledgement that emotions are central and not peripheral to our interactions with others. EI can strengthen a researcher's ability to connect and communicate with participants, skilfully listen and react during interviews and eventually come to more clearly understand the life-worlds' participants articulate (Collins & Cooper, 2014, p. 90). As Prout (2001, cited in Lombard, 2015, p. 20) observed, 'Empowering children and young people by giving them a voice is crucial in child-centred research but listening to their voice is key'. In the current study, an

important aspect of the research and analytic process was ‘emotional reflexivity’ (Collins & Cooper, 2014, p. 90). Spencer (2010, as cited in Collins & Cooper, 2014, p. 90) asserted that self-reflexivity is not complete if it does not include emotional reflexivity, which she describes as ‘a very intricate process, [one which] places serious demands upon the fieldworker to know themselves – not only in terms of the positions we occupy but also in terms of our bodily and psychological proclivities and the dynamics of our “inner self”’. A common element that often accompanies researchers on their research journeys is strong emotions (Collins & Cooper, 2014). While the presence of these emotions is often not acknowledged by researchers in a conscious way, they may nevertheless have an impact on the research process. Collins and Cooper (2014, p. 89) argue that reflexivity is key to the refinement of the research process; ‘The more self-aware and forthright the researcher is, the better the audience can understand the perspective of the research’. As such, the researcher kept and recorded in a diary shortly after each interview recording any salient thoughts and emotions. In this way, the researcher created a space to reflect on the interview process given the sensitive and challenging nature of the interviews.

It is important to recognise that the interviews conducted for this study were often the first opportunity the children and officers had had to explore the issues discussed, and they often became visibly emotional while telling of their experiences. However, both children and officers said at the end of the interview that it had been a valuable experience, and many police officers described the opportunity to reflect on their professional and personal experiences as highly valuable and positive.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Formal written approval to conduct this study was obtained from the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work Research Ethics Committee at Queen’s University, Belfast (Appendix A). The safety of all participants was an important consideration throughout the research process. Research with children on topics such as DA was uncommon two decades ago, when it was considered unethical and believed to pose a significant threat to child protection. Recognising and challenging these issues has been

a critical aspect of more recent research in this field and as such informed the process of obtaining ethical approval to conduct this study (Lombard, 2015; Cater & Överlien, 2014). It has recently been argued that excluding children from taking part in research may do harm of a different kind, leaving children silenced as opposed to unprotected (Alderson, 1995). There is a strong body of research evidence indicating that taking part in research around sensitive topics such as cancer and involvement in end-of-life decisions is an extremely empowering experience for children (Coyne et al., 2009). The prime consideration of this study was to minimise the likelihood that any participant would experience either psychological or physical harm through their participation. Towards this end, the following safeguards were put in place.

To protect child participants from harm, the research did not commence until ethical approval had been obtained from the School Research Ethics Committee (SREC) prior to the commencement of data collection. In addition, the researcher undertook a one-day, accredited child protection training course through the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (11 September 2014) and completed a criminal-records check through Access NI for Women's Aid Armagh Down (Ref VOO15). A branch of the Department of Justice, Access NI is the statutory body with responsibility for ensuring public protection through pre-employment vetting.

Each child was allocated an identified support worker from the refuge service and was asked to give their informed consent to take part in the study. Consent also was obtained from the parent/legal guardian of each child prior to commencing research with that child. In addition, a range of age and developmentally appropriate materials were produced to assist children and their parents to make an informed choice about participation in the study.

Careful attention was paid to the research environment to ensure each child felt safe, valued and respected. The researcher paid careful attention to the verbal and non-verbal cues which often signal reticence/discomfort in children. Time and attention were spent at the beginning and at the end of each interview to ensure each child felt safe and relaxed. All work with children took place in Women's Aid premises that were familiar and

convenient. Interviews took place at a time that was convenient to interviewees and parent/guardians as appropriate in order to minimise disruption to their normal routine.

Children and their parents were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the research for whatever reason at any point. In the event that a child became upset during an interview, the researcher had determined to use personal experience to assess whether it was safe for the child to continue with the interview. Children were also informed prior to the interview that their mother was at a location close by.

To protect participating police officers from harm, the research did not commence until ethical approval had been obtained from SREC. In addition, the researcher underwent a criminal-records check by Access NI, the statutory body with responsibility for ensuring public protection through pre-employment vetting.

Each officer was provided with information on how to access support services within the PSNI and was asked to give their expressed, informed and voluntary consent to participating in the research. Interviews took place during a scheduled shift, at the officer's regular place of work and at a time that was convenient to the officer to minimise disruption to normal routines. Officers were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study for whatever reason at any point. Finally, each officer was informed that this research was not designed to evaluate the police or individual officers.

Ethical considerations in relation to the children and police officers who took part in this study fall into two key categories: informed consent and confidentiality.

4.9.1 Informed consent

This study is based on the philosophy that children are 'independent, competent, individual agents' (Tisdall et al. 2009, p. 3). However, given their legal status as minors, it is generally considered best practice to seek consent from parents/legal guardians prior

to approaching children (Morrow & Richards, 1996). Children are therefore dependent on adults giving consent for them to be approached to participate in research. This is acknowledged as a potential limitation. On the other hand, it is important to note in the context of this research that children may know or may have been told not to talk about the abuse outside the home (McGee, 2000). Therefore, having parental consent may make it easier for children to consider participating in research (Cater & Överlien, 2014).

Peled (2001) suggests that ethically sound research on children's exposure to violence demands informed consent from both children and adults, as consent from parents/guardians only secures permission for the researcher to approach children about participating in the study. It is also acknowledged in DA research that parents may be 'problematic gatekeepers' (Cater & Överlien, 2014, p. 72) who may either coerce children to participate or prevent children from participating in order to protect them from further trauma and/or to keep the family secret.

In relation to this study, children were supplied with an accessible, age-appropriate information leaflet (Appendices B & D). It was anticipated that each parent/guardian would read the leaflet with their child and ensure their understanding of its content. Moreover, consent was not a "one-off", tick-box exercise. Children were reminded at the beginning of each interview that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview at any point. In other words, children's ability to both give and withdraw consent was considered equally fundamental to this study.

Given the complexity surrounding the issue of children's consent, the researcher paid careful attention throughout the research process to any negative reaction or sign indicating that the child was uncomfortable. As Lombard (2015, p. 45) has noted, 'The issue of informed consent will always remain an irresolvable tension, with some people (of all ages) never wholly understanding what they have consented to, by basing their consent not on information but on trust'. Establishing trust between the researcher and interviewee was recognised as a challenge in this study. With this in mind, 'pre-interview' meetings were used as an important opportunity to build trust between the researcher and children.

An issue that can arise when recruiting participants from a service provider such as Women's Aid or the PSNI is that some individuals may feel obligated to take part. This was acknowledged as a potential limitation of this study. To counteract this, it was emphasised in all written information provided by the researcher and at the beginning of each interview that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that each participant's identity would remain confidential. In addition, officers were informed that senior management would not be made aware of the identity of any individual who chose to withdraw from the study at any point.

4.9.2 Confidentiality: Unsought disclosure protocol

Confidentiality is an important issue in DA research. Once consent has been obtained, children have the right to speak with confidence in the interview setting; in fact, this is essential for the validity of findings. However, it is important to recognise that confidentiality not only involves protecting the welfare and safety of the children involved in the research, but also creates a 'duty' on the part of researchers to protect 'other family members and the family [unit] itself from harm' (Cater & Överlien, 2014, p. 73). Recognising the obligation to report if, at any point during this study, knowledge was received about circumstances which required action to be taken for the child's welfare or the welfare of others, the researcher adhered to Women's Aid Safeguarding Disclosure Policy in relation to the management of unsought disclosure(s). This policy was outlined in the written and verbal information given to participants prior to taking part in the study.

In accordance with this policy, the researcher recognised that if it was considered necessary to breach confidentiality, this would be discussed first with the child. It was acknowledged that the upholding of Women's Aid Safeguarding Disclosure Policy in relation to unsought disclosures could act as a potential limitation on children's participation and the content of their contribution during the interview process (Cater & Överlien, 2014). In accordance with that policy, it was decided prior to conducting data collection that unsought disclosures would be recorded and reported directly to the child's

designated support worker, who would then report to the child care manager. It was also decided that when the child was not engaged with a support worker, unsought disclosures would be reported directly to the child care manager of the Women's Aid Centre and recorded. However, all children in this study were receiving support from a designated member of the children's team.

Unsought disclosures were also relevant for police officers. It was acknowledged in discussions between the researcher and the District Commander that the issue of confidentiality was a significant matter to take into consideration with police officers as well as children. Consequently, the procedure for managing confidentiality was made clear in any information given to officers and at the beginning of each interview. As with children, it was essential that police officers had a clear understanding of what would happen in the event that knowledge was disclosed about circumstances that would place the welfare and safety of the officer or others at risk. In accordance PSNI procedure, unsought disclosures were to be reported and recorded directly with the District Commander. The researcher recognised that if it was considered necessary to breach confidentiality, this would be discussed in the first instance with the police officer concerned. In this area of research, it is impossible to develop protocols which address every possible risk prior to the commencement of the research and fieldwork. In this regard, the experience, expertise and training of the researcher and supervisors were relied upon to ensure that unanticipated situations were responded to and managed appropriately. However, no unsought disclosures were made during the research and therefore unnecessary to utilise these protocols.

In addition, the study was undertaken within the research governance framework of Queen's University, Belfast, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Data handling, storage and security were undertaken in compliance with acceptable ethical standards. Both children and police officers were assured that everything communicated in the course of this research would remain confidential to the research team unless abuse or other significant harm was disclosed, in which case the research team would follow the unsought protocols outlined above.

4.10 Data Analysis: Semi-structured and Case Study Interviews

With the permission of the participants, semi-structured interviews were audio recorded for later transcription. All interviews were transcribed by a private, registered transcriber at Queen's University, Belfast. The transcripts were checked for accuracy prior to conducting thematic analysis (TA). As defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 6), 'Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. Themes express 'something important about the data in relation to the research question'; they demonstrate 'some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Ibid., p. 10). Themes can be identified inductively, through a 'bottom up' approach, or deductively, through a 'top down', theory-driven approach (Ibid., p. 12). As this study constitutes a "first look" at the research objectives and the theoretical framework, the research reported here applied an inductive approach.

The analysis followed three discrete but interconnected stages: data management, analysis and interpretation (Guest et al., 2012).

Data management

Using Excel 2013, a spreadsheet was created to assist with data management and analysis. Each participant was assigned an individual, numerical code in that document that referred to the order in which children and officers were interviewed (e.g. LPT 1 or C1). Each participant was allocated to an individual row. The first few columns of each record were assigned to the reference number of the interviewee and their relevant demographic characteristics, as shown below. The remaining columns were connected to the coding framework related to the research objectives and analysis (see page 110 for a description of the coding framework). These columns contained summarised data from the transcripts which were used during the second stage of this process, data analysis.

Children's spreadsheet columns:

A: INTERVIEW NUMBER (e.g. C1)

B: AGE

C: GENDER

D: CULTURAL BACKGROUND (RELIGION)

E: NUMBER OF SIBLINGS

F: PERCEPTION OF POLICE

G: EXPERIENCE OF POLICE INTERVENTION

H. EXPERIENCE OF POLICE

I: RESPONSE CHILDREN FIND HELPFUL/UNHELPFUL

Police and specialist officers' spreadsheet columns:

A: INTERVIEW NUMBER (e.g. LPT1)

B: AGE

C: GENDER

D: CULTURAL BACKGROUND (RELIGION)

E: DATE JOINED POLICE SERVICE

F: ATTITUDE TO PROFESSIONAL ROLE

G: ATTITUDES TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

1. Experience
2. Understanding
3. Response

H: ATTITUDES TO CHILDREN

1. Experience
2. Understanding
3. Response

Data analysis

The aim of the analysis was to explore how police officers could relate more effectively to children when responding to incidents of DA. Working through the phases of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involves an in-depth examination of the text, allowed the researcher to explore and develop knowledge and understanding of police officers and children's lived experiences within the context of DA.

Data analysis with children during the SS interviews was focused on exploring the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. This created a conceptual framework for the coding process: children's perceptions of the role of the police in society, their experiences and understanding of police intervention and what they perceive to be a helpful/unhelpful police response. Analysis of SS interviews with police officers also followed this framework.

Following the same process, data analysis for CS interviews focused solely on exploring the third research objective, focusing on a specific incident of DA involving a child and police officer from the same incident.

TA is a flexible qualitative data analytic methodology; however, it typically follows a progressive series of identifiable phases as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). These are summarised in Table 4.4 below. The process of analysis was not linear, and quite often involved iterative movement by the researcher between the various phases of TA: coding, theme development and refinement.

Table 4.4: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary); reading and rereading the data; noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set; collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes; gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking how the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2); generating a thematic “map” of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples; final analysis of selected extracts; relating the analysis back to the research question and literature; producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Using this procedure, the data was explored for potential themes and categories, which were then coded and examined for similarities and differences until a concise thematic structure emerged. Phases 1-3 of the analytical process involved ‘sticking close to the raw information and its own language’ (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 33), ‘without narrow[ing] your analytic field of vision, leading you to focus on some aspects of the data at the expense of other potential crucial aspects’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 16). Following a description of the themes (Stages 1-5), which were aligned closely with the language of the participants (Boyatzis, 1998), findings were subject to interpretation by the researcher in ‘an attempt to theorise the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13).

As Guest et al., (2012, p. xv) have observed:

A common goal of scientific inquiry is to compare two or more things and see how they are similar and how they differ. Qualitative inquiry is no different. It is often the case that we need to know, for example, how the experiences or perceptions of group X differ from group Y. The challenge in comparing qualitative data, however, is that they are not well suited to standard statistical comparative measures [...]. Instead, innovative procedures and the unique qualities of qualitative data should be considered when comparing qualitative data sets.

Data interpretation: The application of emotional intelligence

The EI framework formed the basis for the analysis of data collected from police and specialist officers. Analysis sought to explore police officers’ responses that were illustrative of EI and associated constructs discussed in Chapter 3 (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management). As this was an exploratory study, to operationalise EI qualitatively, a categorization scheme was developed based on the four core constructs and 12 EI-based competencies, using the capsule descriptors under each construct outlined in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1 for details). This categorization scheme was mapped onto the themes which had been identified in Stages 1-5 (Table 4.4). In this way the researcher was able to confirm or refute the theoretical model and its associated constructs. For an example of this process refer to Appendix J.

Examples of how each of Goleman’s constructs may impact officers’ attitudes and behaviour in the context of this study are given in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Examples of EI in Police Officers in the Context of DA

Construct	Level	Behavioural Indicators
Self-awareness	Absent	Unable to recognise emotion in self
		Criminal justice orientation toward DA
	Present	Recognises emotion in self
		Victim-centred orientation toward DA

Self-management	Absent	Dysregulation of emotions, especially frustration and anger Dislike of attending incidents of DA Anxiety & fear (of ‘opening a Pandora’s Box’; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012)
	Present	Self-regulation of emotions
Social awareness	Absent	Unaware of emotion in others; unable to convey empathy Compassion fatigue Depersonalisation of and detachment toward victims
	Present	Awareness of emotion in others; empathy toward others
Social management	Absent	Poor attitudes toward victims Do not take concerns seriously Unable to convey empathy Ignore/unable to attend to children
	Present	Develop relationships Take children and concerns seriously and convey empathy

In accordance with Lincoln and Guba (1985), the following measures were taken to ensure the methodological rigour and trustworthiness of the findings, where rigor is understood to depend on ‘devising a systematic method whose assumptions are congruent with the way one conceptualises the subject matter’ (Reicher & Taylor, 2005, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 27).

To minimise bias, the reporting of themes and the interpretation of findings were reported by ‘sticking close to the raw information and its own language’ (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 33).

It is a guiding precept of TA that any findings are well supported with extracts from the data to avoid what Bryman (2012, p. 624) has referred to as ‘anecdotalism’. Triangulation of SS interview data with CS interviews was implemented to strengthen theory building (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). With the verbal permission of the children, their art-based material produced during interviews, focusing on children’s talk about the drawings rather than the drawings themselves, was also considered data and triangulated with the interview findings. Through this process of triangulation, the methodological rigour and trustworthiness of the data analysis was maintained.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS – CASE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The following chapters report the findings from case study (CS) and semi-structured (SS) interviews with children and police officers. The findings are presented in three chapters; Chapter 5 presents the findings from CS interviews, Chapter 6 presents the findings from SS interviews conducted with children and Chapter 7 presents the findings from SS interviews conducted with police officers.

The children in this study were aged between 4 and 15 years old. As stated in Chapter 4, none of the children were living with the perpetrator, but a large number had contact arrangements in place. All children were receiving or had received support from a support worker within Women's Aid which children reported as being highly beneficial to their emotional and psychological wellbeing and in understanding the abuse in the home and how it had impacted on them and their lives. A number of the older children were very keen to take part in this study both as a means of helping other children living with DA and as a way to share their story and for their story to be heard.

5.2 Case Study Interviews

This methodology was designed to provide a more contextual and intensive focus and analysis of the theoretical framework, EI, through an exploration of the most recent interaction between a child and police officer involved in the same incident. A CS methodology using 'Retrospective Think Aloud' (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2012; Van Someren et al., 1994) protocol was developed to capture competence and performance by exploring a specific incident/interaction between a child and officer through the lens of the theoretical framework, EI. The procedure for this aspect of the research is outlined in Chapter 4 (Section 4.9). Two CS interviews were conducted, involving two separate interactions between two children and two police officers. In describing these

interactions, pseudonyms have been used to protect children's and police officer's confidentiality.

5.2.1 Background to first case study

The incident which the CS interview focused on took place approximately one year prior to the interview being conducted. On the night of the incident, the adult female victim had reported to the police that her home had been damaged and expressed concern that it was her ex-partner who was responsible. The family had a history of serious levels of DA. The perpetrator had been processed through the criminal justice system, had received a custodial sentence for DA and had recently been released. The police had attended previous incidents involving the family and the victim's daughter, Emer, had had experience of the police on more than one occasion. The perpetrator was the mother's partner and was unrelated to Emer. The property was located in a rural location with which the officer was not familiar. Emer was 12 years old at the time of the interview. The male officer who attended the incident had eight years' service with the PSNI at the time of interview and had served seven years in another district before transferring to his current location.

5.2.2 Police officer's account of the incident

The officer described thinking about the details and the processing of the incident on route to the address and wondering if it would result in an investigation necessitating completion of paperwork such as a DASH² form, which his responses suggest he wished to avoid:

² DASH form: Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment checklist is used by police organisations for identifying, assessing and managing risk.

[T]here is not going to be any evidence to progress it too far and any police officer will say, Well that is better for me, it's less work. (L90-91).

He recalled the incident in great detail. It was Halloween and it had been a very busy shift. He recalled he was the observer that night,³ and could not drive as he had injured his thumb at a previous call. He remembered that it was difficult to drive to the property due to its location and it was late at night. The officer provided a detailed description of the house, recalling that it was in a rural setting and the number of vehicles outside the house when they arrived. He recalled who was present at the time (the victim, the victim's mother, brother and Emer). He recalled speaking to the adult victim, i.e. the mother of the child, but could not be sure if he spoke with the child who was present, whom he recalled was the same age as his own daughter.

As indicated by the findings from the SS interviews (see Chapter 6), many officers' primary concern and level of engagement with DA cases is with the adults involved. Consequently, they tend to approach the incident from a criminal justice perspective, focusing on evidence of physical violence and case management. In this case, the officer had concluded, on the way to the incident, that the physical evidence and witnesses would be limited:

[I]f there is no damage there is almost no offense. (L103)

The officer did not appear to relate the incident to the victim's previous history of DA, despite her being very worried and concerned about this:

[I] can't remember if I asked a great deal of the background, I don't know if the lady [adult victim] was maybe going into it too much. (L103-104)

He informed the victim that he would not be taking a statement as she had not witnessed anything or seen any person around the property but he would carry out a bail check on the victim's ex-partner to ascertain bail conditions. The officer had little to say about his

³ Every DA incident is attended by two officers, one of whom is the driver and the other is 'the observer'; the observer will be the officer who takes the lead and completes any paperwork.

interaction with either the victim or the child present. He remained at the incident for ‘maybe 20 minutes at the most’ (L119).

5.2.3 Emer’s account of the incident

Emer recalled the incident without any difficulty; she recalled that her granny and grandad, uncle and younger sister, who was just two years old at the time, were present in the house. Emer was in the living room of the house when she heard a loud bang on the front door, she remembered her granny ran to the garage and got a baseball bat. Emer then talked about the police arriving at the house but the officer did not speak with her. She did not recall the gender or any level of detail about the officer:

They [the police] were talking to my mum mostly and [to] Granny. (L400)

Emer was unsure if she wanted the officer to talk with her because she is ‘too young’ (L386) but felt it was important for police to talk to children as a way to help them:

Because the kids worry a lot. (L545)

Emer was asked what the police could have done that would have been helpful to her, she suggested that giving children the opportunity to talk about the incident would be helpful so as ‘They [children] get it out of their system’ (L557).

5.2.4 Key points to take forward

This findings from the CS supports findings from previous studies, that police coming into the lives of children in the midst of a distressing event, disrupting family life and their sense of security (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Emer had recalled this incident long after it had happened and whilst she did not appear too concerned that the officer had failed to make contact with her on that occasion, the incident was one she had remembered. She was very clear that speaking with children has potential benefits as

children ‘worry a lot’ about and are impacted by what has happened in the home. This was a missed opportunity for the officer to provide reassurance and demonstrate that the police are in fact there to help and protect children and their family. It was evident from this account that children are not recognised as victims of DA and independent ‘rights holders’ (UNCRC, 1989) in the eyes of the police. Case Study Two demonstrates, from the child’s perspective’s, that a good outcome is possible even in the charged and challenging circumstances of a DA incident, provided the police adopt a different approach.

5.2.5 Background to second case study

The incident which is the focus of the second CS interview took place almost a year and four months before the interview for this research was conducted. Both the attending officer and the child, Ben, recalled the incident in significant detail. He was 14 years old at the time of interview. The perpetrator was Ben’s mother’s partner and Ben’s father. The male officer who attended the incident had three years’ service with the PSNI at the time of interview. A female adult victim had contacted the police because she and her child, Ben, had been physically assaulted by her partner at the family home. This was the first occasion the police had been called to the home. The responding officer stated that the incident was serious and had been treated as an emergency call.

5.2.6 Police officer’s account of the incident

The officer recalls receiving a call between 11.30 p.m. and 11.45 p.m. shortly after starting his shift, to respond to a domestic incident in the area that had been reported by a female victim. A child was reported as being present at the scene of the incident. On the way to the address, the officer remembered receiving further information over the radio from the call handler that the perpetrator had left the location. This, he reported, changed his immediate reaction to the call:

I remember on the way up to the call in the car more information came over the radio, saying that the male has since left the property and taken off somewhere, so obviously that affects your decision in terms of the immediate threat is no longer there. [...] You are going to the call now not feeling as you would have, had there been an element of conflict still there. (L26-30).

The officer stated, 'I can remember clearly that night' (L198). He described arriving at the home to find the adult female, the child's mother, who had made the call to police (he could not recall her name) and her elderly mother in the kitchen. Both appeared visibly shaken and the woman had what looked like juice over her clothing. The officer described the kitchen area as 'a bit of a tip' (L36) and later went on to observe that

a lot of the houses that we go into would be quite run down and quite dirty and you can just tell, you can almost tell what type of person you are going to meet by the house. (L98-100)

The officer said he offered the female victim a cup of tea and asked her what had happened; she told him that her husband had returned home and became angry. He had shouted at her because it was late, and the child involved in the assault had been outside playing in the street. The argument escalated; he then pushed her and threw the juice over her. At some point the child had tried to intervene by shouting at his father to stop; his father had grabbed him and put him against the wall. During this interaction, the officer remembers informing Ben's mother that he would be contacting Social Services because a child had been involved in the incident:

We had contacted Social Services about the whole thing, basically because, well, we had told the mother as well that she needs to clean the house up in no uncertain terms [...], I sort of said to her, Social Services will be advised of this and there is a domestic incident involving a child and I said they will probably come out and speak to you. [...] [I]f they come into a kitchen like this, you know, they will, again they are human as well and they will judge you, do you know what I mean? So I just advised them, you need to get this place cleaned up. (L359-360, 366-369)

The officer did not mention completing a DASH form with the victim, although this would be standard protocol in these cases. The officer later disclosed that there had been repeated incidents at this address.

The officer then spoke with the child, whom he described as 'visibly shaken'. He informed the child that he was not in any trouble and then asked him to talk about what had happened in the home, describing him as 'competent' (L345). His interaction with

the child was noticeably brief and detached, limited to asking about the incident ‘to let him have his account of what happened’ (L54). Although the child told him that he had tried to intervene between his parents, that his father had grabbed him and that he had hit his head off the wall, the officer did not express any concern for the emotional well-being of the child:

[He had sustained] no real injury or anything that would give me cause for concern.
(L62)

After speaking with the child, the officer recalled asking the child’s mother where her husband may have gone. She provided an address nearby and the officers then left the house to arrest him on suspicion of assaulting the child and mother. His interaction with both the adult and child victim was limited to questioning them about the physical assault. The officers were at the address for no more than 30 minutes.

The officer arrived at the address provided for the victim’s partner’s address at approximately 12.15 a.m. He described it as ‘quite a nice house...very nice and very welcoming’ (L102, 105). He spoke with the victim’s husband [name], who is, to the officer’s surprise, calm and relaxed and ‘quite a pleasant fella’ (L107). The officer informed him that he is being arrested on suspicion of common assault and advised him not to say anything until they reached the station. The officer recalls that the victim’s partner [name] reported that he came home from a long day at work to find the victim had been drinking with the neighbour, the house was in a mess, no housework had been done and the child was outside playing, having ignored his request to come into the house. He then went inside and shouted at the adult victim repeatedly. The confrontation escalated, ending with both adult and child being assaulted. The officer recalled that he felt some degree of understanding for the perpetrator’s position:

I see his point as such in terms of why he was annoyed. There was nothing done, and the partner [victim] was at home all day and he was out working. (L175-176)

The perpetrator was charged with common assault.

5.2.7 Ben's account of the incident

Ben described the two male officers who came to his house at the time of the incident; he recalled the colour of the officer's hair. The attending officers had called Ben and his mother into the kitchen of the house, whilst his grandmother remained in the sitting room. When asked how he felt about the time the police called to his house, Ben said he felt sadness and anger:

It is because, well, I felt mostly sadness, but I am small [and] I can't do anything. (L209)

Ben's account of the interaction with the officer is somewhat similar to the officer's, however there is a significant difference in how these actions were interpreted. Ben reported minimal contact with the officers, who barely asked him about the incident and how he was feeling. He expected the officer to ask him a lot more questions, but this did not happen. This is an important point - within the context of DA children often feel inhibited about talking about the abuse in the home, fearing that it will get them into trouble with either parent or feel like they are betraying their parent(s). For this reason, children's safety may depend on the officer's ability and skills to pick up on or to sense these feelings, which may be unspoken or only partially expressed.

When they say, was I alright, I was expecting a load of questions to roll in but then, they just, they just turned to Mummy and said, blah, blah, blah and that's it. And then they just went and tapped the table and said, Right, we will go...back to your nanny's, or out to [the perpetrator's address] and lift him and then go on, and then when they did leave, I said to Mummy, Should they have not have talked to me more? She said, I was expecting a load of questions, but they didn't. (L351-355)

He heard the officers tell his mother they would be contacting Social Services, which caused Ben significant distress; he remembers he did not sleep that night worrying about this as the following quotes demonstrate:

[T]hey were speaking to my mum asking what happened and then Mummy answered and then they said, was I alright, and I goes, Yeah, and they said, Right, we are going to have to contact Social Services and get them out here and stuff like that - they will be out here in the morning. (L265-268)

Because we were panicking the whole night. I don't think that my mummy slept because they told her that. Being honest, I never slept either. (L435-436, L440)

As these quotes demonstrate, the lack of empathy and concern shown by the attending officer for the impact of this incident on Ben, but importantly, it was the manner in which he informed Ben's mother about involving Social Services, inflicting emotional harm, *heightening* the significance and impact of this information for Ben, as highlighted by the following quote:

When they left I knew it was just going to [...] be a hard year, going to the law and Social Services, going to meetings, everything. (L504-505)

The following quote reveals the importance of developing skills such as EI with officers to deal with these cases in an appropriate fashion. Asked if he thought the police officer did his job, Ben responded with a great degree of insight:

I thought that they [police officers] were trained enough not to do that. If they did get trained they would know [how to talk with children so that they do not worry]. (L461-462)

[I] am not saying they are not good at their job [...] but when they come out, done that there, dropped it hard; like, they could have let us down even a wee bit easier. (L482-484)

5.2.8 Key points to take forward

Again, this CS reveals that when children are not assigned the status of 'victim' and the emotional impact of DA goes unrecognised, officers are failing in their duty to fully protect them. Furthermore, these case studies demonstrated, significant changes often occur for children as a result of DA such as referral to Social Services and other agencies and moving away from their home. Under the principles of the UNCRC, children have the right to be informed of all matters affecting them, especially matters of this magnitude – this did not follow for Ben. Furthermore, children within this context experience a lack of recognition of their independent status and continue to be ignored and silenced. In this study, children themselves recognised the need to train officers to be able to pick up on their distress and to talk to them with respect and sensitivity. This case study represents a unique source of information into this experience for children and officers. Importantly,

comparative analysis of these two perspectives on the incident can deepen our knowledge and understanding of these encounters, in ways that will improve police practice toward child victims of DA.

5.3 Analysis: Through the Lens of EI

Each case study revealed interesting differences with regard EI – each case demonstrates in a unique way the value of/need for EI related skills within this context; as highlighted in previous chapters this had important implications for policing incidents of DA involving children moving beyond a ‘violent incident model’ (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012) to encompass emotional and psychological harm and abuse, capturing the complexity of children’s experiences reported here. Without this perspective, children are being left to make sense of and manage the impact of DA by themselves.

Case Study One

The officer’s perspective provides a very limited (emotional) picture of the incident. However, it is apparent from Emer’s account that this was an incident that triggered a lot of fear and worry, not just for the child but for her family. The officer’s primary objective was to *process* the case and to keep the amount of paperwork to a minimum - ‘*no damage, no offense*’ (L103). The officer’s attitude to the incident was reflected in his limited engagement with victims at the incident despite the significant history of DA. His approach, supported by evidence from the officer’s testimony, is disembodied and disconnected from his own emotions as well as the emotions of those involved. He demonstrated a **lack of empathy** for the emotional impact of the incident on all involved. Emer recalls that her grandmother’s response was to get the baseball bat in the garage, which the child read as indicative of her fear; however, the officer described the grandmother’s response as a ‘bit dramatic’ (L175), and there is no detail about the emotional response of the child to the incident and how she was feeling at the time. Both adult and child victim were nameless in the officer’s account. The officer appears unable to adapt his response in order to respond to Emer in a way that would be helpful;

acknowledging her and her experience as separate from the adults involved and validated her experience.

Case Study Two

The officer's narrative of the incident clearly demonstrated how DA cases evoke personal views and intense emotions, which can impact levels of empathy. As discussed in Chapter 3, a critical EI based competency is the capacity to manage destructive emotions (Self-Management, SM2) which would have helped the responding officer to manage his strong emotional responses to the home environment and to maintain a positive attitude toward Ben's mother (SM4). But this did not happen. Based on the evidence from the officer's account his actions seemed more like a reprisal and the tone judgemental rather than reflecting positive concern for the child's welfare and safety based on the uncleanliness of the kitchen area. An approach based on EI, may have also helped the officer develop an awareness of his own attitudes, especially in relation to the concept of 'gender blaming' (Scourfield & Coffey, 2002) as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1) which can have a critical impact for police responses and treatment of victims that have been identified in the literature (HMIC, 2014). The attitude of the attending officer and his judgemental view had a significant impact on how he understood and responded to this case and this family. This response had significant consequences for the child involved which were preventable. Providing officers with training such as EI is much needed to prevent these negative attitudes from impacting professional practice. The absence of or poorly developed skills, **Self-Awareness** and **Self-Management**, revealed a concerning **lack of empathy** and positive regard and concern for the victims: '[Y]ou can almost tell what type of person you are going to meet by the house' (L99-100). The officer did not discuss completing a DASH form with the victim at the scene or enquire about other forms of abuse, nor did he offer advice and other forms of support despite the severity of the incident and the previous history of DA between the victim and the perpetrator. This response contrasts sharply with his attitude towards and perception of the perpetrator, which was much more positive and empathetic.

The officer's interaction with Ben was brief, lacked any evidence of empathy and concern for what was a traumatic experience and understanding of children within the context of

DA (Katz, 2016), which was further heightened by his response to Ben's mother. The attitude and actions of the attending officer had such an adverse impact on Ben both at the time of the incident and long after, as outlined in his account. Ben expressed feelings of helplessness, sadness and anger when discussing his interaction with the officer, who did not ask him what had happened or how he was feeling, and importantly, did not explain to Ben what was going to happen next:

[W]hen I was on Social Services I never really knew what was going on until half way through. (L281)

5.4 Summary

From these case studies, it appears that children involved in incidents of DA can receive a message from some police officers that what they think and feel is not important to them, and that their presence and voice is likely to be erased from the incident, unless they have been physically harmed or injured. A focus on a 'violent incident model' of DA (Stark, 2012) negates children as victims, as in a majority of cases most of the harm children experience is emotional and psychological in nature and as these CS interviews demonstrate, which acts as a key barrier to police responding to their needs within this context. Alongside this key finding is the need to recognise children's independent status and treat them equally to the adults involved. Highlighted by the findings, a primary right for children within this context is to be provided with information in a sensitive and caring manner about what is happening, and any action(s) taken by the police (UNCRC, 1989). Furthermore, confirmation of findings indicated that these encounters remain with children long after they have happened. Ben's awareness of what would have helped him highlights the urgent need to train officers to talk with children respectfully and sensitively – to 'let people down easily' (L494), as Ben put it, about things that are happening and are going to affect them and their lives because this matters to children as well as adults and they are often left to worry about it alone. This situation can and must change.

The two CS discussed in this chapter demonstrated the utility of EI as a concept and making the helping/service role of the police much more visible within this context is urgently required. To achieve this objective, equipping officers with the skills to recognise emotions (Self-Awareness: Case Study One) and to handle them effectively (Self-Management: Case Study Two) would significantly improve their encounters with children (Empathy). These case studies remind us that these incidents are about families and not about statistics or processes. The following chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) present the findings from SS interviews with children and police officers to explore the extent to which the issues raised through analysing these interactions were also experienced by other children in their encounters with the police and if the police were aware of how their behaviour was being interpreted and responded to.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEWS WITH CHILDREN

6.1 Introduction

It was integral to the aims of this study to consider both the views of children and PSNI officers within the context of DA. This chapter discusses the findings from 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with children. The presentation of the findings and discussion are organised in two sections. These sections correspond to the first and second research questions respectively:

1. How do children perceive the role of the police in society?
2. How do children experience the purpose and response of police officers at incidents of DA?

A critical analysis of the findings in the context of the theoretical framework, emotional intelligence (EI) and literature is provided. The findings reported here with children seeks to build on the findings emerging from the CS interviews, providing a more intensive study into police-child interactions.

6.2 Section One: Children's Perceptions of the Role of the Police in Society

Children's perceptions of the police and the role of police in society are explored in this section. For many children who have experienced DA, police are often the first professionals with whom they have contact. As previously argued, children's engagement with police officers during DA incidents, constitutes a 'key moment' to enhance children's safety (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221) and to formulate their attitudes toward the police (HMIC, 2015b; Överlien & Aas, 2016). This is particularly relevant in Northern Ireland (NI), where the legacy of "the Troubles" is believed to have influenced children's perceptions of the police, with research indicating that children from the

Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (CNR) background were twice as likely to state that they did not like the police (28%) than those from a Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (PUL) background (14%) (Connolly et al., 2002).⁴ That said, the children and officers who took part in the current study spoke optimistically about public attitudes towards the police in NI. Bearing in mind that the sample of children in this study was opportunistic and was not selected on the basis of exploring these issues, the findings did not reveal any consistent differences between the attitudes of children from CNR and PUL communities.

Analysis of the key themes identified revealed that most children focused primarily on the punitive/criminal justice role of the police service, with only a small minority of children discussing the helping/service role of the police. Importantly, the children who did so had been in *direct contact* with officers – i.e. the officers had spoken with them directly and asked if they were okay. In order to elicit children’s perceptions of the police and their understanding of the police role in society, children were shown two pictures of police officers, one male and one female (Appendix H). All children correctly identified the pictures as being of police officers, and police were a familiar presence in their everyday lives and communities. This was reflected in their responses, in which they reported observing and meeting the police in various contexts:

Halloween, my house and in shops and in cars and under arrest. (Logan, age 7, L112)⁵

Yeah, I have met quite a few of them, because at the rally I met a few and this wee club that I went to [...] I met a few there and then when they came to my house, I met a few there I recognised. (Luke, age 10, L66-68)

Many of the children in this study had had contact with police on more than one occasion as a result of DA. Officers who consistently engaged with children at each incident of DA in a positive way (spoke with children directly and responded to their needs) were

⁴ In this study, the abbreviations “CNR” and “PUL” have been employed for convenience and are not intended to obscure the complex reality.

⁵ (Logan, age 7, L112): “L” refers to the line number within the interview transcript.

perceived by children as ‘helpers’ who were there to protect them. This perception is vitally important in the context of DA:

[T]hat would have been my, I don’t know, my fourth time seeing the police, so it wasn’t that frightening. (Emer, age 9, L115-116)

Despite, most of the children in this study reported observing police in everyday contexts and seeing them when present at their home in relation to incidents of DA, sometimes on multiple occasions, only four children reported positive and direct contact with police within this context. Three of the children talked about meeting police officers who were giving a talk at their school or at the local youth centre. One 12-year-old boy spoke with ambivalence about a visit by police to his school, and another 12-year-old boy reported a similar experience when the police had come to visit his local youth centre. The evidence reported here support the findings in Chapters 1 and 2 in constructing children’s experiences in this study. Based on the findings from previous research with children, officers at incidents of DA do not usually engage with children and recognise the importance of listening to them and engaging with them as independent citizens within a children’s rights framework (UNCRC, 1989) and New Sociology of Childhood (James et al., 1998).

The level and quality of contact with police that children experienced was found to be a significant factor in how they perceived the police and their role in society, as the theme discussed in the next subsection demonstrates. Police can often be an abstract concept for children; direct personal contact makes it easier for them to associate police and policing with a more human face (Powell et al., 2008). As reported by children in this study, having opportunities to observe and meet police officers increased their perceptions and awareness of the police:

[W]hen they came to the school they sort of talked to you, but when they came to the house they didn’t really talk a lot. (James, age 12, L139-140)

This pattern is significant for these findings and for understanding how children, especially younger children, develop new experiences, whether positive or negative, and assimilate and accommodate those experiences into their knowledge and understanding,

thereby creating ‘schemas’ (Piaget, 1969). These schemas allow children to comprehend the world.

All children, regardless of age and cultural background, generally focused on the punitive/criminal justice aspects of policing when asked to explain what the police do. This is consistent with previous research conducted in this field (Överlien & Aas, 2016; Powell et al., 2008). However, this focus on the punitive policing role was much more evident in the data from the younger children (i.e. those aged 4-7), who had not experienced direct, personal contact with police officers; this is an important finding for this study. This is consistent with the findings from previous studies, which indicate that younger children were less likely to receive attention from police at incidents of DA (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Officers often articulated feeling too scared to talk to young children and opening ‘Pandora’s Box’ of overwhelming need in children they encounter, which they did not feel had adequate resources or skill to manage (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012; Överlien & Aas, 2016). These younger children primarily viewed the police as authoritative, power figures based on the nature of the interactions they had had with them or witnessed between their parents and the police at incidents of DA:

Yeah and they can put you in a dungeon. (Logan, age 7, L87)

[It was s]cary because he just took the cuffs out – you’re under arrest. (Logan, age 7, L120)



Figure 6.1: Drawing by Karter, aged 6, conveying his perception of the power and authority of police.

All of the children in the younger sub-group (aged 4-7) and two older children (aged 8-11) emphasised the punitive role of the police, stating that police use violence and hurt others:

Shooting and sorting people out. And they can hit you with the big sticks. (Logan, age 7, L51, 83)

Catch robbers. They use their guns. (James, age 5, L13, 21)

Two older children, who were siblings, did not describe the police as helping and it was clear from his tone of voice and facial expressions as well as one of the sibling's words that he had completely lost all respect for police authority. His mother had been the victim of domestic homicide and the children had experience of police intervention on multiple occasions which they did not report as being positive or helpful:

I just don't like the police, really; I was doing something and then I had to move away because of them [...]. (Keelan, age 13, L201-202)

Previous research has highlighted children's 'uncertainty and concern' about what to expect from police officers (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 437); this may be due in part to the stereotyped perceptions children have of the police service which focus primarily on its punitive/criminal justice role (Överlien & Aas, 2016; Powell, 2008). Importantly, this may also be directly related to how officers engage with children and the extent to which they listen to them and hold perceptions of children as victims in their own right, especially pertinent for younger children in this study. This view of the police as authority figures becomes vitally important within the context of DA, where the role of the police is to assist victims. For these children, ignoring their distress and not speaking with them at a time of crisis, officers they had encountered at incidents of DA had a lasting and powerful impact on their perceptions of the police in the longer term, more importantly, the extent to which this 'key moment' to help children can be realised.

Whilst the majority of older children (8 out of 10), regardless of community background, spoke about the criminal justice aspects of policing, they also discussed the dual role of the police in terms of helping and protecting people and the community. These children used the word ‘help’ in their responses when asked what the police do: ‘they help citizens’, ‘help people’, and ‘they help you out’:

They arrest any robbers or thieves and they help the community. (Emer, age 9, L36)

Interestingly, a sub-group of four children described this ‘helping’ role first. This sub-group of children had experienced direct, personal contact with officers who responded to DA incident in their homes – i.e. the police had spoken with them and asked if they were okay. These children reported feeling empathy from officers, who recognised their distress and responded sensitively to their individual needs (discussed in Section Two). These children provided more detailed and personalised descriptions of officers compared to the other children; they remembered the gender of the officer, their demeanour, what they looked like, the colour of their hair, and one child remembered the name of the officer who spoke with them:

They help citizens. (Luke, age 10, L14)

Protection is the main one, helping people is another one. (Caoimhe, age 12, L45)

In looking at the quality and nature of interactions between police and children not only shape their perception of the police as ‘helpers’ but importantly, within the context of NI - the extent to which they perceive the police as a legitimate force.

Following questions about what police do in their job, children were asked to identify any differences in the pictures of officers (Appendix H). All children identified the gender difference between the officers in the pictures regardless of age and acknowledged that both genders generally carry out the same job role. The majority of children recalled the gender of the officers who had attended at the time of the DA:

They [female officers] wouldn’t be in the job if they couldn’t do it. (Brian, age 13, L40)

Two children responded that male and female officers sometimes do a different job; both these children had had direct experience with the police, which they reported as positive. They had a greater awareness and experience of gender differences in police behaviour, in terms of differences in emotional expression and emotion management, as the following quotes demonstrate:

I would say that – in the same line of work – but if they needed to be, if [...] one has to get angry – it is hard to explain. Yeah, because his tension would snap quicker than a woman's because a woman will try the logic way first [...]. I'm not saying all women would, but, yeah. (Caoimhe, age 12, L84-85, 107-108, 112)

Because if it is a wee girl that is hurt then the woman goes up to it and asks if it is okay, and if it is a wee boy the man will go up and check if it is okay. Yeah, because the wee girl feels more comfortable if there is a woman there. (Jodie, age 15, L87-88, 92)

Explaining the above comment, this respondent continued:

Because if it is a man, they don't want the man to come to check because they [children] are afraid of something else happening. (Jodie, age 15, L96-97)

Gender differences articulated by some children reveal an awareness and insight into the gender bias in policing and how emotions are expressed and enculturated discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4). Female officers but not male officers typically express feelings of concern and care and male officers express feelings of anger. Furthermore, given that children have significant experience of male violence, officers need to have an awareness of the impact of their gender on children, which is representative of power and control and fear. Within this context, police officers are in a unique position to challenge these pervasive gender stereotypes. EI-based skills (self-awareness, self-management and empathy) can help guide these interactions in a way that enables officers to respond to children in a way that is perceived as helpful and challenge the [gender] stereotypes of police reported here.

Historically in NI, policing and police officers were viewed as the antithesis of the principles their organisation is meant to represent. The views people express about the police often reflect their respective communities (CNR or PUL) rather than an objective assessment of the quality of the service they have received. Interestingly, few children referred to the police or policing in terms of the politics often associated with the

communities in which they live. It is important to note that one 12-year-old girl from the CNR community who had had significant contact with the police as a result of DA spoke with insight and positive regard for the police service and police officers, rejecting the dominant perceptions of the community in which she lived and acknowledging the risk they faced to their own personal safety in the course of carrying out their job:

[T]hey don't really get credit for it, that's what I have noticed [...] Where I live, and this is the honest truth, there are riots with the cops because of over something stupid, like you could just literally be driving down the Armagh Road and people would be throwing stones at them and you think, why are they doing that? All they are doing is driving, so they can't get into the part that I am until it is late, late at night because they get bricked, and if they are only trying to help somebody, what are they meant to do? Because they can't come in until late at night in case they get bricked, so they have to protect themselves. (Caoimhe, age 12, L49, 55-60)

The findings in this study revealed a perception among children, especially younger children, that the primary role of the police is punitive. This is concerning, given that the role of the police is to assist children in situations where they may seek help and protection, such as those involving DA. Children's perception of the police and their role in society is dynamic, however, and is influenced by several factors including age, ethnicity, cultural background, social class, race and interactional experiences. For the children in this study, observing the police in situations such as school visits and visits to youth/community groups appeared to have had some, albeit limited, impact on children's stereotypical perceptions of the police. The findings suggest that the development of more realistic perceptions of the police and their role in society depends on more than simply telling and talking to children about these issues and is grounded in and reflective of *direct, personal interaction*. These experiences help children to see beyond stereotyped perceptions and discern a more personal, *human face* of police officers. Moreover, and importantly for this study, such interaction encourages more positive engagement between police and children. For the children in this study, living in NI, these interactions had a significant impact on their perceptions of the police. These findings have relevance both for children's experience of the police response, discussed in the following sections, and for the issue of EI. Furthermore, the findings reported here could indicate a positive development in the perceived legitimacy of the police in NI. Supporting recent work with children within the context of DA (Katz, 2016; Överlien & Aas, 2016) and the position

taken by this study discussed in Chapter 1, the findings challenge conceptualisations of children which relates their age to their capacity; treating them predominantly as lacking in capacity and too vulnerable:

Well, you need to know them before you can decide. (James, age 12, L108)

The finding that personal interactions influence perceptions of the police is a positive finding in this study which has wider application to other international policing organisations within a transition-from-conflict setting such as NI. Regardless of the situation, every encounter between officers and children represents a new and valuable opportunity and ‘key moment’ (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221) to let children know that the police are a service that are there to help them. At a time when the PSNI is experiencing significant cuts to its budget and communities are lobbying to preserve or restore Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT) resources, these findings have clear implications for policing in NI. The creation of NPT or ‘community policing’ model (Rowe, 2014, p. 97) helps to build relations between the police and the communities in which they serve and improve public confidence in the police service – officers who are visible in communities and who are emotionally intelligent, may help create a more positive perception of the police for children who may be required to call on their help within the context of DA and help to alleviate some of the ‘uncertainty and concern’ children experience when they encounter the police in a crisis such as DA (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 437).

A unique and important finding, using a qualitative methodology and an approach to children’s experiences based upon children’s rights, revealed that children in this study felt it was important for police officers to speak with them and not just the adults and treat them as individuals. This helps children to get to know and discern a more human face of police officers helping to develop a more accurate perception of who they are and what their role is. Section two explores children’s constructions of the police response at incidents of DA through the lens of the theoretical framework, EI, and children’s rights framework (UNCRC, 1989).

6.3 Section Two: Children’s Experiences of the Purpose and Response of Police at Incidents of DA

This section of the findings relates to the second research question, exploring the extent to which the issues raised in CS interviews were also experienced by other children in their encounters with the police and if the police were aware of how their behaviour was being interpreted and responded to. These findings are critically important, as they provide insight into and aim to capture the lived experience of children in this context, which is so often ignored. These findings provide a clear indication of what this experience was like for children in their own words, not through the perspective/voice of an adult or parent, which focuses on what children themselves found helpful/unhelpful from the police response. Analysis of the semi-structured interviews identified three main themes. These themes are explored in turn in more detail below.

6.3.1 DA is not just an adult concern: Children as ‘victims’ of DA

All the children in the sample had experience of police involvement in the context of DA. These incidents often involved significant and serious levels of violence and abuse in the home. Most children reported witnessing damage to property and physical abuse of a family member, usually their mother. The mother of two young siblings involved in the study had been the victim of DA homicide. As noted earlier in this chapter, for the majority of children the interaction with police officers was very limited at the time the police responded to an incident of DA. For over half the children in this study, police were involved on more than one occasion and in a few cases on multiple occasions. As these findings indicate, police can play a significant role in the lives of these children:

The police came and looked at the bed and the time they came it was all threw out the window. (Logan, age 7, L289)

[T]hey [the police] have been in my life an awful lot. (Caoimhe, age 12, L67)

The evidence from previous research with children suggests that adults, including police officers, often hold the belief that children who have experienced DA are unaffected and/or are unaware of the abuse in the home, and/or are considered ‘too young to talk

about the violence’ (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002, p. 19). Premised on these beliefs, children living with DA are often expected to comply with the expectations of adults, including professionals such as the police, resulting in a conspiracy of silence: ‘Children pick up on these boundaries and decide not to raise the subject themselves’ (Mullender et al., 2002, p. 19). Similar findings were evident in this research:

They [police] only talk to grown-ups. Because children are not allowed, only if the adults say. (James, age 5, L423, 443)

This can expose children to life-threatening situations but importantly, fails to recognise the complexity of children’s experiences of living with DA beyond a ‘violent incident model’ (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012). Whether as a response to trauma or because it may be too dangerous to do so, children are sometimes unable to verbalise that they need help and therefore rely on adults asking them if they are okay and noticing that they need help. Evidence to support this was found here and in the CS interviews, discussed in the remaining themes. Despite the common conceptualisation of children as passive witnesses to DA and/or too young to know or talk about the abuse in the home (HMIC, 2014, 2015a) children in this study, even the young children, talked openly about the significant impact of living with DA on their emotional health and wellbeing, and the feelings of overwhelming fear, distress, anger, powerlessness and agency that they often experience, even when police become involved. This was more evident in the accounts from the older children, who typically have increased cognitive capacity, a higher level of emotional knowledge and self-awareness and increased verbal repertoire. This should not be interpreted to mean that younger children are unaware or unable to understand, however, as the evidence from this study attests. For one older girl, the emotional distress/trauma was continuous, even after her mother had separated from the perpetrator, as a result both of child contact arrangements and police action. As described in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2), if the professional response is to be effective and appropriate requires shifting the focus of policing regarding children beyond a ‘violent incident model’ (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012). The children’s testimony powerfully illustrates their insight into their own physical and emotional and psychological wellbeing. Importantly, they demonstrate that children clearly recognise their status as victims of DA and urgently seek this recognition from police:

And I think they [the police] should be trained to see the signs of the child being really sort of scared. [...] I would just feel really sick because I have these – they are in like a little jar, they are childproof, you have to push down and twist. Yeah, I take three of these a day, they are to help with not feeling sick, but worrying and worrying makes you feel sick. It takes it away because I worry an awful lot, because the police come a whole lot because my mum has been through a whole a lot with the police and so have I. (Emer, age 9, L136, 165-169)

I grew up too quickly. (Caoimhe, age 12, L582)

These findings and the findings from the CS interviews, challenge the commonly held and dangerous misconception that children are collateral damage when abuse between adults occurs, or else they are ‘passive witnesses’ to or simply unaware of the abuse in the home. The vivid testimonies of the children in this study attest to their ‘active’ involvement in these incidents, and to significant levels of awareness among children in families experiencing DA which supports the findings from previous research (Buckely et al., 2007; Holt et al., 2008; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). Importantly, these findings also demonstrate the urgent need for professionals such as police to go beyond a ‘violent incident model’ (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012), reframing DA in much broader terms with regard to capturing the complexity of children’s experiences to encompass emotional and psychological abuse and coercive control, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis. An important finding within the context of this study; and as such requires a much more sophisticated policing response requiring enhanced skills such as EI from officers. EI skills such as *empathy* (SOA6) help officers to recognise children as victims of DA in their own right and secondly, officers who demonstrate *adaptability* (SM5) possess the skills to provide support to children at a ‘key moment’ (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221) to mitigate the negative impact of DA. As the previous quotes show, officers urgently need to be trained in skills such as EI. By exploring the police response through the lens of EI, can inform an understanding of children’s experiences from a new perspective, which is the focus of the following themes.

6.3.2 Protecting children in the context of DA

Children were asked about how they were feeling when the police were called to their home to respond to a concern of DA. The findings indicate that DA significantly impairs mental and physical health of children, who often operate in a constant state of hypervigilance (McCrory, 2013; Perry et al., 1995; Schore, 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). A majority of children in this study were unaware that the police had been called to the home and only later discovered their presence there. A small number of children (four) talked about being told by parents or relatives to go to their room when the police arrived. What is very clear from children's accounts is that this attempt to shield them from contact with police does not protect them; they often experience intense, complex emotional responses as a result of police intervention, such as anxiety, nervousness, distress, happiness and anger; fear, however, was the most common response reported by children. Findings supported by previous research (Överlien & Aas, 2016). What is striking from children's reports is the lack of recognition and information they receive within the context of DA as independent victims and 'rights holders' by the adults involved, including parents and police officers. This a concerning finding, given the formal progress in recent years of children's independent status in society under the legal framework of the UNCRC (1989) and theoretical understanding of children and childhood (James et al., 1998). This lack of recognition and understanding is a key barrier to meeting children's primary need to be treated equally to the adult victims and to be given information, and not to be ignored; 'Endeavouring to make sense of complicated and frightening realities is obviously much more difficult in the absence of information' (Mullender et al., 2002, p. 96). One child, who was upstairs in her room when the police arrived, saw her mother's partner being arrested:

[W]hen I saw [name of perpetrator] in the [police] car I ran down to the front door and I was crying. [...] The policewoman and policeman made me cry because they were holding me back. (Emily, age 8, L123, L135)

Five children recalled experiences that occurred at night when they were in bed. The police arriving at their home triggered significant fear in children which was often related to their mother being arrested and their being separated from her or being taken away themselves. Given the nature of these traumatic experiences, children described the need

for contact from police and to be provided with information. This is a core principle that should be upheld by professionals such as police officers under Article 13 of the UNCRC. These findings are evidence of the importance listening to children about their own needs and not through the voice of an adult. The fear that children report experiencing could be reduced if not eliminated simply by officers having the self-awareness and self-management skills to develop confidence and an awareness of children's experiences (empathy) and to be given equal status to adult victims, as discussed in more detail in the final theme:

[W]hen I woke up I was really shocked because I didn't know what happened, because I didn't know anything had happened. So I woke [X] up and said, do you hear people downstairs? And he was like, Yeah. So then [X] woke up and we all went downstairs and there was policemen and policewomen all over the place and then I was really, like, scared because I didn't know what was going on and *they* [police] *sat me down and calmed me down*. (Luke, age 10, L234-238; emphasis added)

[When the police came, I was thinking] What's happened here, why are they at my house, what have I done wrong, sort of trying to think back, see what you've done. (Brian, age 13, L206-207)

Findings from previous research found that children who have experienced contact with police on multiple occasions often experience apathy and a lack of trust in their ability to help them (McGee, 2000; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al, 2012). Findings supported in this study. Such findings have relevance not only for children's perceptions of the police as a 'helping' profession but also for police legitimacy, especially important in NI. One older boy expressed anger and powerlessness toward police, which was clearly evident during the interview when asked how he felt about the time the police came to his home. He was not provided with information during the incident:

Angry. [...] you are told to go somewhere because they [the police] came. You were watching TV or something [and] you had to go somewhere else. (Keelan, age 13, L164, 169-170)

Interestingly, only one child reported feeling a sense of happiness when the police arrived at her home. This child later describes her encounter with the responding officer as positive as she spoke with the child directly:

Because whenever, what my dad done to me, I was happy that the police people came out. (Jodie, age 15, L353)

The police uniform is one of the most highly recognisable in society and children are often taught to associate it with punishment and fear (De Camargo, 2012). Not only did a number of children talk about an intense fear associated with the police being called to the home, but both older and younger children attributed part of this fear to a fear of the police uniform and physical factors such as the difference in height between officers and children, especially male officers. Positive contact between police officers and children, based on an empathetic understanding of children's experiences and adapting to meet their needs, may help to reduce this fear and help children discover the human being inside the uniform, something the police must take into account when attending an incident where children are present:

If they came, like, without the uniform on because sometimes when people see the police car pulling up to your house and police getting out with guns, Tasers and all that and that bat thing they have and handcuffs, you're scared [...]. (Brian, age 13, L180-182)

Because you see the big police officers walking down your driveway to your door. It makes people – it makes you feel afraid because there is a police officer coming to the house. (Jodie, age 15, L362)

6.3.3 Children's feelings of safety, visibility and voice

By talking to children about their experiences and taking seriously what they say, this research sought to highlight how children articulated their encounters with the police and what *they* perceived to be helpful, as opposed to what professionals such as the police think is helpful. The findings from the interviews with children in this study clearly demonstrated they are fully aware of the abuse in the home and recognise themselves as victims, who are in no way different from adult victims. All 15 children who took part in this study had suffered emotional harm as a result of DA. Of these, eleven were intensely aware that they had not been treated as victims or as individuals with rights – the right to be treated as an individual, distinct from the adults involved and the right to information: to be told why the police are there, what is going to happen and what happens when the police leave. This lack of contact with officers and *empathy* had significant implications

for children's sense of safety and visibility. Children demonstrated psychological awareness and insight about these encounters with the police.

Any encounter between children and the police in the context of DA constitutes a 'key moment' to enhance children's safety (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221), yet, for the majority of children in this study, this opportunity was not realised. For their part, children found police intervention a highly distressing and oppressive encounter. Furthermore, it is clear from the children's testimonies that these encounters were moments that stayed with them long after the incident had taken place. In light of these findings, it is unsurprisingly that the majority of children in this study did not have positive things to say about the police response. A majority of children in this study did not receive any direct, personal contact with police. Only four of the 15 children received such contact, while children aged 4-7 years old could not recall any contact with the police; this is a particularly concerning finding for this study.

Police intervention was not the panacea it is hoped to be for these children; they often reported feeling considerable fear in response to police involvement in the context of DA. Critically, despite this finding, they still looked to the police to protect them and restore a sense of safety. What stands out from the interview and case study data is the duality of children's experiences. Children implicitly acknowledged this, expressing their need to be seen as a 'victim' in their own right alongside the need for someone to listen to them with intent, reassure them and importantly, tell them what is happening.

Empathy (SA1) from attending officers, a core tenet of EI, and their ability and confidence to adapt their professional response (SM5) to meet the needs of children made a significant difference to these children's experiences and visibility as victims. Most reported being left alone to make sense of and manage the impact of the violence at home that had resulted in police intervention. This was especially true for the youngest children:

They [police] only talk to grown-ups. Because children are not allowed, only if the adults say. (James, age 5, L423, 443)

Participant (P); Researcher (R)

R: *Can you remember what you were thinking when the police came to the house?*

P: Yeah, I thought mummy and daddy were going to break up and they did.

R: *How did you feel about that, [child's name]?*

P: Very, very, very sad.

R: *Do you remember the police officer coming over to talk to you?*

P: No, they didn't talk to me, they talked to Mummy.

(Logan, age 7, L343-353)

Later in the same interview, when the researcher asked this child why he thought the police officer did not speak to him, his reply was:

Because I am just a wee boy. (Logan, age 7, L388)

Children who experience DA are unanimous and extremely clear about their need for someone to talk to and listen to them and treat them as an independent person (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). In this study, children agreed that being ignored by police increased the level of fear, distress, anger and antipathy they felt towards the police, undermining their belief that the police were there to protect them:

They didn't really talk to me, so they didn't listen. (Keelan, age 13, L246)

Like, go up to the children and talk to them and tell them what is going on and ask them do they want anything. (James, age 12, L256-257)

Just like when you get nervous, you need someone to talk to you. (Luke, age 9, L295)

The absence of empathy experienced by many of the children in this study gave rise to feelings of being invisible and unimportant in these situations, negating their experiences:

It's just like, I think he only looked at me once. It was like, I might have been invisible, I didn't really seem to be there. (Emer, age 9, L348-349)

The testimony of one older girl, who expressed obvious emotional distress and anger at the attending officer's lack of empathy and his lack of attention to her non-verbal cues signalling her request for help, is indicative of this pattern. This child also expressed her concerns about whether the officer could keep her safe after they leave the home. At the time, the child's ability to communicate verbally was significantly constrained, both by the context of DA and in response to the trauma she had experienced as captured so clearly in her account of the incident. Police had been notified when she had not been returned

to her mother by her father, as outlined in her parents' legally binding child contact agreement:

Well, I think that they could have asked me in another room, away from my dad, did you want to go home, where they could have recognised – I would do this thing when I am nervous, I would start to fiddle with my clothes and, like, start fiddling with my fingers. (Emer, age 9, L120-122; L130-132)

I wanted the policeman to, like, take me into another room and ask me did I want to go home because I wouldn't say in front of my daddy in case he done something on me after the policeman went away. (Emer, age 9, L120-122)

Notably, this girl talked about the need to train officers to notice the signs when children are scared. Like many children living with DA, she demonstrated a maturity and psychological awareness of herself and others beyond her years, and yet she described feeling an intense sense of powerlessness, despair and isolation that is widely shared by children when key professionals such as police officers are not trained to notice them, help them and address their needs:

And I think they [the police] should be trained to see the signs of the child being really sort of scared. [...] And they can also notice in a child's voice if they are nervous, like if they ask them any questions. (Emer, aged 9, L136, L141)

Children's experiences of police intervention focused very strongly on the abilities of the attending officers in relation to social awareness and empathy (SOA1) and adaptability (SM5). As was stated in Chapter 3, this ability begins inside, with the individual being aware of their own emotions (self-awareness, SA1). This EI construct was easily captured in children's narratives and in relation to this theme. Children spoke of DA as a situation which is fraught with difficulties because talking about the abuse and/or how they are feeling is inhibited and/or dangerous. For this reason, children's safety may depend on the officer's ability and skills to pick up on or to sense these feelings, which may be unspoken or only partially expressed. Clear evidence for this was also found in the second CS interview; children have an acute awareness of their own immature position and perceptions by adults. In Chapter 1 (Section 1.3) the role of the police is to 'recognise the needs of any children they may encounter' (HMIC, 2015a, p. 5), the evidence reported here finds this significantly lacking within the context of this study. These findings support a number of studies reporting the importance of skills such as EI in contemporary police work which has important implications for criteria used in the recruitment of

potential officers and training, concluding ‘It may be just as important for a modern day police officer to be emotionally aware as it is for them to be physically fit and knowledgeable about the law’ (Brunetto et al., p. 436).

In describing the police response to their needs, the majority of children reported an absence of empathy or what might be described as ‘empathy avoidance’ (Goleman, 1999, p. 143). While this may be a strategic response by officers who wish to avoid engaging with children either to save time or to protect themselves from emotional distress, officers who took this approach failed to respond to or make direct contact with children. This constitutes a critical finding, for as Callaghan et al. (2015, pp. 3-4) have observed, ‘The failure to recognize the risk that domestic violence poses to child safety can place children at increased risk, particularly if that risk is not taken into account in child protection, and in contact arrangements post-separation’.

For a number of children, DA involves significant disruption, loss and change in their lives. Four children in this study talked about having to leave their home and go to a relative’s house or move further away from their lives as a result of DA. Children reported a range of negative emotions, including distress, anger and powerlessness, which were compounded by the lack of communication and information from the police during the incident. The absence of EI skills such as empathy to understand children’s active role and experience of DA and to recognise them as victims independent of the adults and offer assistance at a time of crisis is a consistent finding in this study. A finding strongly supported in previous research with children (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000; Mullender, 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). The lack of information given to children within this context is also concerning, heightening children’s reactions and fears at a time of crisis:

Because I just don’t like the police, really. I was doing something and then I had to go and move away because of them [police]. I can’t do my own thing. (Keelan, age 13, L210-202)

Then two minutes later they were gone. I needed to stay at somebody else’s house. (Logan, age 7, L448)

At present, the police do not offer an effective safety net for children in the context of DA. A major concern which was strongly communicated in the children’s narratives and

the CS interviews, is the lack of recognition and attention which they receive from key professionals such as the police, which represents a missed opportunity to enhance their welfare and safety. As one child put it, children are not ‘seen’: ‘I didn’t really seem to be there’ (C3, age 9, L348). Critically, these findings show that children seek to be recognised as ‘victims’ by the police, but that this recognition is too often denied them. The data clearly show that at incidents of DA, children do not want to be ignored by police and want to talk about what is happening; such police behaviour can serve to heighten negative emotions and importantly, can re-create some of the devastating dynamics of the abuse in the home, e.g. powerlessness over their lives and social isolation. It is important to ensure that children are not only kept safe through police intervention but even more importantly, that they feel safe. Recognising the importance of integrating ‘soft skills’ such as EI into police training becomes highly salient through the narratives and words of children in this study.

The failure of the police to acknowledge them as individuals separate from adults and to speak with them on that basis can have serious consequences for children’s self-perception and, importantly, for police organisations, affecting children’s perceptions of and attitudes toward the police, especially in the context of DA (see Section One):

Because they are doing something, or probably talking to someone in the family or something like that, and they don’t really want to talk to you, because they are only interested in the other thing [domestic abuse]. (Keelan, age 13, L232-233)

It’s just like, I think he only looked at me once. It was like, I might have been invisible, I didn’t really seem to be there. (Emer, age 9, L348-349)

Four older children in this study had a positive encounter with the police compared to the majority of children in this study. Three of these children had had experience of police involvement on multiple occasions as a result of DA. Three of these children were upstairs in their bedroom or in bed asleep at the time police arrived at the home:

Yes, I was in bed and then they [police officers] woke me up and I looked out the door because [...] my mum was up my stairs. (Emily, age 8, L79-80)

[T]here was a couple of police officers that came to my house and they were asking if my mum was okay and then my mum called me down and they started asking me questions. (Jodie, age 15, L126-127)

This small group of children talked positively about the responding officers and their actions during a stressful and traumatic experience. The children described how the officers restored a sense of safety calmly and confidently, how they had made time and space to talk with them and reassure them and how this had helped to calm them. One girl still recalled the name of the officer who had spoken with her. Importantly, and in sharp contrast with the group of children who did not receive direct contact from the police, these children felt that they had been noticed and recognised as independent from the adults involved, which was significant for the children involved. These responding were able to demonstrate adaptability (SM5) and empathy (SOA6) to recognise and respond to the needs of children which involved simply listening and providing comfort and reassurance:

That I was okay with her listening to me, but at the same time I felt safe. It was like a bit of joy because they were here, and *I got to tell them what all happened*. (Jodie, age 15, L428, L432, emphasis added)

They were really nice. They brought us, like – so we were upstairs sleeping and then we woke up and then the police officer was sitting down and he got us biscuits and juice and all that out. [. . .] *They calmed us down*, they sat us down and talked about it and all, like, it will be alright, just go back to bed and watch something, or something like that, to calm yourself down. (Luke, age 10, L81-82, L105-106; emphasis added)

In the interviews, children were also asked to talk about the action the police took and if they felt this action was helpful. Overall, these four children were positive about the action the police took, which often involved simply listening and talking to them about things unrelated to DA. Importantly, receiving information rather than being left to create their own story was critical to their understanding of what was happening. The power these informal actions of officers in helping these children at a time of crisis was salient:

Because they were making eye contact with you and they were kind of nodding their head, like they were listening and eye contact. (Luke, age 10, L317-318)

[T]hey explain to you what they are doing, they don't do it straightaway, they explain to you what they are doing in different situations and whenever they do that, then they do whatever they need to do, so then you don't get freaked out by what they are doing – like if they are walking in the house or something, you don't get freaked out by what they are doing and they explain it in a way that you

understand what they are doing so you don't get freaked out even more. (Caoimhe, age 12, L151-156)

One girl highlighted the significance of police recognising the cues that children living with and experiencing DA may well be most attuned to and that are likely to be triggers of distress, such as the gender and appearance of officers, their uniform, their tone of voice and facial expression:

Because when they are above your height level it is a bit scary because they are taller than you and you are afraid of something happening, but when they are below your height level you are okay, you are happy that they are below your height level. (Jodie, age 15, L505-507)

Interestingly, children stressed the significance and importance of being given the opportunity to talk for themselves and of having another person listen to them. Within a children's rights framework (UNCRC, 1989), this is something that professionals such as police, must take account of; challenging social constructions of children as inherently dependent and lacking in capacity. This can be viewed as a form of 'symbolic violence' toward children (Bryne, 2016, p. 116):

I got to tell them what happened. (Jodie, age 15, L432)

Yeah, because you don't want to feel sad and scared when people can help you feel better. (Luke, age 10, L252)

Officers who demonstrated EI-based competencies such as empathy (SOA1) and adaptability (SM5) made a significant difference to children's experiences, as is revealed in the various ways officers responded and adapted to meet their needs, especially the need to be recognised as independent victims separate from the adults involved and as 'rights holders'. Despite progress regarding children's independent position in society as 'rights holders' rather than as 'passive and dependent in the private family' (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 3), there is a significant gap between a legal commitment to the principles of the UNCRC and what actually happens in practice. This gap can be explained by three key concerns that have relevance to this study: scepticism about children's capacity (or the belief that they lack capacity) to have a meaningful input into decision making; a

worry that giving children more control will undermine adult authority; and the belief that compliance and consulting children require effort (Lundy, 2007).

Critically, the ability to demonstrate empathy enabled officers to interpret, understand and respond to the subtle layers of children's emotional response, which typically were comprised of fear and uncertainty about why the police were there and what was happening, and fear that their mother and/or the perpetrator would be arrested or that they themselves were going to be arrested, concerns which were not evident in the accounts of other children. In the first instance, empathy enabled these officers to notice these children and respond to them. Importantly, the responses that proved most helpful to children were more informal help and support and communication compared to responses that require more formalised training, such as Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview training. This must be viewed as an important objective for policing DA involving children. Furthermore, from a policing perspective these informal measures of support would not damage any future criminal investigation, as highlighted in a previous study (Överlien & Aas, 2016).

The findings presented here highlight the critical influence of the police on children's reaction to DA and its longer-term impact: the response they receive from officers can either help or further complicate children's responses to DA in both the short and longer term. Notably, the testimonies of children in this study challenge the common adult misconception that communicating with them about sensitive issues will upset and/or damage them which has important implications for professionals working with children not just within the context of DA (Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al, 2012). On the contrary, informing children not only helps to protect their emotional and psychological wellbeing in the short term and mitigate against the impact of their experience of DA in the longer term. It must also be recognised as a children's rights issue: under Article 12 and 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), children have the right to be given information regarding matters that affect them and the right to have their opinions taken into account.

Finally, at the end of each interview children were asked to list three things which are important for police officers to know when they encounter children at incidents of DA. The following findings are based on a thematic analysis of children's responses:

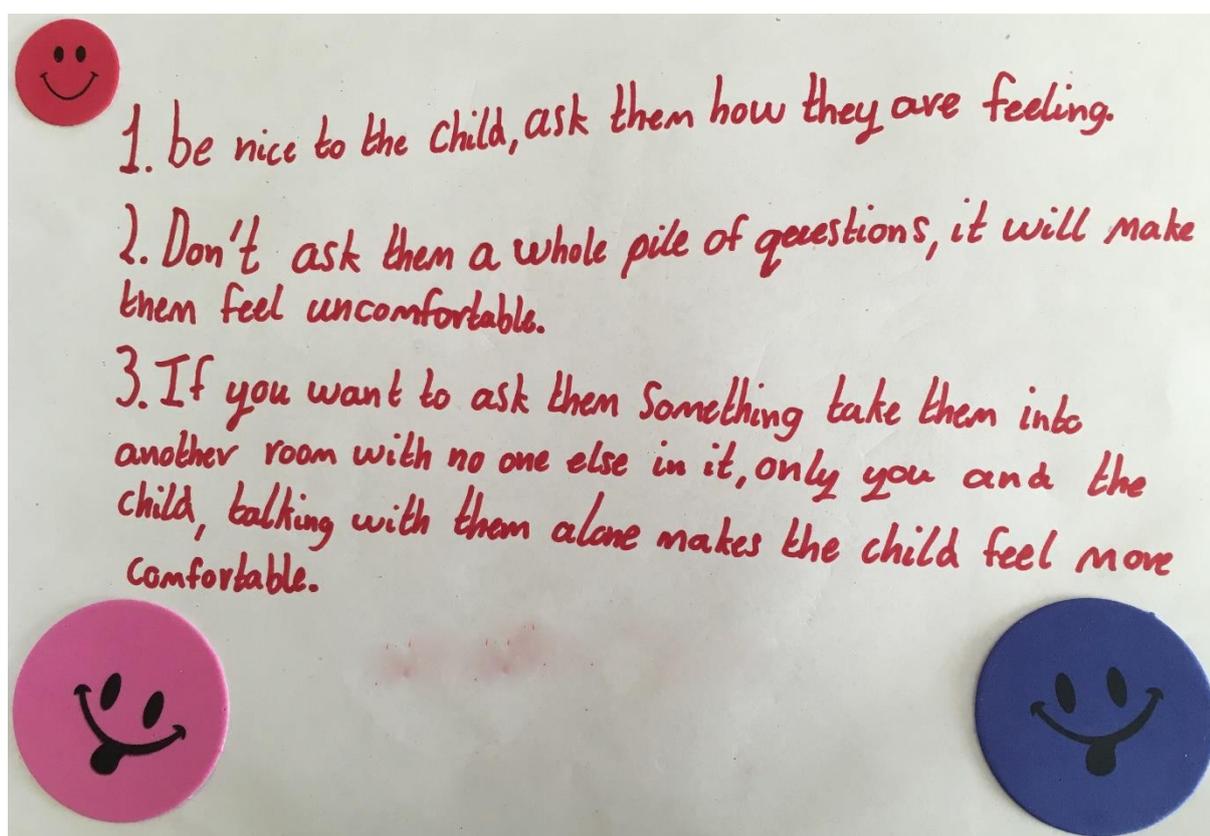


Figure 6.2: Three things that children say are important to tell police at incidents of DA. Drawing by Emer, aged 9.

1. **Speak to children:** It helps children feel safer when officers talk with them directly and ask them if they are okay and tell them what is happening; more importantly, it validates their experience and them as individuals and as victims, separate from adults.
2. **'Don't ask them a whole pile of questions':** Children agreed that it is important for police to talk to them about other things, not just about home, as this makes them feel 'under threat': 'Stuff that they are not working on, like, and it's to do with you' (Anthony, age 9, L309).

3. **Tone of voice, facial expression and the uniform:** Children want police to talk to them in a calm, sensitive way and make eye contact with them. They also want them to be aware of their fears associated with the uniform. For a significant number of children in this study, shouting can activate a trauma response and the uniform is often associated with punishment as opposed to helping.
4. **Take them into another room by themselves:** Children talked about the importance of taking them into another room, such as the living room. Talking with them alone makes children feel more comfortable.
5. **Remove the perpetrator from the house.**
6. **'Bring them a cup of tea and a biscuit and ask them do they want to play with toys'** (Finn, age 5, L425).

6.4 Summary

The aim of this study was to explore how one element of the service response, that provided by police officers, could respond more effectively to children at incidents of DA. Studying this issue through the lens of emotional intelligence (EI) provided insight into the research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The majority of children in this study shared similar views regarding their perceptions of the police and their role in society. A majority of children, especially younger children (4-7 years old), described their punitive role, viewing police as authority figures who could use violence in the course of carrying out their job. A number of older children also reported the dual role of the police as both agents of the criminal justice system and providers of a 'helping' service. Based on the findings reported here, having the opportunity to interact with the police may help children to develop their perception of policing as a 'helping' profession rather than one whose primary purpose is to dispense criminal justice and punish offenders. Direct contact with police officers might also help children to discern their more human face, which is so critical in the context of DA. The second research question was to better understand how children experience the purpose and response of police to enable the police to develop their practice and respond to children in ways that they

perceive as helpful. Children in this study articulated a high degree of uncertainty and concern about police coming to their home in response to concerns of DA. These situations often involved serious levels of abuse, some of which had been occurring for a significant period of time in the children's lives, and in some instances continued after their mother had separated from the perpetrator. This concern may be in part due to their stereotypical perceptions of the police as agents of punitive justice and not as public servants who are there to help them and offer support. Given that the role of the police is to assist children in situations where they may need help and protection, these findings are concerning. It was evident from the findings with children, differences in officers EI based skills (empathy and adaptability) had an important impact of the extent to which children viewed the police as a helping profession, an important finding for this study. These encounters provide invaluable opportunities to demonstrate the dual function of the police (i.e. as enforcers of criminal justice on the one hand and as members of a 'helping' profession on the other), particularly in light of the fact that opportunities for positive engagement with children are becoming more restricted as a result of cuts to the policing budget. Furthermore, these findings have important implications on perceptions of police legitimacy, where attitudes toward the police in NI remain highly conflicted.

In the majority of cases, concerns were compounded by the lack of recognition of children as victims of DA separate from adults and a failure to speak with them directly and provide them with information. The findings in this study concur with those of previous studies, in which the majority of children did not receive direct contact with police officers at incidents of DA; furthermore, when officers ignored children and failed to see them as independent victims of DA and speak with them directly, this often heightened children's reactions to their experience of DA and its impact on them in the longer term, which in some instances caused further emotional harm. Shockingly, a large number of children reported many instances where officers failed to take them into account, or who by their actions demonstrated a lack of empathy, leaving them feeling scared, anxious, isolated and powerless because they had not been provided with information pertaining to the incident or the decisions taken by officers. This had significant implications for the children present at these incidents, including having to leave their home or the involvement of Social Services, which in one case left a boy feeling distraught with worry

that he may be separated from his mother. As that case demonstrates, if, for whatever reason, officers fail to detect signs of emotional harm, they run the risk not only of failing to protect the vulnerable, but of inadvertently perpetuating if not compounding the abuse by failing to see children as victims, too.

Adding to previous research, the data from this study suggests that improving this situation is not simply a matter of professional skills and training alone but rather emphasises the importance of embedding and developing personal qualities such as EI into the recruitment and training of police officers to build their capacity and skills to recognise and have the confidence to respond to the needs of children in the context of DA in ways that are perceived by children as helpful. Critically, the findings indicate that children seek to be recognised as ‘victims’ by the police, although this recognition is still often denied them. Viewed through the lens of EI, the capacity to recognise (Self-Awareness) and manage (Self-Management & Adaptability) emotions is clearly central to the police response to children, enabling a response based on empathy, a core tenet of EI. The findings in this study suggest that child-police interactions serve important functions other than simply to generate a ‘record for the system’ for future action by other agencies. Recalling those officers who had talked to and listened to them, children emphasised the importance of being given the opportunity to tell their stories. This made children feel safe, and more importantly, visible. The significance of this cannot be overstated. This work is challenging but importantly, as Goleman’s states, EI can be learned.

This thesis seeks to add to a growing body of literature with the aim of making the experiences and voices of children living with and experiencing DA more visible. In other words, it seeks ‘to ensure that service provision is relevant, fit for purpose, and person-centred. Without this, services run the risk of being not just insensitive to need, [but] potentially damaging and liable to let down those most in need’ (Callaghan et al., 2015, p. 21). Studying police-child encounters through the lens of EI, examined this issue from a different perspective than previous research, providing an opportunity for knowledge development and mobilisation within this context and highlighting the original contribution of this thesis within this field and beyond. The following chapter presents the findings with police officers.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEWS WITH POLICE

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from 20 semi-structured interviews conducted with 18 front-line police officers and 2 Domestic Abuse Officers (DOA). These findings correspond to the third research question:

3. How do police officers describe their professional role and how do they experience, understand and respond to incidents of DA involving children?

Central to the research with police officers was a critical analysis of the findings in the context of the theoretical framework, emotional intelligence (EI). Similar to the findings with children, the findings reported here with police officers seeks to build on the findings emerging from CS interviews, providing a more intensive study into police-child interactions.

7.2 Police Officers' Perceptions of their Role in Society

The HMIC report, *Improving the Police Response to Domestic Abuse* (2014, p. 48), stated that the police service needs to ask itself fundamental questions about recruiting the 'right people' with the relevant skills (including empathy, a core tenet of EI). For this reason, how police officers describe their role and their motivations for joining the police were explored. Interviews with police officers revealed that the majority of those who took part in this study had a criminal justice orientation, seeing their role largely in terms of enforcing the law. A smaller number of officers took a victim-centred approach, describing their role in terms of 'helping' others. In view of findings from previous research, exploring adult victim perceptions of the police response to DA found that the attitude and demeanour of officers was experienced as the most critical aspect of the

police response to DA (Stephens & Sinden, 2000). Stephens and Sinden study (2000) although limited by the small sample size ($n = 25$), and other research (Johnson, 2007; HMIC, 2014) found that a criminal justice approach which focuses on pro-arrest and law enforcement alone, was not associated with rates of recidivism or victim confidence and satisfaction with the police; what was of 'paramount significance' (Stephens & Sinden, 2007, p. 542) was the *empathy* displayed by the officer. Interestingly, the majority of officers in this study described the varied nature of their work, involving activities which for the most part are unrelated to crime and law enforcement and more closely linked to the service aspect of their role. The data would suggest that, this service role, although much less visible than the criminal justice and law enforcement aspects of policing, in fact has become a much larger part of routine police work, with the growing workload related to public protection tasks such as DA and public safety and welfare (Rowe, 2014).

Importantly, the findings also indicate that the way officers described their professional role was strongly associated with how they understood and responded to children. Officers who viewed their role from a criminal justice orientation were less likely to make contact and speak with children than those officers who took a victim-centred approach that focused on helping others. The data from this study suggests that policing requires officers to adopt many different roles and attitudes in the course of discharging their duty. These include listening and providing empathy, qualities often associated with the role of counsellor or social worker, as well as conveying authority and enforcing the law. These findings contribute to a wider debate within policing concerning what officers' in today's society should be expected to do (HMIC, 2014, p. 48) and the issue of 'role ambiguity' (role ambiguity refers to vague and unclear expectations set for employees, such that employees are uncertain as to what is expected of them) which is significantly associated with stress and lower job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2015, p. 105). A similar debate is also occurring within the medical profession whereby empathy is increasingly emphasised as a core element of modern doctor-patient care, challenging traditional perceptions of what it means to be a doctor (West, 2012). Police organisations can help reduce officers' stress and increase job satisfaction by increasing employee perceptions of their job role, which has direct relevance and application to policing DA incidents.

The interviews revealed interesting similarities and differences among the officers who took part in this study. Their responses are discussed in the themes below.

7.2.1 An opportunity to do something different

Of the 20 officers interviewed, seven had at least one family member who had previously served in the police service; the remaining 13 officers did not. Of the seven officers who had a family history of police service, two were male and five were female. All except one came from a PUL background; the remaining officer, a female, came from a CNR background. These findings, which indicate a disparity in the religious affiliation of officers, may reflect the historical legacy of policing in NI.

Officers reported various motivating factors for initially joining the police service. These included a long-term aspiration and interest in the profession since childhood; desire for a career that was different; unhappiness, dissatisfaction and boredom in their previous job role; and a family history of serving in the police. All were attracted to the diverse nature of the work, the absence of routine tasks, the autonomy and relative flexibility of the working day, the financial benefits, job security and job status:

I liked the idea of the police, going out and stopping crime and all the rest, and it's a uniform job, professional, emergency services. I liked the idea of that and sort of a job as a career as such. I suppose you could say that you want a job with good money prospects, like [a] pension and stuff. (LPT17, female, L10-13)

Six officers and two domestic abuse officers (DAOs), of whom four were female and four male, also stated that their decision to join the police service had been strongly motivated by the desire to help others, to make a difference in the lives of others in some way and to do a job that was meaningful. Some of these officers spoke of a previous background in other jobs such as Victim Support and Social Work. One DAO commented that this would not be viewed as a common reason for joining the police service:

[I]t might sound a bit ridiculous that my focus was on people who would be victims as opposed to wanting to catch the bad guys, yeah. You know, I didn't really think – the bad side of things, it sounds really silly, but it was just always that, that no matter what circumstances they would find themselves in, you would be working

with such a wide variety of people, and, you know, in the role of the police officer you would have the potential to, you know, to make a difference, so even if somebody is getting really bad news, I would always remember how they were told, do you know what I mean? Or something like that, it was just always that that appealed to me, you know? You can help people, you can make their bad circumstances a bit easier, you know? (DAO2, female, L75-83)

7.2.2 First responders: Police force or police service?

In asking officers to describe their professional role, the aim was to explore officers' attitudes to their role, which has been found to be a 'silent contributor' to policing practices, especially in the context of DA (Logan et al., 2006; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). The majority of officers in this study found this question challenging, and it provoked a degree of reflection; their responses revealed the significant complexity and arduous nature of their role in general and of policing in NI specifically. Many of the officers talked about the change in their job title from Response Officer to Local Policing Team (LPT), but all emphasised that this change had had a minimal impact on their day-to-day job role. All officers perceived their job role as primarily first responders to a wide range of incidents, including DA; frequently this involved making contact and liaising with outside agencies such as social workers and more recently with mental health agencies/professionals. On the evidence of the officers in this study, the police are often a gateway service to other services:

It is so varied and so far-ranging that 'initial responder' is probably the phrase that I would give to any police officer that would be in what we call the policing teams now. Someone picks up the phone to call [the] police, you are the one going, you are the one to deal with that, depending on [...] it can vary so much in what they are looking for police assistance for, from somebody parking in their space to 999, someone's house is at risk. So we deal with quite a lot, varying calls, and then we also are dealing like you are saying yourself, [with] domestic abuse matters. They are in themselves can be so varying, from having an argument with your partner to again dialling 999, there is a risk to life. (LPT7, male, L65-71)

Clear differences emerged in how officers described their professional role. More than half of the officers in this study held the view that their role was orientated primarily towards a traditional criminal justice approach and the enforcement of the law and not

towards help and emotional support; and for many officers, this was the reason why they joined the profession. In this regard, officers' perceptions of their role were similar to children's perceptions of the police:

Sometimes [...] you do have to offer some sort of, you know, emotional, some sort of shoulder, or some element of that in the initial report, but I think that it is really important that you don't lose sight of the reason why you are there. I am not a social worker, I'm not a marriage counsellor, I'm not trained to give you the right emotional advice as to how to deal with that situation, and whether it is best for your kids or not. Sometimes that is the conversations that you are having with people. And at the end of the day I do make it clear I am not the best person to give you that advice, I'm biased, my advice is going to be biased because I want to prosecute this person because they have committed a crime, and that might not be what you want to do. (LPT14, female, L790-795)

Interestingly, this officer reported using the uniform to maintain a certain level of physical and emotional detachment in order to discharge her job role effectively, to be perceived as a professional and as a form of emotional protection. This view also was expressed by other officers, for whom the uniform was not synonymous with a personal identity:

It is like acting. Yeah, it is kind of like [officer's name] and I have a family, two young kids, but I just keep myself to myself and I like to keep my quiet time. Obviously in work you can't, you have to be authoritative and out there, really to deal with people. (LPT1, male, L46, 50-52)

A number of officers in this group admitted to feeling a great deal of pressure and fear both from within the organisation and from external agents such as the public and Police Ombudsman, which fuelled a fear of getting things wrong, of being watched, of criticism and of being perceived as unprofessional and ultimately, the fear of termination and losing their job. These feelings appeared to reinforce for these officers the utility of adopting a more criminal justice/bureaucratic and narrow approach to their role:

[I]t is completely irrational, I think now, because everybody knows that society needs police, and everybody knows that the PSNI is different now and it is the most scrutinised police force in the world, and I honestly believe it is. How many bodies are there to look over us, and our laws and our Code of Ethics looks over us as well. You are petrified of losing your job in this. (LPT1, male, L238-241)

Officers who talked about joining the police service in order to help others described their role as first responders in much broader terms, not only from a criminal justice orientation, but in terms of the importance and responsibility of helping others who are the victims of crime. These officers recognised their role in providing access to and collaborating with

other agencies such as Social Services and Women's Aid as part of their role; what Stanley (2015, p. 235) refers to as 'institutional empathy':

[W]e are the initial impact, we need to be able to see that somebody needs that help to be able to refer them on. If we miss it, sometimes it is hard. I know there are other areas where people can come in, but sometimes if it feels as if we miss it, you know, especially with the likes of children and stuff, where they do need help from other areas, if we miss it, it can be missed for a long time because there might be no other reason to bring in other resources, so our role is one of the primary, first responding roles to be able to help people. (LPT5, male, L67- 72)

It was evident during interviews with officers that police work is physically and emotionally onerous. Their expectations of what the job would involve prior to joining and during training were often completely different from their day-to-day reality:

It can be rewarding, but it can also be very tough as well, in terms of long hours and not knowing if you are going to get home on time to see your kids go to sleep or whatever. It can be awkward socially and just expect your sleep pattern to be deprived. (LPT2, male, L105-107)

As reported in Section One, officers experienced feelings of fear which they ascribed to organisational expectations and demands. In a complementary finding, feeling valued and receiving recognition by managers was identified as extremely important to maintaining a positive attitude/outlook toward their job. However, officers reported experiencing a lack of appreciation and respect from section managers, only seeing or hearing from them when they have made a mistake or are behind in their reports. A number of officers talked about the fear of having their employment terminated. Critically, these experiences may have contributed to a salient feeling of being undervalued and underappreciated in their job role, as the following quotes suggests:

[W]hen you do something wrong, you are straight up to the office and trailed through the coals, and you know about it straight away. If you do something right a lot of the people do not want to know, a lot of the bosses at the top they don't want to know. (LPT3, male, L617-620)

I suppose sometimes people in Response – I always mention Response because *I think we are treated the worst in the job* – maybe sometimes we do need reminded of that, and sometimes there is the odd boss or sergeant or inspector who will go on to your log – we have to keep logs of every call – and say, 'Good work' and that, and you sort of go, 'That's nice, I am getting noticed.' Every now and again they notice something like that or they will remind you of our job being difficult and, you know, you're doing your best and don't forget that, because I sometimes think

people get a bit, 'I don't care about this job' sort of thing, and it is a pity. (LPT17, female, L272-278; emphasis added)

For a number of officers in this study, performance at work was improved when they felt recognised and appreciated for doing their job well and supported emotionally in what is a significantly challenging role for officers and their families. The EI competency, self-management is integral to the policing role given that it helps to support officers maintain a positive outlook (SM5) in their role alongside external recognition, associated with increased well-being and job satisfaction (Brunetto et al., 2012). This competency may become critically important within the context of policing in NI discussed in the following theme.

7.2.3 Policing in NI: The legacy and the future

A unique feature of this study is the context in which policing is situated in this part of the UK. Officers repeatedly talked about policing in NI as being hugely challenging, at times frustrating, but also rewarding, particularly in terms of the legacy of the Troubles and the opportunities for change, not only in public attitudes towards the police since the Good Friday Agreement (1998) but in the attitudes of officers towards policing in NI. Working as a police officer in NI remains a highly dangerous occupation, and yet carrying personal protection weapons, driving in armoured vehicles, the ongoing presence of terrorist threats, being unable to disclose your occupation to others outside your family and checking under your car for suspect devices are strangely normalised in the narratives of officers:

I think up here [in Northern Ireland] obviously you have the terrorist threat, which is something completely different from anywhere else. You can't let your neighbours know what you work at for fear you don't know who they are, or who they might know. Every morning before you get into your car you are getting down on your hands and knees and looking about it to make sure that nothing is going to go bang. (LPT7, male, L194-198)

A common and emotive theme in officers' accounts was accountability and the high degree of scrutiny to which officers are subjected in NI. For some officers in this study, this created a climate of fear, as previously noted:

I think that we [police officers in NI] are very highly scrutinized and everybody hates us, and I think for that reason we do have a lot more pressure on us than other places do, just for the sheer past and RUC and the whole Catholic/Protestant thing in Northern Ireland. It's different in that sense. (LPT15, female. L266-269)

Despite these challenges, a fragile optimism and positive outlook about the future of policing in NI was present in many accounts; it was clear that building trust and earning the respect of the public was an important issue for many of the officers in this study. Only one officer expressed the view that attitudes to the police would remain essentially the same:

I would say primarily just because of our unique history, you know, historically there are people based on political or religious views that may have certain preconceptions about the police and I certainly do think that it has improved vastly, and it is a credit to the former RUC and PSNI and organisations for taking into account the recommendations of the Patten Report, things like that. They have worked at it, and even down in Newry, I have spoken to colleagues who would be driving about, and they would say, 'We couldn't have went here when we first started policing'. They would have had at least two or three armoured land rovers, and now you can drive about just with a crew. So there has definitely been a positive change, but even now there are still areas, I suppose, that maybe you need to take another call sign to, just in case anything did happen. But I think really just because of the historic role of the police that it would be quite unique job in Northern Ireland. (LPT12, male, L210-219)

7.3 Police Officers' Experiences of Responding to DA

The following findings report, through the lens of EI, how officers experience, understand and respond to DA. This data informs our knowledge and understanding of how officers engage with this complex issue, particularly (and importantly for this study) when children are present. The interviews with officers revealed two main themes, which are examined in the following subsections.

7.3.1 DA is unlike any other crime

The interviews with officers revealed that DA cases are unlike other forms of police work. It is messy, and carries a much greater emotional load, more so when children are involved, compared to other forms of police work. Officers often talked about incidents in which victims had been seriously physically and sexually assaulted, or in which there was evidence of emotional abuse, coercive control and threats to kill. Children were frequently present at such incidents, and occasionally they were physically assaulted and injured. A large number of the officers reported a strong dislike for attending DA-related calls, a view which appears to be widely shared: ‘I have never met one [police officer] that likes domestics’ (LPT4, male, L582). A strong case has been made for self-awareness (SA1) and self-management (SM2) as the cornerstone of EI (Goleman, 1996; Havers, 2010); from the findings, the importance of this competency with officers is clear within this context. DA cases often evoked emotions that reflected the personal views and histories of the individual, which had an impact on their professional practice as a police officer, specifically their capacity for empathy. While a majority of officers described a sense of personal distance from DA, four (three female and one male) revealed their own personal experiences of DA in childhood and within adult relationships, which was important to note:

I grew up in a house with domestic abuse, so I have seen it first-hand. Now, never personally really me, but that is why my mum left my dad, and then I watched him do it to my step-mum and I stood in between them, and said, Well, hit me then. So I grew up as a child seeing how it worked and then became an adult going, Whew, I am not going to stand for that. [...] [M]y personal history is exactly why I, not necessarily have an interest in it, but I would be more practical, in that I would be like, we need to get this person down to Women’s Aid. (LPT8, female, L465-469, 471-473)

[M]y mum never called the police and that really bothered me, you know? [. . .] If a police officer had of been called to my mum’s house for something and had maybe picked up on it, or been open to picking up on it, maybe she wouldn’t have had to go through it for so long because it took her ten years before she said, Enough, and left with the kids. (LPT9, female, 917-920)

Officers reported that incidents typically involved a male perpetrator and a female victim, and whilst there is never a “textbook” case, alcohol and/or drug use and mental health issues are major factors in a large number of cases. Importantly for this study, this often

makes dealing with these incidents much more complex and arduous from both a criminal justice perspective and an interpersonal perspective. When officers go to a call, what has been reported is often not what has occurred: sometimes incidents are much more serious in nature than was indicated initially, and often counter allegations are made which further complicate officers' ability to respond effectively:

[Y]our emotions are more heightened in those cases, whereas if you were to go to an RTC [road traffic collision] or even a fight in the street, it is a different fight because you can relate to it, I suppose. (LPT1, male, L511-512)

You don't know what you are going to walk in and find and very often you walk in and people – there is a lot of shouting and a lot of screaming and crying going on, you know? It is hard to try and stay calm and get the message across. It can be very hard to figure out what is going on. (LPT10, male, L411-413)

In addition to describing their experiences in relation to DA, approximately a third of all officers also spoke of the significant pressure on them emanating from within the organisation itself, associated with DA:

There is a big pressure on domestics, there is a big responsibility, the DASH form thing. This year it is really drilled into you that they sometimes don't end well, you have to make sure you have done all you can and [that] you are not walking away and leaving somebody to get stabbed. And you know you don't want that to happen for them, but for your career, both things, for selfish reasons you don't want it to happen, as a police officer you don't either. That is the difference with domestics. (LPT4, male, L652-656)

They [domestics] are more scrutinized than any other [type of incident]. (LPT11, female, L355)

The relational and family context of DA plays a unique but crucial role in the policing of these cases, in which the victim or injured party (IP) is often wary about talking to the police and reluctant to disclose the nature and extent of the abuse. Whether their reluctance was negotiated effectively depended on the personal qualities of the attending officer. A critical quality was the ability to empathise with victims (SOA6) and offer emotional support. These qualities, which include EI based competencies, were largely absent or poorly developed. This in turn made it difficult for the responding officers to maintain a positive outlook (SM4) when responding to these incidents. It was evident from the narratives of officers in both the CS interviews (CS Two) and the findings reported here, this impacted the police response to children. Importantly, officers were less likely to make positive contact with children in these cases. A large number of

officers repeatedly spoke of the frustrating and unrewarding nature of attending reported incidents of DA, which often involve a high level of withdrawal statements, low prosecution rates and ‘repeats’. A number of these officers expressed the opinion that in many cases the problem lay with the individuals involved, and they questioned the ability of the police to help people who appeared unwilling to accept police assistance in order to change their circumstances.

I mean, there are certain names or addresses that as soon as you hear it on the radio, before they have told you what it is, you know what it is you are going to. You go into it in a bad way with a preconceived, ‘This is what I am going to do’, because it is the same all the time, but that is a bad way to go into it. [...] I have had very, very few domestics where it has went the whole way to court and somebody has been convicted. (LPT6, male, L431-434, 452-453)

All the officers in this study experienced intense emotions and emotional labour with regard DA. They dealt with these emotions in different ways, which had important implications for how they engaged with these cases. For those officers, both male and female, who approached the role from a traditional criminal justice orientation with the aim of enforcing the law, emotions were not seen as necessary or important for their role; these they saw as more relevant to the role of nurses, counsellors or social workers. To the extent that it reflects the perception that emotions are an important feature of the ‘caring’ professions but not of the police service, this finding has clear implications for how police relate to children present at these incidents of DA, discussed later in this chapter.

Five officers in this study talked openly of the need to ‘detach’ from their feelings in order to conduct themselves in a professional manner, to do their job effectively (i.e. enforce the law) and also to protect themselves emotionally. This is an important finding in the context of EI, whose advocates argue that emotions are ‘typically *indispensable* to rational decisions’ (Goleman, 1996, p. 28 original emphasis). Irrespective of gender, this suggests something about how emotions are acculturated and understood within the police service. Although it may be perceived as an adaptive response by officers, this tendency to manage the situation by detaching emotionally is highly problematic, impacting operational decision making and interfering with the ability of officers to connect with others (*empathy*).

I must admit, try to keep a sense of emotional detachment as best you can because you would find that if – you know, you can get very involved, and it can become very emotional and you will be thinking about it, and maybe getting yourself worked up. So I think that even from a professional point of view you just have to maybe take a step back from it but still recognise that this is two people, we have a victim here, but just not add too much so that you almost become ineffective in what you are there to do. (LPT12, male, 472-477)

I think that is part of why you become a police officer rather than a nurse, or something like that. [...] What you need to do kicks in and you move on to the next thing. (LPT15, female, L790-792)

By contrast, one female officer spoke of coming out from behind the uniform, connecting with her *human* side and at times not complying with the way ‘upstairs’ wanted things done and instead focusing more on case management. Her testimony conveyed a powerful sense that she often encountered a tension in her role as a police officer between her duty on the one hand to follow the correct procedures and on the other hand to be ‘a bit more human’, which for her meant connecting with her ‘gut feeling’ in response to cases, showing empathy for some of the difficult circumstances in which these incidents occur and not simply turning up to apply the law in a very prescriptive way, as officers are trained to do. She recalled an occasion when she had been called to a domestic incident involving an elderly male with dementia who had no recollection of his actions; ‘upstairs’ had advised it should be recorded as a domestic and the male should be removed from the house:

I think, well, say you go to a domestic for instance, you know there are certain things that you have to do, that have to be done, then forms that have to be done afterwards and contact the relevant people, but it is not as easy as that sometimes, you know? And especially if there are children there, you know? You have to also have a heart at times and not be so PC about things, you know? And sometimes if you do something and you have a gut feeling and it’s right, it may not be the way ‘upstairs’ want it done, so there are certain ways that you have to be a bit more human and deal with things, you know? (LPT16, female, L110-115)

7.3.2 Perceptions of risk and response to DA

The testimony of officers regarding how they managed the strong feelings and emotional labour associated with DA incidents, which generally involved remaining detached from

the situation, revealed how this attitude had informed their understanding and response to these cases. Most officers followed a criminal justice-orientated, ‘pro-arrest’ approach and applied the law in a clearly defined and prescriptive way. Importantly, this approach was perceived by these officers to be the most effective way to help and protect adult victims. Moreover, it was seen as a way of communicating to adult victims and perpetrators that DA was taken very seriously by police:

I am acknowledging that there are emotions involved and again me trying to do my job, it is to prosecute a crime that has been reported and I have evidence of. (LPT14, female, L784-786)

In assessing the level of risk and gathering evidence to support a potential arrest and prosecution, there was a narrow focus on the *visible* indicators of abuse, such as physical injuries, obvious signs of distress and damage to property etc. This narrow focus worked *against* the responsibilities of officers to protect and offer (emotional) support to victims. Findings which have been identified by recent inspections into the police response to DA (HMIC, 2014, 2015b). For example, officers reported finding non-physical forms of DA such as emotional abuse and trauma significantly more challenging to detect and manage. They therefore relied heavily on the victim to speak and give evidence to officers, which they were often reluctant or unable to do. This focus on the visible signs of abuse is a key finding from this study, given that most of the abuse and trauma suffered by children is emotional and/or psychological in nature, living with coercive and controlling behaviour (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012), therefore there is a much greater likelihood that child victims will go unnoticed by police:

They [children] are more difficult, because it is easy for me to turn up to a domestic incident where you know it is quite clear that something physical has happened and we don’t need a statement from the victim or even a verbal complaint, if we see something and we think [...] we can [make an] arrest [...] and deal with [that], they are off and they are away, and that is that dealt with, but you try walking into something where somebody – it’s not physical, it’s mental. You wouldn’t get an arrest like that into custody because there is no evidence there, unless somebody gives you evidence. (LPT6, male, L372-377)

Officers reported that such situations left them with limited or no power to pursue a criminal investigation and prosecution, demonstrating decision-making. Officers’ behaviour appeared authoritative and detached, lacking *empathy and empathetic concern* (SOA6) for the human context and the complexity of DA and treating it more as an

objective legalistic process, as was evident from their accounts. Concerningly, officers did not appear to recognise that violence can sometimes escalate post-separation:

[I]f they are not willing to make a statement there is not a great deal we can do. (LPT6, male, L384)

You need to separate the parties, talk to them. You sort of have to be quite honest: 'Look, this is what I am going to do about this', rather than saying, 'Okay, look, if you don't want to tell me what has happened, that's fine'. No. To be brutally honest, we are going to deal with this whether you want to go ahead with it or not, we are going to deal with this, regardless of what the victim might think. You have to – we have a role and you have to do it. (LPT13, male, L299-301)

Six officers and two DAOs, of whom four were female and four male, reported a different experience. These officers also described the emotional labour associated with DA, but unlike their peers, they demonstrated the skills of emotional self-awareness (SA1) and self-management (SM2 & SM5) and confidence in managing these incidents. Emotions were not seen as threatening to professional practice, or as surrendering authority in any way. Rather, emotions were seen as integral to their professional identity and professional practice, especially in the context of DA, which requires officers to adapt their methods to a range of people and environments. These officers talked much more in terms of using their 'people skills', 'gut feeling' and 'rapport building' to deal with these cases:

I would say one skill I would have a lot of confidence in [is] that I am quite good at reading people – I would be quite perceptive of people. (LPT9, female, L516-517)

I have a lot of experience and you know how to – maybe if you are in a tense situation and you go to deal with someone, you need to be more calm, in a different set of circumstances, you just bring it down. You are very aware of your own body, your own mind, conscious of the fact that you shouldn't carry one incident to the next because you are dealing with a totally different incident, a totally different person. So it is almost like you come to the end of an episode and you stop, rewind and start again, and just reset. So I guess having good mental awareness of your own body. (LPT18, male, L173-179).

In addition to understanding the complexity of DA, and importantly, their own emotional reactions to these situations; these officers demonstrated empathy, which informed their professional response, enabling them to go beyond a traditional criminal justice approach and to see each incident as an opportunity to offer support and care to victims rather than feeling dejected and frustrated. Empathy helped build trust and establish relationships that formed an integral and fundamental part of police action and response to DA:

[I]f [...] the person says nothing has happened, no complaints, no statement, you can think, Okay, I can understand where you are coming from, but at the same time still *offering them all the support* and advice. We have cards that we can give with all the help numbers and all the charities and agencies that can help them; maybe just discreetly hand over. So it does help you to understand the victim more in those types of scenarios. (LPT12, male, L251-255; emphasis added)

I suppose that is why whenever I am speaking to them and it is not like telling them you need to do anything, it is just telling them you understand. (LPT8, female, L503-504)

These officers also appeared much more confident about detecting the signs of and managing emotional abuse and trauma, which most officers in this study found significantly challenging and difficult to discuss:

[W]hen you are going to a domestic incident, or an incident of domestic abuse, you don't just focus on, is there a bruise, you have to look a bit deeper at – you know, you have to ask your controller, well, is this the first incident, what has happened in previous incidents, what is the type of abuse here, is it a physical abuse, or is it a psychological abuse, what is happening here. So you do have to do a lot of delving into that. (LPT18, male, L497-501)

Understanding and responding to the needs of others involves some of the most difficult work of all. Despite claims that 'empathy comes naturally', it takes certain qualities and arduous mental effort to get into another person's mind and then respond with compassion rather than judgement. As Cooper and Lousada (2005, p. 167) have noted, 'emotional intelligence is not about less-or-more action, but about action arising from a particular kind of thoughtfulness; thoughtfulness emanating from feeling'. Many victims report that emotional and psychological abuse is often much more damaging than physical abuse (Lagdon et al., 2014); the ability to detect and respond to the signs of emotional abuse and trauma is critical to the delivery of an effective police response, revealing the emotional complexities of relating to victims in this context. Without this perspective, victims remain unprotected and therefore at risk. While most officers involved in this study described DA as a significantly challenging context emotionally – indeed, many reported a clear dislike for attending these incidents – when studied through the lens of EI, the findings demonstrate clear differences amongst officers in terms of how they recognised (Self-Awareness – SA1), understood and managed the emotions and emotional labour associated with DA (Self-Management – SM2 & SM5), and in their

ability to recognise and understand the thoughts and feelings of others (Social Awareness – Empathy SOA6). Those officers who sought to detach emotionally and focused primarily on the criminal justice aspect of these cases found detecting and managing emotional abuse and trauma significantly challenging. Others for whom emotional self-awareness and knowledge were integrated into their professional practice, reported higher levels of empathy and confidence in their ability to handle incidents involving this type of abuse. These officers routinely offered support which went beyond law enforcement, such as picking up on evidence of emotional abuse and trauma, providing information about other services and agencies (e.g. Women’s Aid) and leaving their contact details with victims in case they needed help in future. It was evident in officers’ testimonies that EI related skills (Emotional Self-Awareness, Self-Management and Social Awareness – Empathy & Relationship Management) appeared to be a key ingredient and contribute to the efficacy and professional practice of officers at DA incidents. The implications of these findings for children – the focus of this study – are discussed next.

7.4 Police Officers’ Experiences of Responding to Children

Safeguarding children is a key priority for police officers attending incidents of DA and represents a ‘key moment’ (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221) to enhance their safety. Reflecting on the findings from the interviews with officers, two key themes emerge: the different ways in which officers perceived children and the safeguarding activities officers undertook with children. Importantly for this study, the data suggests that such perceptual differences reflect the relative competency of the officers in relation to the key EI based skills, and in particular self-awareness (SA1) and social awareness – Empathy (SOA6). Significantly, those officers who demonstrated EI recognised the emotional impact of DA on children and saw them as ‘victims’ in their own right, while those officers in whom EI was significantly weaker perceived children as ‘witnesses’, and the support they offered to children was weak, and sometimes damaging, as a result.

Officers who saw their role as part of a criminal justice approach to DA and sought to emotionally ‘detach’ from the situation perceived children present at domestic incidents

as ‘witnesses’, unless they had been physically injured, supporting the findings from previous research (Buckley et al., 2007; McGee, 2000, Mullender, 2002; Richarson_Foster et al., 2012; Överlien & Aas, 2016). Child victims of DA are more likely to suffer emotional and psychological injury than physical harm. Of the 15 children who took part in this study, for example, three had experienced physical abuse; all reported emotional distress. If, for whatever reason, officers fail to detect signs of emotional harm, they run the risk not only of failing to protect the vulnerable, but of inadvertently perpetuating if not compounding the abuse by failing to see children as victims, too. If the children were asleep when police arrived, as children often are when the police call to an incident, these officers assumed they were unaware of what had taken place. Consequently, the primary focus of these officers was on the adult victims. The focus on adult need creates a significant gap in service delivery which has implications not only for the health and wellbeing of these children and their families but for confidence in and attitudes towards the police.

A deficit of EI was not evident in all officers, however. Significantly, those officers with innate interpersonal skills, despite a lack of training and proceduralistic culture, were more likely to recognise and respond to signs of distress in the children present in the home and to identify them as victims. The evidence from their testimonies suggests that EI-related skills (i.e. emotional self-awareness, self-management (emotional self-control & adaptability) and social-awareness (empathy)) contributed to their efficacy and professional practice at DA incidents.

As reported in Section 7.3.2, Section One, officers revealed that DA is unlike any other form of police work, because it invokes such intense emotions and involves such a high degree of emotional labour. Officers managed this challenge in various ways, each of which had important implications for how they understood and discharged their professional role.

Two major themes emerged from analysis of the data from interviews with police officers. These are discussed in turn below.

7.4.1 Witness or victim? Officers' perceptions of children at incidents of DA

The findings revealed that children were often present at incidents of DA, especially younger children who were more likely to be at home, upstairs in bed or in their bedroom when the police arrived at the home. As discussed in Section One, incidents often involved serious levels of violence and abuse. Regardless of their gender and whether or not they had children of their own, most of the officers in this study reported experiencing a greater emotional load when children were present. Reflecting on these experiences, officers described these incidents as much more challenging to deal with, because they witnessed children living in difficult and upsetting circumstances.

Differences between officers in terms of how they perceived children at incidents of DA had important implications for their assessment of and response to the needs of those children. The majority of officers in this study described children as 'witnesses'. Importantly for this study, children were not reported as 'victims' and were frequently marginalised; unless they had been physically injured or harmed as a result of the incident, engagement with them was viewed as a tick box exercise, or as an additional obstacle to police dealing with the incident. Their role focused on enforcing the law and emotional support provision, which was seen as the role of Social Services:

[S]ometimes the kids, to be honest, they are not forgotten about, but you know, you think, what are we going to do with these kids? (LPT3, male, L889-890)

[N]ine times out of ten when you respond to a domestic, the kids aren't physically present, although you know that they are there and you go and check on them, and you know that they have probably heard things. [...] [U]sually our real input is taking the details, making sure they are okay and normally refer it to Social Services because there is only so much that we can do. (LPT14, female, 897-901)

Whilst it makes it more emotional for everybody involved, it is still – it doesn't make it much different. You go in and you have a job to do; if you identify that something has happened, you deal with it. Yes, it is hard if you are taking somebody's mother or father away for what has happened and the kids aren't understanding, it is hard, but we have to do it. (LPT13, male, L386-389)

Describing children as 'witnesses' created a great deal of tension and uncertainty around officers speaking with children on their own (i.e. without another officer present) which they felt conflicted with the PSNI's safeguarding protocols in relation to taking statements and gathering evidence. For some children, this may be a matter of great significance

(being recognised as a victim separate from adults and as a person with rights) as was highlighted in this study, but what is being proposed with regard to contact between children and officers would not conflict with any criminal investigation. With regard to safeguarding protocols, it would appear important to examine within the context of DA:

I suppose we are always slightly wary of – you know, you will go up and talk to the child, but you always have this the whole appropriate adult thing, you don't want to be talking to a child too much on their own, but I will always go up and check that they are sleeping. I don't generally wake them. (LPT17, female, L708-711)

This anxiety was shared by another officer who described her experiences involving children in similar terms:

[I]t is hard to know sometimes what to do with them. Should you be speaking to them? Do you really want to take them into a room on their own and ask them what happened? Should you do that? How do you make this easier for the kid? You want to go in there and arrest their dad; they are there; should you move them into another room? But I do feel it is hard just to know what to do with kids sometimes, just from a kid's point of view, not just even domestics in anything. It is something that I would rather deal with, a suspect maybe kicking off or something, it is easy to know what you do there, but with kids it is hard to, sort of, because you don't want to make things worse for them. It gets a bit messy, so it does, when kids are involved in things. (LPT15, female, L854-856)

The majority of male officers who described their role in terms of criminal justice and enforcing the law preferred to send the female officers to check on children, perceiving them as more effective in relating to children and asking how they were feeling. This suggests that male officers appear to be much less confident than their female peers in their ability to engage with and relate to children on an emotional level. These findings support more traditional 'masculine' models of policing where there is a stronger focus on crime fighting tasks, and organisational culture within policing, discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis (McCarthy, 2013; Smith, 1989; Rowe, 2014) that are perceived as more legitimate. However, as the findings that follow and the interviews with children will attest, gender was not a factor in the police response to DA; both male and female officers demonstrated competency linked to EI related skills: 'Gender, clearly, is not neural destiny' (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008, p. 4):

So generally you will make sure there are female officers there and they would be the ones that would check, eyes on the kids. (LPT4, male, L712-713)

[I]f there are kids involved you sort of get a female officer to deal with the kids because nobody wants to see, no kid wants me coming in and talking to them looking like this [the uniform and carrying all the gear including a gun] (LPT6, male, L473-476)

Six officers and two DAOs, who described their role in terms of a victim-centred approach, expressed a different attitude toward children. Regardless of gender and whether or not they had children of their own, this attitude was reflected in how they assessed and responded to them. These officers referred to children as ‘victims’ in their accounts in the same way as they spoke about adult victims in the household, and demonstrated greater levels of self-awareness and confidence in their ability to relate with children in this context. Most importantly, they recognised that children do not have to be physically abused or harmed to be impacted by DA. In so doing, they recognised the emotional abuse and trauma suffered by children goes beyond a ‘violent incident model’ (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012). Two male officers explicitly recognised that children may not always show the signs of emotional abuse and trauma, an observation which underscored the need for meaningful engagement by officers with children, reflecting a key theme to emerge from the interviews with children themselves. Again, these findings testify to embedding skills such as EI into training and recruitment exercises with officers:

[I]t might just be a verbal argument between a mum and a dad, or dad and dad, or whatever, but somebody is upstairs, it is still affecting them, so they [children] are still *victims* essentially. They may not have any direct involvement in it, but it is still not a nice thing for them to deal with, which on one occasion, it is probably not too bad, again, you need to find out, this could be our first incident with it but it could be something that has gone on every day for the past six years and that is why we like to get everybody’s details. (LPT5, male, L685-690; emphasis added)

[Y]ou could come to a house where there are children who are not in the thick of it but they have obviously witnessed what has happened and again you have to consider how they are feeling, what they are thinking, separate them, but reassure them: Everything is okay, we just need to talk to you; those are just basic sort of skills, communication skills. [...] [Y]ou have to try and remember, there are other people in the house and it is a broader issue because for us it is often, Get a statement, get the person to custody, send them to interview, get them to court, court will deal with the issue. But there is obviously more to a family. (LPT18, male, L675-679, 692-694)

7.4.2 'Checking' on the welfare of children

The findings in the previous section, which revealed that most officers where EI based skills (self-awareness and social awareness) were absent or poorly developed, perceived children as outside the abuse unless they have been physically injured, had a direct bearing on how officers responded to children present at incidents of DA, particularly in relation to their decision making and risk assessment of those children. Data from the CS data in which a child had experienced significant physical and emotional trauma but had received minimal contact or enquiry about his emotional state from the officer provided powerful evidence that in many cases risk assessment involved establishing the whereabouts of any children, checking that they were okay and had not been physically injured and taking a note of their details (name and date of birth) simply in order to record them on the system. The findings with children highlighted the significance of speaking with children within this context, not doing so had negative consequences for children on their emotional reactions to DA incidents and self-perception in both the short term and longer term (Devaney et al., 2013). What is also very clear from these findings with officers is the lack of recognition children receive as independent citizens with needs and rights equal to adults despite legal frameworks which acknowledge and protect these needs and rights (Byrne, 2016; UNCRC, 1989). Officers reported that most children were asleep when they arrived and that they were happy not to wake them up, a response underpinned by the belief that sleeping children would not have been aware of anything taking place in the house. Officers reported leaving Social Services to deal with children, which could take up to a few days:

I would tend to, you know, not really go near the kids, other than to check on where they are, whether they are bed or not, to make sure that they are okay and there was nothing wrong and contact Social Services and whatever – whenever you are clearing the thing up. (LPT6, male, L470-472)

It is easier to think that Social Services will deal with the kids, but you know it is up to us to check on their welfare, if they are in bed. To be honest, it probably all happens when they are in bed as well. (LPT3, male, L913-914)

So there is only so much that we can do in relation to the kids because we are basically there to make sure that they are physically okay and to try and reassure them that they are safe. But whether or not they have heard what has happened, or, you know, or whether they are emotionally okay, there is not very much that we

can do to determine that. [. . .] I am probably more focused with actually dealing with the actual domestic. (LPT14, female, L904-908, 945-946)

Eight officers (four female and four male) had a completely different perspective on and attitudes towards children present at domestic incidents. Importantly, these officers were more likely to report a greater level of awareness and understanding of the emotional and psychological burden of DA on children, leading to increased contact and communication with children beyond simply recording their details and ‘putting them on the system’ (LPT15, female, L738). Unlike their less emotionally confident colleagues, these officers also preferred to wake children who are asleep when they call to the house:

[I] think it is about building up a rapport with children as well. You don’t just suddenly go in and delve straight into, you know, maybe it is about having a wee conversation about ‘Oh, what’s that you are watching on the TV?’ or you know, talking to them as a wee person. (DAO1, female, L876-878)

I think you have to be thorough. It is not enough, some people might say, [to] open the door and look in the room, Oh, there is a child in the bed, that’s fine, but you have to really switch on the lights, you know? Like I said, I have encountered kids before, not in domestics, but in different incidents where they have had blood on them, or I have been to domestics where there has been blood in the house, so you have to, I suppose, get eyes on the children. If they wake up, okay, we obviously need to check and make sure that they are alive and well and they are breathing, what their emotional mind set is, if they are sleeping, if they are happy, is there anything wrong there, is there any blood, you know. [...] Even though the child is not of an age where they can communicate, nevertheless it was very traumatic. Babies can sort of pick up those emotions and things, and that was a pretty horrible incident. (LPT18, male, L718-724, 736-738)

One male officer spoke of an incident he attended involving a six-year-old boy which clearly demonstrates that children do not always show visible signs of emotional distress and underscores the importance of meaningful engagement with children:

One incident where there has been a child there, now four of us arrived; it was quite serious in terms of physical abuse [...] as everybody has went running in and I have seen this wee lad just standing on the stairs himself, he wasn’t crying or nothing. [...] There was a big enough scene in the living room [...] but because there was a lot of them in anyway and then he is just standing there, he didn’t seem – the shock on his face initially I thought was, Oh, there’s police. [...] Once he started speaking to me, he was fine for a good five minutes and then he just broke down. He was six years old but there was no bruising or anything. But it transpired, once we brought him outside, anyway, because there was a bit of a rumpus started as more and more police were arriving [...] it turned out that he has, all his life, has basically growing up watching what was going on in the house [...]. (LPT5, male, L405-421)

These officers spoke of their professional responsibility not only to speak with children to assess their needs but also to collect as much information from them as possible to record on the DASH form to assist other agencies such as Social Services:

What am I looking for in that circumstance, what do I need to obtain here, is it information regarding the welfare of the child, is it information pertaining to the investigation, is it information that I need to refer to Social Services [...]? (LPT18, male, L883-885)

One male officer spoke of the opportunity to show ‘the human side’ of officers and thereby reduce the fear toward police that is commonly instilled by adults in children:

You know, maybe take your hat off, put it on their head, or do the human side of things. Sometimes that is what I do with kids. (LPT18, male, L342-343)

Their accounts attested to the suffering they themselves had experienced after attending DA incidents involving children, and their strong sense of having a professional duty to not ignore the impact of the abuse on the children present and simply pass this responsibility on to Social Services. Empathy was not an easy or comfortable option for these officers, yet they frequently spoke of the confidence EI based skills had brought to their encounters with children and to their professional role. These findings also support previous research (Chapter 2) demonstrating the ‘courage’ (Överlien & Aas, 2016, p. 442) required by officers when attending incidents where children are present. Officers frequently expressed a caring attitude toward children and a desire to do their utmost to help them. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating a correlation between EI and job commitment and engagement (the antithesis of burnout) (Brunetto et al., 2012, p. 430). These officers did not suppress emotional reactions to these encounters, they possessed a level of self-awareness which enabled them to manage emotions effectively. Furthermore, this self-awareness was related to communication and higher levels of empathy with children which was a critical source of comfort and reassurance for children. For these officers, checking on children went beyond simply recording their details; they stressed the importance of waking children if they were asleep and speaking with them to make sure they were okay, physically and emotionally. Officers referred explicitly to EI-based competencies (Self-Awareness, Self-Management and Social Awareness – Empathy) as the core skills that had been most effective in their professional role as police officers. These findings, highlighted in this chapter, clearly indicate that EI-related skills,

together with a more nuanced, victim- or 'people'-oriented approach, are integral to the effective policing of incidents involving DA and to service delivery generally, particularly when children are present, and the limitations of the criminal justice approach to DA.

The findings in this study highlight the utility of adopting a qualitative approach to the use of EI in the study design. The data clearly demonstrated how the components of EI were evidenced that could not have been achieved using a quantitative approach. Critically, a qualitative approach provided vivid descriptions of the personal and contextual factors which impact how emotions are experienced for police officers within this context (Concoran & Tormey, 2012).

Provocatively, the theoretical approach to this study, EI, raises some important questions about how we as a society think about the role of a police officer (criminal justice orientation or helping/service orientation) and the knowledge and the skills that are recognised by the police service, particularly during recruitment exercises, as necessary to effectively perform that role (Rowe, 2014). These findings challenge the question regarding the compatibility of EI and police work. In a profession that remains highly gendered, attitudes concerning emotion and what are commonly referred to as 'soft skills' do present some challenges; as attitudes to emotions and 'soft skills' may be viewed as ancillary, even disruptive, to the role of policing. Based on the findings here, EI may offer a valuable opportunity to improve outcomes for children living with DA and in this new political and social landscape making increasing demands on policing resources, accountability processes and legitimacy. Understanding and responding to the needs of others involves some of the most difficult work of all which becomes clearly evident within the context of DA, especially when children are involved. The ability to show empathy to another, requires exposing ourselves to that suffering. Despite claims that 'empathy comes naturally', it takes certain qualities and arduous mental effort to get into another person's mind and then respond with compassion rather than judgement. The competencies within Goleman and Boyatzis model of EI helps individuals recognise their strengths and weaknesses, and situations such as DA that may trigger intense emotions, as demonstrated in the studies reviewed in this paper. As Cooper and Lousada (2005, p. 167) have noted, 'emotional intelligence is not about less-or-more action, but about action

arising from a particular kind of thoughtfulness; thoughtfulness emanating from feeling'. EI may also help to counterbalance a system driven by processes, promoting a more 'human face' of the police service and officers. As Ashurst (2011) asserts, emotional work and emotional intelligence may need to be different for various fields of professional practice. Indeed, the findings reported here makes a case for the development of EI to be an integral part of the recruitment and training practices of future and current officers. By focusing attention on the issue of emotions and EI within the context of DA and policing in a more conscious and explicit way, we can begin to treat it as an area of professional competency and give police officers a language to think about and discuss key aspects of their work. Given the importance of the police response for children, EI may create new understandings and, importantly, inform training and capacity building designed to improve the ability of officers to relate to children in ways which are perceived as helpful. EI may offer an important and innovative opportunity for future research in this field.

7.5 Police Officers' Perceptions of the Content and Quality of DA Training

All 20 officers in this study reported that attending incidents of DA (or 'domestics') represented a core part of their work. Some of the officers stated that while more violent incidents were a much rarer occurrence, they often dealt with what they perceived as lower-level, minor incidents. Many officers felt these incidents often did not warrant police resources and did not perceive them as 'genuine' domestics.

As student officers at Garnerville Police Training College in Northern Ireland, they typically took part in a one-to-two-day training course on DA. This training focused primarily on law enforcement and the standard procedural protocol discharged by officers at incidents of DA, as well as how to complete Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) form and basic information on the types of abuse and the cycle of violence. Training post-graduation did not occur often; indeed, many officers could not recall receiving any training relating to DA after graduation:

It was more geared just towards the adults and specifically towards the victim in the domestic abuse, but there are protocols in place, you know, service procedures regarding domestic abuse. (LPT12, male, L295-296)

[It] is more procedures in when you attend, separate them, speak to the lady in one room and the male in another room, you know, those sort of things – are there children in the house present. The main thing is to get the offender away for that night at least. Now, if there are any injuries or anything, the offender has to get arrested, but if there is not and it was just verbals, you have to separate them for that night and there is just a form you fill out, a DASH form [...]. (LPT16, female, L315-319)

The PSNI's own internal District Training Team deliver training to officers on legislation and procedural updates in relation to DA, such as the DASH form and more recently, in relation to dealing with ethnic minority groups and honour-based violent crime. Only one female LPT officer had recently attended enhanced training on DA, which included a focus on withdrawal statements (retracting a statement made to police) and the DASH form. One DAO also spoke about the value of the enhanced DA training, especially in relation to enhancing her understanding of the rationale behind the questions included on the DASH form and the importance of completing it at incidents of DA:

Well, whenever the police go out to domestics, you are probably aware they often fill out a DASH form, but I think it [CAADA training: Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse] really brings that to life, so [...] you actually understand why these documents are important, what they could be indicative of, and the really key things that you are looking for. (DVO2, female, L525-528)

A majority of officers also talked about having to complete mandatory National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT) on-line training as part of their professional development, which from time to time included modules on DA. However, officers did not speak positively about the utility of this training, which they described as a 'tick-box exercise' that could require a considerable amount of time to complete; it was strongly felt this was not time well spent.

They are totally useless because people just [...] send out [a message], 'Please complete these courses in a certain period of time' [...]. [A]t the minute there is a big push on to have all their courses completed, everybody is click, click, click and trying to wing the questions at the end [...]. [T]his is one of our training rooms and someone comes in and talks about something that is more useful, you are getting it first-hand and you can ask questions and they can interact with you. (LPT3, male, L546-551)

The most efficacious form of “training” in relation to DA reported by the majority of officers in this study was attending calls and working alongside other, more experienced colleagues; some officers spoke of the variety of approaches officers took to their job in an operational environment that relies heavily on collaborative decision-making:

The most useful thing for the job is actually going out and getting the experience and dealing with it. (LPT1, male, L379-380)

Whilst some officers did acknowledge the challenges of creating training that reflects the realities of DA, there was a strong sense from the participants in this study that the professional training they had received, both as a student officer and subsequently, provided nothing more than a basic level of professional knowledge, was focused on processes and which some officers felt did not adequately prepare them for the realities of their job:

The domestic abuse training is a lot like the training in Garnerville, in that it seems to be – it should be designed to prepare you for being out on the ground and to enable you to do your job to the best of your ability. It’s not – it all seems to be a bit like “ass covering”, a tick-box exercise – Okay, we will talk to them about this, we will talk to them about this, we will talk to them about this. I don’t think that the training really prepares you for what you are going out to, I really don’t. I think you get your basics, your legislation, on some very shallow preparation for going out on the ground from Garnerville, but I think you really start to learn how to do the job when you get your station [...]. [T]hen you come down to the station and they have to take all the Garnerville stuff away and make you, make you into a human, make you back into a person. (LPT9, female, L392-398, 628-630)

A small number of officers explained that while having professional knowledge and skills was critical in dealing with DA, these skills alone may not be the most importance in such situations, and skills such as EI are integral to the police response, as the following quote indicates:

I rely on my own personality, I rely on my own communication skills and on my own ability to empathise and put myself in that situation, as well as being a professional police officer. (LPT18, male, L881-883)

These findings support research highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, which argued that *empathy* is of ‘paramount significance’ (Stephens & Sinden, 2007, p. 542) for officers attending incidents of DA. In this study, the majority of officers did not recall receiving any training which included specific guidance about how to handle the presence of

children; instead, they are generally instructed to record the details of children in the home and refer to Social Services:

It is easier to think that social services will deal with the kids but you know it is up to us to check on their welfare, if they are in bed, to be honest it probably all happens when they are in bed as well and it is up to you to check on those kids, because obviously when you start to write your report on it and what happened at that incident part of that is to say that you check on the kids and you know, not always sort of rouse them but just check maybe they are asleep, or you know, even if they are still alive as well. (LPT3, male, L913-918)

These findings indicate that the training officers received in relation to DA focused on a criminal justice approach and enforcing the law that is associated with processes and procedures which can become over-regulated and dehumanising. This approach to training may serve to reflect or reinforce a stereotypical perception of the role of the police and service delivery for many new officers joining the service. Some officers reported that it was not the professional knowledge they acquire that is most effective in carrying out their job but their ‘soft skills’ such as emotional self-awareness, managing emotions as part of their job role and empathy which was most valuable when attending DA incidents.

It is clear from the findings of this research that work to raise awareness of and make the ‘helping’ aspect of police service delivery more visible to both serving officers and probationers through recruitment and training exercises would have future benefits for those children living with and experiencing DA. Alongside this, building the skills and personal capacity of officers to support all victims by embedding skills such as EI into these processes is critical, demonstrated by the findings from officers. Training is a core element of Goleman and Boyatzis’s theoretical model of EI; who posits that individuals are born with a general EI that determines their capacity to develop EI through training, informing officers of the efficacy of using these skills to improve the police response to children. At present, training to develop officer attitudes to reflect this service orientation and one which focuses on developing self-awareness and self-management in order to develop empathy, a core tenet of EI, is not really being implemented. Instead, there is a stronger focus on the criminal justice and procedures at incidents of DA which may serve to reinforce more stereotyped perceptions to the job role and how officers behave at incidents of DA. Connected to these findings, increasing officers’ perceptions of their job

role and demonstrating their dual function (i.e. as enforcers of criminal justice on one hand and members of the ‘helping profession on the other) is critically important if they are to respond to DA in an effective and professional manner and importantly for this study, when children are present.

For the officers in this study, the role of a police officer is highly complex and challenging, both physically and emotionally, and especially in NI. That said, participants expressed a range of views about what it was reasonable to expect officers to do in the course of discharging their job. The majority of officers in this study described their role from a traditional criminal justice orientation; a smaller number of officers took a much broader, dual approach to the role, which they described in terms of helping and making a difference in the lives of others, reflecting more accurately the reality of police work (Rowe, 2014).

In terms of EI, the study found salient differences in how the officers in this study described their professional role (which can be broadly described as a criminal justice approach vs. a victim-centred approach), which had important implications for how they thought about and dealt with the intense emotions and emotional labour associated with DA (*self-awareness, self-management*); how they understood and discharged their role (*social awareness – empathy*) and importantly for this study, how they responded to children present at incidents of DA. As argued earlier, these findings raise important questions about how we as a society think about the role of a police officer (criminal justice orientation or helping/service orientation) and the knowledge and the skills that are recognised by the police service, particularly during recruitment exercises, as necessary to effectively perform that role (Rowe, 2014). Intrinsically, these findings represent a strong challenge to ‘the cult of masculinity’ (Silvestri, 2017) and more masculine crime fighting approaches which are considered more legitimate within policing, discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.4).

The findings presented in this chapter, highlight a series of separate yet interconnected factors which may influence police attitudes and behaviour at incidents of DA: personal qualities, organisational culture and the training new officers receive. Given the criticism directed at the police response to DA (HMIC, 2014) concerning the lack of empathy

shown by officers, embedding skills such as EI into officer training and recruitment would appear to be urgently required.

7.6 Summary

In many ways, the findings from interviews with children are a counterpoint to the findings from interviews with officers exploring how they describe their professional role and experienced, understood and responded to incidents of DA. A large number of officers expressed a strong dislike for attending ‘domestics’, because of the intense emotions and emotional labour involved in policing these cases, which, because of the nature of the relationship between victim and perpetrator, are highly complex and are generally characterised by low prosecution rates that underscore the limitations of the criminal justice approach to DA. As outlined in Chapter 1, it is important that officers’ emotional experiences are understood for the vital role they play in shaping how police officers’ respond to DA incidents involving children. The findings in this thesis draw out a number of important implications within the context of the theoretical framework: the relevance of EI to policing DA incidents where children are present, challenging attitudes and perceptions of emotion and professional job role and the training of officers in responding to DA. As such, the data suggests that EI related skills (Self-Awareness, Self-Management & Social Awareness – Empathy) are integral to policing ‘domestics’ and a key element of an effective police response which supports all victims involved. Significant differences emerged between officers and their ability to recognise emotion (Self-Awareness) and to manage the intense emotions associated with DA effectively (Self-Management) which then enabled officers to provide empathy (Social Awareness) and meet children’s needs for reassurance and comfort at a ‘key moment’ (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012) discussed later in this chapter. These components of EI enhanced officer’s professional objectivity and decision making at instances of DA and sense of professionalism, in line with organisational strategies (DHSSPS & DOJ, 2016) and the local government’s ‘Victims Charter’ (DOJ, 2015).

In exploring the final research question, the findings with officers revealed salient differences in how officers described their professional role (i.e. the criminal justice approach vs. a victim-centred approach). Unsurprisingly, officers who described their role from a criminal justice orientation responded, inherently, to these cases in a very prescriptive manner. Many officers expressed that emotions were not relevant to their role and could negatively impact on their ability to do their job effectively and professionally. Previous research in this area highlighted key differences in officer's attitude to DA incidents (Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012) however, exploring this issue through the lens of EI offers insight into how these key differences may emerge. These officers approached these incidents from a 'violent incident model' (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012) negating the emotional and psychological abuse, and coercive and controlling behaviour that is often so damaging to the wellbeing of victims and importantly for this study, for child victims. Furthermore, the findings reported here support previous research, which emphasised the important role of emotion in police work (Drodge & Murphy, 2002) and effective job performance (Brunetto et al., 2012; Ebrahim Al Ali, et al., 2012). A number of officers reported 'detaching' from their emotions and their more 'human side', viewing emotions as inessential to their role if not at odds with the concept of 'professional objectivity', which is a core principle of policing (College of Policing, 2014, p. 3). From this perspective, these police officers tend to view their emotions associated with DA as potentially overwhelming and therefore threaten to compromise professional judgement, despite the fact that, as EI theorists have noted, '[e]motional forces continue to be active in the process of deliberation and decision-making, but in an unacknowledged manner' (Cooper & Lousada, 2005, p. 166).

It is also important to state that officers reported they 'detach' from emotions in order to protect themselves from the intense emotions and emotional labour associated with policing DA incidents. However, such a strategy may result in a psychological concept referred to as 'emotional dissonance' (discrepancy between felt and expressed emotions) (Adams & Buck, 2010, p. 1031) placing officers are at an increased risk of 'burnout' (emotional exhaustion stemming from emotional demands) (Brunetto et al., 2012). The concepts within Goleman's EI model (self-awareness and self-management) act to protect individuals whose job role involves high levels of emotional labour (Ricca, 2004; Vuzzo,

2010). The results found that a smaller number of officers who demonstrated self-awareness, self-management and empathy reported these skills as intrinsic to their ability to manage DA incidents effectively and respond to the needs of victims. Emotions were not viewed by these officers as antithetical to their professional role or to professional objectivity; on the contrary, they believed their ability to recognise (self-awareness) to manage emotions rather than ‘detach’ from them, enhanced their professional skills and practice at incidents of DA. This group of officers had a much greater awareness and understanding of the complexity of DA; importantly, they were able to detect the signs of emotional abuse and trauma and understood that this can often obscure the signs of harm and distress. These officers offered emotional support underpinned by empathy, were consciously non-judgemental and provided victims with information about services in the community, such as Women’s Aid as well as their own contact details.

Such misconceptions about the role and value of emotions and emotional self-awareness (the cornerstone of empathy) have led officers to focus narrowly on the physical signs of abuse and a criminal justice approach to policing DA. As discussed earlier, such findings seek to highlight the importance of understanding emotions within the context of policing. As the data in this study will attest, emotional abuse and trauma were not taken as seriously or acknowledged by officers in the same way as physical violence and injury, which proved to be a key factor impacting the police response to children. These findings are consistent with those from previous studies highlighting the attitude and behaviour of officers at incidents of DA, which reported a concerning lack of recognition and empathy toward children and their experiences resulting in limited engagement (HMIC, 2014, 2017); these trends are clearly evident in the case study data from this research. Moreover, officers spoke about using their policing authority and powers of arrest to control these situations, rather than also forging relationships with victims and offering support. Needless to say, EI-related skills (in particular Self-Awareness & Self-Management – Emotional self-control) were poorly evidenced in this group of officers. The children’s testimonies reveal how officers can improve their response by implementing relatively informal but effective measures that help children feel both recognised as victims rather than passive witnesses and respected as individuals. The experiences of children in this study provide unequivocal evidence that officers can contribute positively to the

experience of children at incidents of DA and be a 'significant adult' in their lives (Devaney, 2015, p. 91). These findings challenge the misconception that communicating with children about sensitive issues will upset and/or damage them which has important implications for policy and practice with children not just within the context of DA. Informing children not only helps to protect their emotional and psychological wellbeing in the short term and mitigate against the impact of their experience of DA in the longer term. The findings in this thesis clearly demonstrate the efficacy and importance of interpersonal skills such as EI impact the police response to DA where children are present.

The aim of this thesis has been to explore how police officers understand and respond to such children, and how officers can develop their practice in order to respond more effectively to DA in ways that are helpful to children. By articulating the experiences of children and police officers, this thesis has fulfilled this aim.

CHAPTER 8: KEY MESSAGES

8.1 Key Messages and Contribution to the Topic of Children's Experiences of the Police Response to DA in NI

This chapter outlines the contribution and three key messages that emerged from this thesis from a theoretical, conceptual and methodological perspective. It concludes with the researcher's personal reflections on the research and acknowledges its limitations.

This thesis makes a number of important contributions to *Theory*: the use of EI to better understand the 'interactions' between police officers' and children; *Conceptual positioning of children within the context of DA*: perception of children as 'victims' not 'passive witnesses' of DA, applying a children's rights perspective (UNCRC, 1989). *Methodology*: being able to involve younger children through the use of creative methods and case study design. These 'key messages' are discussed in turn below.

8.2 Key Message 1: Emotional Intelligence and the Relevance for Police Officers

A recent high-profile government inspection report examining the police response to DA highlighted a number of shortcomings. A key recommendation from this report stated that there was a need to develop areas of training and development for police officers to include a 'specific focus on *empathy* with victims' (HMIC, 2014, p. 23, emphasis added). Furthermore, the presence and needs of children at incidents of DA has been largely ignored; with police officers often failing to recognise children as victims with needs and rights separate to the adult victims involved. However, despite this report by the HMIC (2014, 2017) calling for reform to the police response to DA, there is a lack of understanding how these shortcomings would be addressed.

This study makes a unique and important contribution to knowledge that we previously did not know before this study was conducted in relation to policing response to DA incidents where children are present. Examining the central aims and objectives of this

thesis through the psychological lens of emotional intelligence (EI), was significant and meaningful in light of the growing awareness of the relationship between emotion and performance in policing (Drodge & Murphy, 2002; Hawkins & Dulewicz, 2007). The application of EI to this area of police practice offers a theoretical framework from which to address the issues highlighted above (HMIC, 2014). The findings with officers demonstrated new areas and opportunities for training to improve the police response to child victims of DA adding to previous research cited here (Buckley et al., 2007; Holt et al., 2008; McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). The findings presented in this thesis highlight how the interactions between police and children represents a ‘key moment’ of change for children (Richardson-Foster et al., 2012, p. 221) which can affect their perceptions of the police as ‘helpers’ and impact the legitimacy of the police, which has particular relevance within the context of this study, NI.

Responding to incidents involving DA is different from other forms of ‘traditional’ police work. A core part of that work involves significant levels of emotional labour and unleashes intense emotions in the officers themselves. A large number of officers in this study reported ‘detaching’ from their emotions, as they were not seen as necessary for their professional role or fearing they would impact their personal effectiveness in discharging their job role. However, this had a significant impact on how officers experienced, understood and responded to DA, importantly for this study, when children were present. Ensuring that officers have the necessary skills to police these situations effectively requires those responsible for their recruitment and training to identify candidates with the personal capacity to discharge their professional responsibilities. In this study, the EI-based competencies of Self-Awareness, Self-Management and Social Awareness – Empathy were critical in supporting officers to manage these intense and complex situations effectively; importantly, they were also a key element of what children perceived as a positive police response. Those officers who demonstrated the components of EI (self-awareness, self-management & adaptability and empathy) perceived children as ‘victims’ of DA beyond a ‘violent incident model’ (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012), engaged confidently and positively with children beyond obtaining their details to record on the

system and adapted to meet their needs in a caring and sensitive manner. Importantly, EI offers the potential for this ‘key moment’ of change to be realised.

EI may help counterbalance a system driven by processes, promoting a more ‘human face’ of the police service and officers. The policing response to DA has been heavily criticised in recent years; a key part of this critique has been the poor attitude of attending officers and the lack of empathy and support shown to victims (HMIC, 2014, 2015b). Whilst developing empathy in front-line officers was a key recommendation in the College of Policing’s guidance for professional practice (Ibid., p. 23), that report did not outline how this objective would be incorporated into future training practices with officers. From a theoretical perspective, the data in this study clearly attests that EI-based competencies provide a framework for developing the skills that support officers to be more effective in their professional role, particularly at incidents of DA where children are present.

In a profession and a police culture that remain highly gendered, attitudes concerning emotion and what are commonly referred to as ‘soft skills’ on professionalism and professional objectivity do present some challenges. However, EI does not represent a threat to the professionalism of policing or professional objectivity. Furthermore, EI does not conflict with the PSNI’s safeguarding protocols or any future criminal investigation; the purpose of speaking with children independently is simply to ask if they are okay, which is clearly in the best interests of children in this context. EI offers an important opportunity for the police service to do more with less by building the personal capacity of officers to be more effective in their professional role and to deliver on the five strands of the government’s strategy to stop DA in NI, *Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy* (DHSSPS & DOJ et al., 2016, p. 42), and with particular reference to strand three, ‘Delivering Change through Responsive Services’.

Officers in this study differed significantly in their understanding of what it meant to be a police officer and what officers should be expected to do. The role of the police is rapidly changing both locally and nationally, reflecting a move away from ‘traditional’ law enforcement and increasingly towards provision of support, in a criminal justice

system that is seeking to become more victim oriented (Hales & Higgins, 2016). This transformation requires officers to adopt a different approach to service delivery, one which demands a high level of competency in relation to specific skills such as EI. Despite this trajectory, a majority of officers in this study described their role from of a criminal justice perspective. These officers demonstrated a very prescriptive attitude towards their work, almost negating the dual role of the service as stated in the policing strategy published by the PSNI, namely, to prevent crime, detect offenders *and* help protect the most vulnerable in society (PSNI, 2017). A smaller number of officers saw their role in much broader terms, defined primarily by a perception of themselves as providers of help and support to the vulnerable. What this thesis makes clear is that the process of systemic change and the implementation of the vision for policing as set out by the Patten Report (1999) take time to embed. In a post-conflict yet still divided society, some elements of policing that were affected by years of violence can linger in the collective mind of the organisation tasked with policing the streets where that violence took place. Almost 20 years after its publication, the observation that the police in NI have ‘not yet finalised the total transformation from force to service’ (Patten, 1999, p. 3) still holds true, albeit to a much lesser extent. These findings emphasise the importance of skills such as EI for policing in this new political and social landscape; making increasing demands on policing resources, accountability processes and legitimacy. The findings in this thesis also offer policing organisations a theoretical framework, EI, to contribute to these debates. As stated in Chapter 3, EI is a relatively new scientific concept, despite this, the findings here support the view that ‘the concept of emotional intelligence continues to occupy a prominent space in the [...] literature’ (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008, p. 2).

The findings from this study therefore have important implications for prospective officers. The innate interpersonal skills they possess can be tapped and developed to enable them to assist in this transformation by carrying out their role more effectively. This objective could feature more prominently both in recruitment exercises and in the training of officers, which to date has focused more heavily on law enforcement and a ‘pseudo-militaristic’ style of policing (Gibson, 2016, p. 2). There was also the criticism by a number of officers that the training they had received focused more on procedural matters rather than helping police officers to tap into their own and (adult and child)

victims' experiences e.g. the emotional/human side of the work. By achieving this may also reduce the impact of 'role ambiguity' among new and serving officers: 'When we see, as we're seeing, a significant change in the environment in which we operate, then of course there should be a significant change in the way in which we go about our business' (BBC, 1999).

Furthermore, the utility of a qualitative approach to EI provided insight and meaning to this concept with police officers, making a contribution to knowledge and interventions within the field of DA and with policing organisations more broadly. These findings highlight the utility of continuing to explore EI in a qualitative way. The added value of interdisciplinary research demonstrated here is instructive for other research of this type and in general.

As the first study of its kind to take place in NI, it also helps to increase knowledge and understanding of policing in a society transitioning from a period of protracted violence and conflict.

8.3 Key Message 2: Conceptual Positioning of Children within the Context of DA

This study was the first of its kind to explore in-depth, police-child interactions within the context of DA and within NI; making an important and original contribution to the knowledge base in this area by offering new insights to improve the police response to children.

The vivid testimonies of children in this study demonstrate that emotional and psychological abuse and the experience of living with coercive and controlling behaviour by the perpetrator (Katz, 2016; Stark, 2012) were not taken as seriously or acknowledged by police officers in this study in the same way as physical violence and injury, and yet they are no less harmful; this is a key finding in this study with regard to how children are conceptualised within the context of DA. A situation that can and must change. Challenging the persistent and damaging rhetoric and misconceptions surrounding children is a critical step towards the delivery of a professional response that is sensitive

to their experience and their needs (to be recognised as victims separate from adult victims, ask if they are okay and to be given information about what is happening). Without it, children will continue to be silenced by service providers, however unintentionally, leaving them feeling ‘invisible’ and potentially causing them further stress and emotional/psychological harm. The findings with children in this study demonstrate that they are not ‘passive witnesses’ of DA, but rather that their involvement is intimate and dynamic; this finding is consistent with those from previous research (Buckley et al., 2007; Callaghan et al., 2015; Holt et al., 2008; McGee, 2000; Mullender, 2002; Överlien & Aas, 2016; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012).

Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989) states that children have the right to receive information about matters affecting them and to have their opinion taken into account. By drawing on Lundy’s conceptualisation of Article 12 (space, voice, audience and influence), as discussed in Chapter 1, it can be seen that in their interactions with children police officers often failed to uphold this core principle of the UNCRC (1989). As ‘duty bearers’, police officers have an obligation to uphold these principles and provide children with the information they need. However, as the findings in this study show, this is not currently common practice. There is a recognition that despite progress regarding children’s independent position in society as ‘rights holders’ rather than as ‘passive and dependent on the private family’ (Tisdall & Punch, 2012), there is a significant gap between a legal commitment to the principles of the UNCRC and what actually happens in practice. This gap can be explained by three key concerns that importantly have relevance to this study: scepticism about children’s capacity (or the belief that they lack capacity) to have a meaningful input into decision making; a worry that giving children more control will undermine adult authority; and the belief that compliance and consulting children require effort (Lundy, 2007). Recognising and addressing children as independent victims of DA and ‘rights holders’ and adopting a Children’s Rights-Based Approach (CRBA) have the potential to produce better outcomes and make a significant difference in terms of protecting and supporting children in this context. As has been demonstrated by these findings, it is important to ensure that children are not only kept safe through police intervention but, that they *feel* safe. By applying EI as a framework to the training and

development of new and current officers, this would help to protect children's rights under Article 12 (UNCRC, 1989; Lundy, 2007).

Such an approach is in line with the NI government's *Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027*, a key objective of which is that children live in a society which respects their rights (Ibid., p. 80). Towards this end, officer training must focus on building awareness of the nature and impact of DA on children and of Children's Rights in the context of DA.

8.4 Key Message 3: Methodology – Building Children's Capacity

This thesis makes a valuable contribution to the discourse with regard children and DA. Firstly, the study has demonstrated that researching challenging and sensitive topics with children such as DA can be done successfully and carried out in such a way that respects children as 'victims' and as 'rights holders'. Conceptualising Article 12 as four separate yet interconnected concepts – space, voice, audience and influence (Lundy, 2007) – assists children to fully exercise their right to participate under the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Lundy's conceptualisation was used in this study to ensure respect for children as victims and to ensure their participation was meaningful. A key aspect of this effort was building the capacity of children with regard to emotion (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). Towards this end, the introduction of figurines from the movie *Inside Out* (2015) created a highly animated and nuanced dialogue around emotions and their experiences with regard to police and DA.

Furthermore, this thesis represents the first study of its kind to examine the views of children and police officers' in the context of DA and in a local context, NI, making a significant contribution to this important body of literature. Given the unique history of policing in NI, outlined in Chapter 1, the findings in this thesis provide unique insights into the legacy of the troubles for officers and how EI can offer important opportunities for change. Evidence for this was found in the interviews with children. To date, research

internationally exploring the nature of encounters between children and police officers has been limited. What studies have been published typically focus on the experiences of older children. This thesis makes a valuable contribution to the literature by beginning to address this gap and through its inclusion of younger children (under the age of 8 years old), who are at most risk due to the significant impact of DA on children's development. Younger children are most at risk of being excluded from research from professionals who question their capacity to take part in this type of research. This research demonstrates how younger children can and should take part as they have valuable insights to offer. The current research also contributes valuably to the methodology through the introduction of a case study approach that captures the views of children and officers involved in the same incident. This methodology brought to life the disparity between what children need and what they currently receive from the policing response. Furthermore, provided insight into how differences in the police response to children impact how they experience the police. The methods used in this study highlights the importance of including children's voices to ensure that policy and services are appropriate and sensitive to their needs.

The value of including children's voices and experiences of DA has significant value and relevance for practitioners and professionals working in this area, of which Women's Aid and the PSNI are just two. In articulating their experiences, children highlighted how important and meaningful it was for them to be able to tell their own stories rather than have to rely the voice of a parent or another adult.

By giving voice to the experiences of children and officers, this thesis hopes to contribute to policy development and training practice by those organisations that seek to benefit from this work, policing organisations and those working directly with victims of DA, especially children, and within the context of the local government strategies (Northern Ireland Executive & Department of Education, 2016; DHSSPS & DOJ, 2016). Given the nature of the subject matter, which is a world-wide concern, these findings have relevance to audiences beyond that of NI. The theoretical implications of EI and policing within the context of DA is unique and novel and offers an opportunity for knowledge mobilisation not just within the field of DA but has a much wider application for policing in general. The researcher has presented the findings from this study at various domestic and

international conferences (refer to p. xiv) as well as to relevant organisations and audiences, including Women's Aid, the PSNI and the Independent Advisory Group for Domestic and Sexual Violence, which includes representatives from the PSNI's Public Protection Units, the Court Service, Victim Support and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland. The researcher plans to publish a number of journal articles relating to this thesis.

8.5 Research Limitations

Whilst not without limitations, it is important to acknowledge that given the limited time and resources available, the complexity of the research design and its challenging subject matter, this study achieved a great deal in the field of research. However, there are a number of issues that are important to highlight.

A larger sample size and additional time to conduct further case study interviews may have produced a more nuanced account of how children and police officers experience these encounters. Whilst the benefits of working with a gatekeeper, such as Women's Aid, in terms of accessing participants in this hard-to-reach population is gratefully acknowledged, this may have had implications for the economic and ethnic diversity of the sample of children. Another limitation due to funding is the failure to include non-English-speaking children, which limited the diversity of the sample and what could be learned about their experience in NI in this context. For this reason, and because the study was conducted in only one part of the UK, in which the relationship between the public and the police is arguably unique, caution must be exercised in relation to the generalisability of the findings. That said, the findings from this study support the findings in previous research, which gives the researcher confidence that they have application and generalisability beyond the local context.

A children's rights approach has been critiqued for representing the 'majority world' and ignoring the 'minority world' – i.e. for 'introducing ideas antithetical to certain cultures and traditions' (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 250). In relation to traveller children or street

children, for example, ‘majority world’ norms are inappropriate and may in fact be damaging. Whilst there is no doubt that the introduction of the UNCRC (1989) was significant for children, it is important to consider these critiques.

8.6 Personal Reflections on the Research

The opportunity to conduct this doctoral research afforded myself a valuable opportunity to study an important issue with children and police officers in NI. I have a background in psychology and have worked with children prior to conducting this research. However, through my involvement in this study, I gained new knowledge and skills, particularly in the areas of children and domestic abuse, children’s rights and policing. This has had a profound impact both on this thesis and on my professional development as a social science researcher. My professional background informed the approach to this research in terms of its theoretical underpinnings and methodology; a genuine desire to understand and learn about the experience of children and officers was an equally important factor in shaping the research objectives and design of the study. While listening to these experiences at times was emotionally challenging, this is only to be expected, given that the strength of the findings from qualitative studies depends on the ability of the interviewer to build a relationship with the interviewee (Collins & Cooper, 2014).

I used a diary to record reflections after each interview with both children and officers. Through this process, I gained valuable insight into and respect for the officers and the difficult job they have to do, which often goes unnoticed. My engagement with children reminded myself once again of their incredible resilience and wisdom and renewed my commitment to advocate for children and Children’s Rights. Many of the children who took part in the study commented that talking about their experiences had been positive and spoke of using this opportunity to improve things for other children. This is an important objective of this thesis, and for myself.

8.7 Concluding Thoughts

Despite considerable progress with regard to the service response to victims of DA, the findings from this study show there is still a significant gap in the service response to child victims. Adopting a 'victim-focused' approach to DA is a service objective, and there was evidence of a strong desire among officers to do the right thing by children. That officers were highly motivated to take part in this study is another reason to be optimistic about the future direction of this work. That said, this study identified various shortcomings and limitations in professional practice which have been highlighted. What has become clear through the findings presented in this thesis is that a criminal justice approach will be ineffective and damaging without the personal skills to deliver it. In the spirit of genuine partnership with the PSNI and Women's Aid, three evidence-based 'key messages' drawn from the findings in this study are offered.

The 'key messages' suggested here aim to improve the police response to children at incidents of DA. The findings in this study challenges the many misconceptions surrounding children, it is critical that any future research and work with children must acknowledge children as victims and 'rights holders' and take them into account and give them a voice.

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Appendix A: Ethics/Organisation Approval Letters

SREC Study Approval Letter

School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work
Queen's University Belfast
6 College Park
Belfast
BT7 1NN
Tel 028 9097 5906
Fax 028 9097 3943
www.qub.ac.uk/soc

REF: EC/280

Date: 22 October 2015

Dear John

Title: Police Response and Understanding of Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children and Young People. A Theory for Change (Annemarie Millar)

Thank you for submitting your ethics application to the School Research Ethics Committee. The Committee has reviewed your submission and has agreed to give a favourable ethical opinion and to approve the study.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you, as Chief Investigator, that this study must be registered with the University's Human Subjects Research database. Without this registration the study will not be covered by the University indemnity insurance.

Good luck with the research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a red rectangular box. The signature appears to be 'D. Schubotz'.

Dr Dirk Schubotz

Chair

School Research Ethics Committee

SSP&SW



Women's Aid Armaghdown
Central Office
7 Downshire Place
Newry
BT34 1DZ
TEL: (028) 3025 0765
FAX: (028) 3026 9606

Annemarie Millar
Ph.D. Candidate
School of Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work
Queen's University Belfast

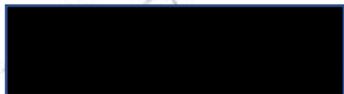
04/11/2015

To whom it may concern:

Please be assured that I can confirm, on behalf of Women's Aid Armaghdown that we are happy for the above named Ph.D. Candidate to conduct the research with our organisation in relation to:

'Police response and understanding of incidences of domestic violence involving children and young people. A theory for change.'

Kind Regards



Chief Executive Officer/

Armagh Office
39 Abbey Street
Armagh
BT61 7DY
Tel: 028 3751 1473



Portadown Office
53 William Street
Portadown
BT62 3DX
Tel: 028 3839 7979

24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline: 0800 802 1414 Email Support: 24hrsupport@dsvhelpline.org
Text support to 07797 805 839 freephone from all landlines and mobiles. Translation service available.

Approval Letter: PSNI

14 May 2015

Dear Annemarie,

I am writing on behalf of the Chief Constable to confirm that PSNI are happy to participate in your work.

We look forward to receiving a copy of your final report in due course.

Kind Regards

Sam Donaldson

Sam Donaldson
Superintendent
Chief Constable's Office
Police Service of Northern Ireland
Tel: 028 9070 0005
Mob: 07795 607 207
Email: sam.donaldson@psni.pnn.police.uk

Appendix B: Information Sheets, semi-structured interviews

Child 4-7 Years Old (Side 1)

 <p>Your mummy or the person looking after you knows you are going to have a chat with Annemarie. The only people who will know what we talk about in our chat is Annemarie and you. If it is ok with you, Annemarie will write some things down or tape record your chat with her. This is just for her to listen to in case she forgets some of your ideas. It is ok to tell Annemarie if you don't want her to tape record your chats.</p> <p>We do not have to use your real name, you can pick a name that you would like to use. It is really important that you and other people in your family are safe. If you tell me something that means you might not be safe I may have to let your mummy know so they can keep you safe but I will talk to you first if I have to do this.</p>	 <p>After your chat, you can get a snack and if you want to talk to someone about anything you talked to Annemarie about, your mum or someone you know will be there to help you.</p> <p>After talking to all the other boys and girls, Annemarie will send you a letter about what she finds out. Annemarie will also send this report to other people so that what you talked about will help other boys are girls living in families just like yours. She will not use your real name.</p>  <p>If you want to take part, you can write your name on the page with the picture of the smiley face on it. Your mum or the person looking after you will arrange a time for you to meet with Annemarie. If you have any questions you would like to ask Annemarie you can write them down and ask her at the meeting..</p> <p>Question Box!</p>	 <p>Queen's University Belfast</p> <p>Police Response to Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children and Young People.</p>   <p>Hello. My name is Annemarie. I go to a university called Queen's University Belfast. In my work I talk to children and find out what they think. My favourite colour is green and I like going to the movies.</p>
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Child 4-7 years old (Side 2)

 <p>Lots of boys and girls live in families where the adults sometimes fight and argue. Sometimes policemen or policewomen have to come to help the adults who are arguing and fighting. By working together with Annemarie, you can talk about how the police talk to children like you. It is really important to Annemarie what you think. What you tell me will help other policemen and policewomen understand about the best ways to talk to and help other boys and girls like you who live in families where sometimes the adults don't get along.</p>	 <p>I would like to talk to you because you have good ideas. We do not know a lot about what children like you think. It is very important that people like policemen and women know what children like you think. Annemarie is going to talk about -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-What do you think about policemen and policewomen where you live?-Is it easy or hard to talk to the policeman or policewoman when they come to your house when the adults in your house were fighting?-What you think are the best ways police men or policewomen can make things better for other boys and girls just like you? <p>YOUR IDEAS</p>	 <p>If you decide you would like to help Annemarie with her work, you can have a snack, then do some drawing or some other art work and when you are drawing, you can talk to Annemarie about your ideas.</p> <p>You can bring your favourite toy or teddy along to meet Annemarie.</p>  <hr/>  <p>No. It is up to you if you want to take part in Annemarie's work. If you change your mind or get fed up, you can stop at any time and it will be ok.</p>
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Child 8-15 years old (Side 1)

Your mum or the person looking after you will know you are going to have a chat with Annemarie. The only people who will know what you talk about will be Annemarie and you. If it is ok with you, Annemarie may have to write some things down and tape record your chat with her. This is just for **her to listen to in case she** forgets some of your ideas. It is ok to tell Annemarie if you don't want her to tape record your chats. **We do not have to use your real name, you can pick a name that you would like to use.** It is really important that you and other people in your family are safe. If you tell me something that means you might not be safe I may have to let your mummy know so they can keep you safe but I will talk to you first if I have to do this.

After your chat, you can get a snack and if you would like to talk to someone about anything you talked to Annemarie about, your mum or someone you know will be there to help you. After talking to all the other boys and girls, Annemarie will send you a letter about what she finds out. Annemarie will also send this report to other people so that what you talked about will help other boys are girls living in families just like yours. She will not use your real name

If you want to take part, you can write your name on the page with the picture of the smiley face on it. Your mum or the person looking after you will arrange a time for you to meet with Annemarie. If you have any questions you would like to ask Annemarie you can write them down and ask her at the meeting. Thank- you for reading this and I look forward to meeting you!

Question Box!

Queen's University
Belfast

Hello. My name is Annemarie. I am a student at a university called Queen's University Belfast. I am doing some research with children which involves talking to them and finding out what they think. My favourite colour is green and I like going to the movies.

Child 8-15 years old (Side 2)

 <p>Lots of children live in families where the adults sometimes argue and fight. Sometimes the police have to come to help the adults who are fighting. By working together with Annemarie, you can talk about what you think and feel about how police talk to children like you. <u>It is really important to Annemarie what you think.</u> What you tell me will help the police understand better about the best ways to talk to and help other children like you who live in families where sometimes the adults don't get along.</p> 	 <p>Annemarie would like to talk to you because she wants to know what it was like for you. We do not know a lot about what children think about this. It is very important that people like the police know what children think. Annemarie is going to talk about -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-What do you think about policemen and policewomen where you live?-Is it easy or hard to talk to the policeman or policewoman when they come to your house when the adults in your house were fighting?-What you think are the best ways policemen or policewomen can make things better for other boys and girls just like you? <p>YOUR IDEAS</p>	 <p>If you decide you would like to take part in Annemarie's work, before beginning your chat with Annemarie, you can have a snack. We will then do some drawing or some other art work and when you are drawing, Annemarie will ask you some simple questions. I hope you are going to enjoy chatting to Annemarie. You can bring along a favourite toy or something that is special to you to show Annemarie.</p>  <p>No. It is up to you if you want to take part in Annemarie's work. If you change your mind you can stop at any time and it will be ok.</p>
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Police Officers (Side 1)



Police Response to Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children and Young People.

I am Ph.D. research student based at Queen's University Belfast and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. This study aims to look at how police officers like you, experience and understand domestic abuse incidents involving children and young people. I would appreciate it if you would take the time to read through this information sheet carefully. It explains why this research is so important, and how, by agreeing to take part, you could help us to understand the views and experiences of police officers, who are in a unique position to intervene in the lives of children and young people exposed to domestic abuse in Northern Ireland. A large body of research evidence now shows that domestic abuse has a significant impact on the health and well-being of young children living in families where domestic abuse is present, whose effects may be carried into adulthood. Police officers are often among the first professionals many children and young people living with and experiencing domestic abuse encounter. There has been limited research looking at how police officers experience and understand these situations. This will be the first study to look at this issue in Northern Ireland. The historical context of policing in Northern Ireland make this study unique. This study is interested in looking at how police carry out their professional job role in a 'transformation from conflict' society. ***By taking part in this research, you will making an important contribution to knowledge development and understanding in this area of research.***

What is the purpose of this study?

The aim of this research is to explore the interaction between police officers and young children in order to understand police officers own experience and response to young children exposed to domestic abuse in ways they will find helpful.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are a police officer working in Northern Ireland, with experience of domestic abuse.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will then be invited to take part in a single interview which will last approximately one hour. The interview questions will relate to your experiences in your professional job role and domestic abuse involving children. With your permission this interview will be audio taped. Formal permission for this study has been obtained from the Chief Constable. Interviews will take place during working hours.

About the researcher

My name is Annemarie Millar. I am a Ph.D. research student based at Queen's University Belfast. I hold a professional qualification in Psychology; my research interests are child development and Neuropsychology. This study is funded by the Department of Employment and Learning, and is being undertaken in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be strictly confidential, stored securely and will comply with data protection guidelines. No personal information will be traced back to any individual taking part in the study. The findings from the study will be written up and published in a variety of formats but you will not be personally identifiable from anything that is written up or published. The final report will be completely anonymous. I must however inform you that if you disclose information that may result in you or anyone else being put at risk of harm I may have to inform the designated person within your organisation. If this situation should arise you will be kept fully informed.



Police Officers (Side 2)

What are the benefits of taking part?

This study represents an opportunity to make an important contribution to knowledge development and understanding of how service professionals such as yourself, experience and understand children exposed to domestic abuse. This information will help contribute to service development that will improve outcomes for children and families affected by domestic abuse. It may also provide a safe space for you to reflect on your own personal experience as a service professional.

What are the potential disadvantages of taking part?

It is hoped that there will be very few disadvantages of taking part in this study. As the research involves discussing domestic abuse involving young children, a possible concern is that you may become upset taking about some of these issues.

However, your involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and you are free to stop the interview and may withdraw at any time. Information will be provided to you with details of counselling services should you need to talk to someone.

Another concern may be the time you will be asked to give to the study for completing the interviews. However we will keep this to a time that is convenient for you during your working hours to ensure that disruption to your normal routines is kept to a minimum.

Is participation optional?

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. However, if you change your mind about taking part you can withdraw at any point, verbally or by contacting the researcher using the contact details provided. Reasons for your withdrawal will not be required. If you decide to withdraw all your information will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

What will you do with the information gathered?

The information obtained from this research forms the basis of a research doctorate being completed by the named researcher. However, it is an important objective of the researcher and Women's Aid, who are partners in this research that the information obtained as part of this study will be used to develop service provision for young children and their families affected by domestic abuse in Northern Ireland and beyond. The results from this study may also form the basis of scientific papers in academic journals and presentations at regional and national conferences. The researcher is happy to provide you with a summary of the research findings. You may provide contact details on the consent form so that a copy can be sent to you should you decide to participate.

What do I do now?

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Should you wish to take part in this study or have any further comments or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details below.

Contact details for further information:

Annemarie Millar, Ph.D. Candidate
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work

6 College Park
Queen's University Belfast
BT7 1LP

Tel: 07772455971

Email: amillar20@qub.ac.uk

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Tel: 028 9097 3630

Email: t.serisier@qub.ac.uk

Parent (Side 1)

Will my child taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected during the course of the research will be strictly confidential, stored securely and will comply with data protection guidelines. No personal information will be traced back to any individual taking part in the study. The findings from the study will be written up and published in a variety of formats but you or your child will not be personally identifiable from anything that is written up or published. The final report will be completely anonymous. I must however inform you that if your child discloses information that may result in your child or anyone else being put at risk of harm I may have to act in accordance with Women's Aid safeguarding policy and inform the Safeguarding Officer at Women's Aid. If this situation should arise you will be kept fully informed.

What will you do with the information gathered?

The information obtained from this research forms the basis of a research doctorate being completed by the named researcher. However, I would like to emphasise, it is an important objective of the researcher and Women's Aid, who are partners in this research that the information obtained as part of this study will be used to develop service provision for young children and their families affected by domestic abuse in Northern Ireland and beyond. The results from this study may also form the basis of scientific papers in academic journals and presentations at regional and national conferences. The researcher will be happy to provide you with a summary of the research. You may provide contact details on the consent form so that a copy can be sent to you should you or a safe address decide to participate.

What do I do now?

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Should you be happy for the researcher to contact you to arrange to meet with you and your child(ren) please return the reply slip at the bottom of this leaflet with your contact details to your contact at Women's Aid. I will be in touch with you using the contact details provided by you on this form.

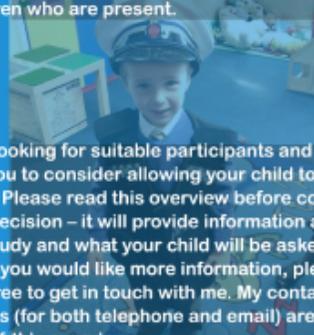
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Tel: 028 9097 3630
Email: t.serisier@qub.ac.uk

Police Response to Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children and Young People.

Hello and **thank you** for your interest in this research. I am currently undertaking a study looking at how best police officers attending incidents of domestic abuse can help young children who are present.



I am looking for suitable participants and would like you to consider allowing your child to take part. Please read this overview before coming to a decision – it will provide information about the study and what your child will be asked to do. If you would like more information, please feel free to get in touch with me. My contact details (for both telephone and email) are at the end of this overview.

In Northern Ireland and in many other countries, children are living in families where domestic abuse is present. For many children who experience domestic abuse, the first professional they come in contact with are members of the police. Police officers often do not know how to talk to or help children in these situations. When asked about this, children say it is really important for police to listen to them and talk to them. However, there is a lack of research asking children about their personal experiences with the police and what helps them, which is why we need to carry out this research. It is important to ask children themselves about this. Children often find this a really positive and enjoyable experience.

Name: _____ Child's Name: _____

Mobile Number: _____

Parent (Side 2)

What is the purpose of this study?

The aim of this research is to speak to children about their experiences with the police in order to improve the ways police officers respond to young children exposed to domestic abuse in a way they will find most helpful.

Why contact me?

This study is interested in speaking with young children between the ages of 4-11 years old, who have experience of domestic abuse and who have also experienced police involvement as a result of domestic abuse.

It is also important that as the child's parent/guardian you understand what the study is about and why it is being carried out. It is also necessary that you understand what it will involve for your child so that you can decide if they can take part.

What will happen if my child takes part?

The study will involve your child answering some short questions about what they think about the police in general and their experiences with the police as a result of domestic abuse. The interview itself will be very relaxed and informal and involve the use of arts and crafts. It is hoped the session will not last more than an hour. With the permission of you and your child this interview will be audio-taped.

About the researcher

My name is Annemarie Millar. I am a Ph.D. research student based at Queen's University Belfast. I hold a professional qualification in Psychology; my research interests are child development and Neuropsychology. I have a lot of experience working with children and 'draw and talk' methods. I am a volunteer with Women's Aid supporting children who have experienced domestic abuse.

This study is funded by the Department of Employment and Learning, and is being undertaken in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast.

Is participation optional?

Participation is entirely voluntary. Should you or your child decide not to take part in the study or withdraw from the study at a later stage, this will not impact on the services or support you or your child receive. Women's Aid will not be informed of your decision to participate or not participate in the study. You and your child will be asked to sign a consent form. However, if you or your child change your mind about taking part, they can withdraw at any point, verbally or by contacting the researcher using the contact details provided. Reasons for your withdrawal will not be required. If you or your child decide to withdraw all your information will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

What are the benefits to my child of taking part?

Research with young children in general is still a relatively new area. However, research carried out with children who have experienced domestic abuse has proved to be very valuable to those supporting children and their families, such as the police. The ultimate aim is to improve our understanding of what is most helpful to children with a view to improving and providing helpful services to meet their needs. Previous research with children found that they find this a very enjoyable and positive experience as it also provided an opportunity for children to talk about things that matter to them in a supportive environment.

What are the potential disadvantages of taking part?

It is hoped that there will be very few disadvantages for your child taking part in this study and a lot of research has found that children who take part find it a positive experience. As the research involves answering questions of a private and sensitive nature, a possible concern is that your child may become upset talking about some of these issues. However, your involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and you and your child are free to stop the interview and may withdraw at any time. A child support worker from Women's Aid, with whom your child is familiar, will be put in place prior to the interview taking place, should your son or daughter need to talk to someone. Another concern may be the time your child will be asked to give to the study for completing the interview. However we will keep this to a time that is convenient for you and your child to ensure that disruption to your normal routines is kept to a minimum.

Appendix C: Consent Forms – semi-structured and case-study interviews

Child

My consent form!

Police Response to Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving Children and Young People.

Queens University Belfast

***Parent/Legal Guardian: Please ensure the child has read or provide assistance for your child to read the following information and put a tick in the box if they agree.**

1. Mummy has read a leaflet from Annemarie with me.
2. If I get fed up I know that I can stop taking part at any time.
3. It's OK for Annemarie to tape record my chats with her.
4. I know that I can change my mind if I don't want Annemarie to tape record my chats any more.
5. I understand that if I tell Annemarie something during our chat that means I might not be safe you might have to let my mummy know but she will talk to me first before she does this.
6. I want to take part in Annemarie's study.
7. My favourite food  and drink  for a snack are: -----

Your Name: _____

Drawing of You 

Police Officers

Individual Participant Consent Form for Police Officer (Semi-Structured Interview)



Study Title: Police Response to Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving children and young people.

1. I have read the Participant Information sheet.
2. I have been supplied with information outlining the purpose of the research.
3. I have had the opportunity to ask questions in relation to this study.
4. I give my consent to participate in this study.
5. I give my consent for the interview to be audio recorded for transcription purposes only.
6. I have received details of how to contact the researchers involved should I wish to request further information regarding this study.
7. I understand that I am free to withdraw participation at any time – before, during or after the study by speaking to the researchers or contacting them afterwards. I will not be required to give a reason for my withdrawal.
8. I understand that any information provided is confidential and will remain so in accordance with Queen's University Belfast data protection policies. Furthermore, any information supplied during this study will not be disclosed to any other parties.
9. I understand that any disclosure of information during interviews that involve concerns of safety will be discussed with me and reported to the designated safeguarding officer.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Parents

□ **Individual Consent Form for Parent/Guardian child participant U-18 years old (Semi-Structured Interview)**



Study Title: Police Response to Incidents of Domestic Abuse Involving children and young people.

1. I have read the Participant Information sheet.
2. I have been supplied with information outlining the purpose of the research.
3. I have had the opportunity to ask questions in relation to this study.
4. I give my consent for my child to participate in this study.
5. I give my consent for the interview with my child to be audio recorded for transcription purposes only.
6. I have received details of how to contact the researchers involved should I wish to request further information regarding this study.
7. I understand that I am free to withdraw my child from participation at any stage or my child can withdraw at any stage – before, during or after the study by speaking to the researchers or contacting them afterwards. Reasons for withdrawal will not be required.
8. I understand that any information provided by my child is confidential and will remain so in accordance with Queen's University Belfast data protection policies. Furthermore, any information supplied during this study will not be disclosed to any other parties.
9. I understand that any disclosure of information during interviews that involve concerns of safety to my child or other's will be discussed with me and my child and reported to the designated safeguarding officer within Women's Aid.

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Child name: _____

Appendix D: Information Sheets, case-study interviews

Child

4-7

Years

Old

(Side

2)



Lots of boys and girls live in families where the adults sometimes fight and argue. Sometimes policemen or policewomen have to come to help the adults who are arguing and fighting.

By working together with Annemarie, you can talk about how you feel about the policeman or policewoman who came to help you when the adults in your house were not getting along with each other.

It is really important to Annemarie what you think.

What you tell me will help other policemen and policewomen understand about the best ways to talk to and help other boys and girls like you who live in families where sometimes the adults don't get along with each other.



I would like to talk to you because you have good ideas. We do not know a lot about what children like you think. It is very important that people like police officers know what children like you think.

Annemarie is going to talk about -

- What do you think about policemen and policewomen who came to help when the adults in your house were arguing and fighting?
- Is it easy or hard to talk to the policeman or policewoman when they come to your house when the adults in your house were fighting?
- What you think are the best ways policemen or policewomen can make things better for other boys and girls just like you?


YOUR IDEAS



If you decide you would like to help Annemarie with her work, you can have a snack, then do some drawing or some other art work and when you are drawing, you can talk to Annemarie about your ideas.

You can bring your favourite toy or teddy along to meet Annemarie.



No. It is up to you if you want to take part in Annemarie's work. If you change your mind or get fed up, you can stop at any time and it will be ok.

Child 8-15 (side 2)



Lots of children live in families where the adults sometimes argue and fight. Sometimes the police have to come to help the adults who are fighting.

By working together with Annemarie, you can talk about how you feel about the policeman or policewoman who came to help you when the adults in your house were arguing and fighting.

It is really important to Annemarie what you think.

What you tell me will help the police understand better about the best ways to talk to and help other children like you who live in families where sometimes the adults don't get along with each other.



Annemarie would like to talk to you because she wants to know what it was like for you. We do not know a lot about what children think about this. It is very important that people like the police know what children think.

Annemarie is going to talk about -

- What do you think about policemen and policewomen who came to help when the adults in your house were arguing and fighting?
- Is it easy or hard to talk to the policeman or policewoman when they come to your house when the adults in your house were fighting?
- What you think are the best ways policemen or policewomen can make things better for other boys and girls just like you?

 YOUR IDEAS



If you decide you would like to take part in Annemarie's work, before beginning your chat with Annemarie, you can have a snack. We will then do some drawing or some other art work and when you are drawing, Annemarie will ask you some simple questions. I hope you are going to enjoy chatting to Annemarie.

You can bring along a favourite toy or something that is special to you to show Annemarie.



No. It is up to you if you want to take part in Annemarie's work. If you change your mind you can stop at any time and it will be ok.

Police Officer (side 2)

What is the purpose of this study?

The aim of this research is to explore the interaction between police officers and young children in order to understand police officers own experience and response to young children exposed to domestic abuse in ways they will find helpful.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have invited to take part because this study is interested in interviewing a small number of police officers and young children involved in the same incident of domestic abuse in order to gain a better understanding of how police officers experience these situations.

The parent has consented for the researcher to make contact with you via the district commander to discuss the research.

What will happen if I take part?

If you are interested in taking part in this research, you can contact the researcher who will arrange to meet you to discuss the research further and answer any questions you may have about your participation. You will then be asked to sign a consent form.

You will then be invited to take part in a single interview which will last approximately one hour. The interview questions will relate to your experience of a specific incident of domestic abuse. With your permission this interview will be audio-taped.

Formal permission for this study has been obtained from the Chief Constable. Interviews will take place during working hours.

About the researcher

My name is Annemarie Millar. I am a Ph.D. research student based at Queen's University Belfast. I hold a professional qualification in Psychology; my research interests are child development and Neuropsychology.

This study is funded by the Department of Employment and Learning, and is being undertaken in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be **strictly confidential**, stored securely and will comply with data protection guidelines. No personal information will be traced back to any individual taking part in the study. The findings from the study will be written up and published in a variety of formats but you will not be personally identifiable from anything that is written up or published. The final report will be **completely anonymous**. I must however inform you that if you disclose information that may result in you or anyone else being put at risk of harm I may have to inform the designated person within your organisation. If this situation should arise you will be kept fully informed.



What are the benefits of taking part?

This study represents an opportunity to make an important contribution to knowledge development and understanding of how service professionals such as yourself, experience and understand children exposed to domestic abuse. This information will help contribute to service development that will improve outcomes for children and families affected by domestic abuse. It may also provide a safe space for you to reflect on your own personal experience as a service professional.

What are the potential disadvantages of taking part?

It is hoped that there will be very few disadvantages of taking part in this study. As the research involves discussing domestic abuse involving young children, a possible concern is that you may become upset taking about some of these issues. However, your involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and you are free to stop the interview and may withdraw at any time. Information will be provided to you with details of counselling services should you need to talk to someone.

Another concern may be the time you will be asked to give to the study for completing the interviews. However we will keep this to a time that is convenient for you during your working hours to ensure that disruption to your normal routines is kept to a minimum.

Parent (side 2)

<h3>What is the purpose of this study?</h3> <p>The aim of this research is to speak to a small number of children about their experiences with the police in order to improve the ways police officers respond to young children exposed to domestic abuse in a way they will find most helpful. Your child has been invited to take part in an interview which aims to look at a specific incident of domestic abuse in which the child and police officer were both involved to get a better idea of how young children feel about and understand these experiences.</p>	<h3>About the researcher</h3> <p>My name is Annemarie Millar. I am a Ph.D. research student based at Queen's University Belfast. I hold a professional qualification in Psychology; my research interests are child development and Neuropsychology. I have a lot of experience working with children and using 'draw and talk' methods. I am a volunteer with Women's Aid supporting children who have experienced domestic abuse.</p>	<h3>What are the benefits to my child of taking part?</h3> <p>Research with young children in general is still a relatively new area. However, research carried out with children who have experienced domestic abuse has proved to be very valuable to those supporting children and their families, such as the police. The ultimate aim is to improve our understanding of what is most helpful to children with a view to improving and providing helpful services to meet their needs. Previous research with children found that they find this a very enjoyable and positive experience as it also provided an opportunity for children to talk about things that matter to them in a supportive environment.</p>
<h3>Why contact me?</h3> <p>This study is interested in speaking with young children between the ages of 4-11 years old, who have experience of domestic abuse and who have also experienced police involvement as a result of domestic abuse. This study is interested in asking a small group of children and police officers involved in the same incident of domestic abuse in order to get a more detailed picture of their experiences. In order to do this, we need your written permission in order to contact the police officer involved. It is also important that as the child's parent/guardian you understand what the study is about and why it is being carried out. It is also necessary that you understand what it will involve for your child so that you can decide if they can take part.</p>	<p>This study is funded by the Department of Employment and Learning, and is being undertaken in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast.</p>	<h3>What are the potential disadvantages of taking part?</h3> <p>It is hoped that there will be very few disadvantages for your child taking part in this study and a lot of research has found that children who take part find it a positive experience. As the research involves answering questions of a private and sensitive nature, a possible concern is that your child may become upset talking about some of these issues. However, your involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and you and your child are free to stop the interview and may withdraw at any time. A child support worker from Women's Aid, with whom your child is familiar, will be put in place prior to the interview taking place, should your son or daughter need to talk to someone. Another concern may be the time your child will be asked to give to the study for completing the interview. However we will keep this to a time that is convenient for you and your child to ensure that disruption to your normal routines is kept to a minimum.</p>
<h3>What will happen if my child takes part?</h3> <p>The study will involve your child answering some short questions about their own personal experience of police officers response to your son or daughter at a specific incident of domestic abuse. The interview itself will be very relaxed and informal and involve the use of arts and crafts. It is hoped the session will not last more than an hour. With the permission of you and your child this interview will be audio-taped.</p>	<h3>Is participation optional?</h3> <p>Participation is entirely voluntary. Should you or your child decide <u>not</u> to take part in the study or withdraw from the study at a later stage, this will <u>not</u> impact on the services or support you or your child receive. Women's Aid will <u>not</u> be informed of your decision to participate or not participate in the study. You and your child will be asked to sign a consent form. However, if you or your child change your mind about taking part, they can withdraw at any point, verbally or by contacting the researcher using the contact details provided. Reasons for your withdrawal will not be required. If you or your child decide to withdraw all your information will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.</p>	

Appendix E: Confirmability Protocol (case-study interview)
Confirmability questions for parent, to match child and police officer involved in the same incident of domestic abuse (case study)

- Ask the child's mother whether the police have responded to an incident of domestic abuse on more than one occasion, and if not whether the child is likely to remember this occasion and why?
- If more than one incident, ask the child's mother if there is a recent episode of domestic abuse where the Police were involved that the child is likely to remember, and if so why.
- Do you think (named child) will be able to talk about the incident?
- Ask the mother to provide a brief description of why the Police were called
- What action did the police take at the time of the incident?
- Can you recall where (named child) was at the time of the incident
- Did the officers speak to (named child)?

Appendix F: Interview schedules – semi-structured interviews

Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews (children 4-15 years old)

Introduction

Before beginning interviews with children, the researcher (R) will discuss consent, and that it is OK for children to stop our chat if they want to. Children will be reminded that their parent/guardian knows they are talking to the researcher about the time the police came to their house when the adults were fighting and arguing and the whereabouts of their parent/guardian during the interview. The researcher will also remind children about confidentiality and unsought disclosures.

It will be stressed to children that this is NOT a test.

Researcher will explain to the child that they want the child to practice refusing to answer a question so that if a question came up in the interview and the child was not happy to answer, they would feel confident to refuse. Ask if they have any questions.

Section 1: CYP Perceptions of the police and the role of police in society

R: I would like to have a chat with you today about your ideas about the policemen and policewomen where you live.

Show children images of policeman/policewoman (Appendix H)

Q1. Who are the people in the pictures?

Q2. (Child's name), what do these people do?

Follow up question

- Do they do anything else in their job?

Q3. Are they the same?

Follow up question

- Do they do the same job?

R: So they do lots of things in their job

Q4. So tell me (child's name) have you ever met a police officer?

Follow up question

- Tell me about that?

Q5. Have they ever helped you?

Follow up question

- Tell me about that?

- Remember all the things you told me that a police officer did as part of their job. Did they do what they are meant to do?

Section 2: Children's experiences of police involvement as a result of domestic abuse

R: Ask child if they have seen the Disney Pixar movie 'Inside Out'.

Q6. Can you remember what that movie was about?

When I was coming down on the bus today my tummy felt really funny inside and I was thinking how excited I was about meeting you.

Q7. Does that ever happen to you? Tell me about that.

Follow up question

- Why do you think that happens?

Follow up question

- I'm wondering what happens when you are scared?
- What makes you feel better when you feel scared?
- I'm wondering what happens when you are angry?
- What makes you feel better when you are angry?
- Are they the same?

That's really interesting. SO, your body and your brain are really clever. They can tell you important things.

R: Sometimes there were times when mum and dad were fighting.

Sometimes other people came to the house.

Q8. Tell me about that?

Q9. Tell me how you were feeling?

Q11. Did the police officer come to speak to you?

Q12. How did you know the police officer was listening to you?

Follow up question

- What happened that they couldn't speak to you?
- Could the police officer have done anything to help you talk more?

Q13. Was it the best time to speak to you?

Follow up question

- Was it the best place to speak to you?

Q14 .When the police officer was there, what did they do/could they have done that would have been helpful?

Follow up question

- Tell me how you were feeling when the police left the house?

Section 3: (Closing question)

Q15. Tell me 3 things that were important to you to tell the police.

To close the interview children will be asked if there is anything they would like to add.

End of Interview

Interview schedule for semi-structured interview (Police Officers)

Introduction

Thank participant for taking part. Before we begin, let's get the formal bit out of the way.

Researcher (R) will give a brief summary of the purpose of the research interview, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of individual Police Officer's in Northern Ireland within the context of domestic abuse. I think it is fascinating research; I hope you will find it interesting too.

Officers will be reminded there are no right or wrong answers. Time will be provided at the end if they have any questions they would like to ask.

Before commencing the interview, interviewee will be reminded that consent is voluntary, and they may withdraw at any point. Interviewee will also be reminded of protocol regarding confidentiality, anonymity and unsought disclosures. The interview will be audio-recorded.

Section 1 (Opening questions)

Q1. Tell me a bit about your background in the Police, how long you have served?

Q2. When you were picking careers, what was it that pulled you toward the police?

Q3. If you had to describe your job role to someone, what would you say?

Follow up question(s):

- Do you think being a Police Officer here in Northern Ireland is different from other parts of the UK?
- Can you give me an example?

Section 2 (Intermediate questions)

R: I am going to move onto a slightly different topic. We have been talking about what pulled you toward the Police. Your job is fascinating!

Now we are going to talk about your experience regarding DA.

I call it 'Domestic Abuse', Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence. What do you generally use, and we will use that?

Q4. Tell me do you get training in this area?

Follow up question

- What kind of training have you received in this area?

- Have you found it helpful?

Q5. Did any of the training you received relate to children?

Section 3 (Probing questions)

Q6. Working in shifts; is attending domestic abuse calls a key part of your work?

Q7. What are the differences between DA and other types of police work?

Police are often the first professional many children and young people living with domestic abuse come into contact with.

Q8. What do you do if there are children present in the house?

Follow up question

- How often do you encounter children?
- How important is it that you speak to children present?

Q9. Are there incidents you attend that they often involve the same people?

Follow up question

- Is there a way you manage these incidents?

Section 4 (Closing question)

Q10. Reflecting back on what we have discussed today, are there any other comments which you would like to make not specifically covered here?

End of Interview

Interview schedule for semi-structured interview (Specialist Officers)

Introduction

Thank participant for taking part. Before we begin, let's get the formal bit out of the way.

Researcher (R) will give a brief summary of the purpose of the research interview, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of individual Police Officer's in Northern Ireland within the context of domestic abuse. I think it is fascinating research; I hope you will find it interesting too.

Officers will be reminded there are no right or wrong answers. Time will be provided at the end if they have any questions they would like to ask.

Before commencing the interview, interviewee will be reminded that consent is voluntary, and they may withdraw at any point. Interviewee will also be reminded of protocol regarding confidentiality, anonymity and unsought disclosures. The interview will be audio-recorded.

Section 1 (Opening questions)

Q1. Tell me a bit about your background in the Police, how long you have served?

Q2. When you were picking careers, what was it that pulled you toward the police?

Q3. If you had to describe your job role to someone, what would you say?

Follow up question(s):

- Do you think being a Police Officer here in Northern Ireland is different from other parts of the UK?
- Can you give me an example?

Section 2 (Intermediate questions)

R: I am going to move onto a slightly different topic. We have been talking about what pulled you toward the Police. Your job is fascinating!

Now we are going to talk about DA.

I call it 'Domestic Abuse', Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence. What do you generally use, and we will use that?

Q4. Tell me do you get training in this area?

Follow up question

- What kind of training have you received in this area?

- Have you found it helpful?

Q5. Did any of the training you received relate to children?

Section 3 (Probing questions)

Q6. Is/Was attending DA a key part of your work?

Q7. What are the differences between DA and other types of police work?

Police are often the first professional many children and young people living with domestic abuse come into contact with

Q8. Tell me about your role and experiences working with children who have experienced domestic abuse?

Follow up question

- What skills do you consider to be of importance in your role?

Q9. What would you consider a good outcome in situations where there is domestic abuse?

Section 4 (Closing question)

Q10. Reflecting back on what we have discussed today, are there any other comments which you would like to make not specifically covered here?

End of Interview

Appendix G: Interview Schedules – Case-Study Interviews

Interview schedule for case-study interviews (children)

Introduction

Before beginning interviews with children, the researcher (R) will discuss consent, and that it is OK for children to stop our chat if they want to. Children will be reminded that their parent/guardian knows they are talking to the researcher about the time the police came to their house when the adults were fighting and arguing and the whereabouts of their parent/guardian during the interview. The researcher will also remind children about confidentiality and unsought disclosures.

It will be stressed to children that this is NOT a test.

Researcher will explain to the child that they want the child to practice refusing to answer a question so that if a question came up in the interview and the child was not happy to answer, they would feel confident to refuse. Ask if they have any questions.

Section 1: CYP Perceptions of the police and the role of police in society

R: I would like to have a chat with you today about your ideas about the policemen and policewomen where you live.

Show children images of policeman/policewoman (Appendix H)

Q1. Who are the people in the pictures?

Q2. (Child's name), what do these people do?

Follow up question

- Do they do anything else in their job?

Q3. Are they the same?

Follow up question

- Do they do the same job?

R: So they do lots of things in their job

Q4. So tell me (child's name) have you ever met a police officer?

Follow up question

- Tell me about that?

Q5. Have they ever helped you?

Follow up question

- Tell me about that?
- Remember all the things you told me that a police officer did as part of their job. Did they do what they are meant to do?

Section 2: Children's experiences of police involvement as a result of domestic abuse

R: Ask child if they have seen the Disney Pixar movie 'Inside Out'.

Q6. Can you remember what that movie was about?

When I was coming down on the bus today my tummy felt really funny inside and I was thinking how excited I was about meeting you.

Q7. Does that ever happen to you? Tell me about that.

Follow up question

- Why do you think that happens?

Follow up question

- I'm wondering what happens when you are scared?
- What makes you feel better when you feel scared?
- I'm wondering what happens when you are angry?
- What makes you feel better when you are angry?
- Are they the same?

That's really interesting. SO, your body and your brain are really clever. They can tell you important things.

R: Sometimes there were times when mum and dad were fighting.

Sometimes other people came to the house.

Q8. Tell me about that the time the police came to the house (refer to specific incident confirmed by child's mother).

Q9. Tell me how you were feeling?

Q11. Did the police officer come to speak to you?

Q12. How did you know the police officer was listening to you?

Follow up question

- What happened that they couldn't speak to you?
- Could the police officer have done anything to help you talk more?

Q13. Was it the best time to speak to you?

Follow up question

- Was it the best place to speak to you?

Q14 .When the police officer was there, what did they do/could they have done that would have been helpful?

Follow up question

- Tell me how you were feeling when the police left the house?

Section 3: (Closing question)

Q15. Tell me 3 things that were important to you to tell the police.

To close the interview children will be asked if there is anything they would like to add.

End of Interview

Interview schedule for case study interview (Police Officers)

Introduction

Before commencing the interview, interviewee will be reminded that consent is voluntary, and they may withdraw at any point. Interviewee will also be reminded of protocol regarding confidentiality, anonymity and unsought disclosures. The interview will be audio-recorded.

Researcher will give a brief summary of the purpose of the research interview, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of individual Police Officer's in Northern Ireland within the context of a specific incident of domestic abuse. Officers will be reminded there are no right or wrong answers. Time will be provided at the end if they have any questions they would like to ask.

For this aspect of the research a method known as 'Think Aloud' protocol is used.

This method has been used a lot in psychology; to develop an understanding of individual's thinking and decision-making processes. An example where TA has been used was in a study to understand the thinking of chess experts during matches. The chess players were presented with specific positions

from unfamiliar chess games and then asked to select the best next move for each position whilst thinking aloud.

This method has also been used successfully with individuals to recall past events, which is why we are using this method today, it is known as 'Retrospective Think Aloud'. This method will be used to talk about a specific incident of domestic abuse which involved a child. The narrative for the case study was constructed on the basis of police incident reports. I will ask you to complete a practice activity using 'Think Aloud' before we you go on to talk about the specific incident. Do you have any questions?

Section 1 – Exploration of reported incident of domestic abuse involving children

Before we begin the next part of the interview about the specific incident, I would like to conduct a practice activity with you using the 'Think Aloud' protocol. I would like you to describe your journey to work today. Researcher will provide feedback regarding the level of detail given. If acceptable, the researcher will proceed to the next stage of the interview.

Section 2 – Retrospective Think-Aloud Protocol

R will give a brief outline of the reported incident in which the officer was involved. Police Officer will then be asked to provide a free account of their

own experience and understanding of the incident with no or minimum input from the researcher.

End of Interview

The researcher may make some notes during the officer's account.

At the end of the officer's account the researcher may ask questions in order to explore further or seek additional information with regard specific instances of the officer's account where perhaps there was a significant pause/hesitation, or the researcher may seek clarification. Example questions include; 'What were you thinking/feeling at that point?' 'What were you deciding at that point?'

Follow-up questions are being used to collect further information *after* the officer's account has been given, in order to avoid interruptions in thinking processes during the officer's account.

*The researcher may prompt officer to speak if silence or inactivity occurred for an extended period of time. These prompts included phrases such as 'What are you thinking now?' and 'What are you deciding at this point?'

Section 3 (Closing question)

Reflecting back on what we have discussed today, is there anything that has made you think about your practice/experiences in a different way, or that you have found useful?

Appendix H: Images of Police Officers



Appendix I: 'Inside Out' Characters (Anger, Disgust, Fear, Joy & Sadness)



Appendix J: Exploratory Analysis - Emotional Intelligence

Analysis sought to explore interview data conducted with children and police officers' responses that were illustrative of Goleman & Boyatzis (2011) model of EI and associated constructs (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management).

Theme (children)	Quote/Evidence	EI Construct and Analysis
<i>Children's feelings of safety, visibility and voice</i>	'They [police] didn't really talk to me, so they didn't listen' (Keelan, age 13, L246)	Social Awareness (SOA6) – Keelan experienced a lack of empathy and empathetic concern from attending officer. He expresses in short quote need to talk about incident with officer but this was denied.
	'They brought us like...so we were upstairs sleeping and then we woke up and then the police officer was sitting down and he got us biscuits and juice and all that out. [...]They calmed us down, they sat us down and talked about it and all, like it will be alright, just go back to bed and watch something, or something like that to calm yourself down' (Luke, age 10, L81-82, L105-106)	Self-Management (SM5) & Social Awareness (SOA6) – Demonstrates the ability to adapt their professional approach when children are involved in order to meet their needs. High level of empathy. Ability to regulate child's emotional reactions.
Theme (police)	Quote/Evidence	EI Construct and Analysis
<i>DA is unlike any other crime</i>	'I must admit, try to keep a sense of emotional detachment as best you can because you would find	Self-awareness (SA1) – lack of awareness of understanding emotion and how it can be used

that if- you know, you can get very involved, and it can become very emotional[...] you almost become ineffective in what you are there to do' (LPT 12, male, L472-477)

in ways to enhance thinking and behaviour. Officer reports emotions are disruptive and negatively impacts how they discharge job role. Impact on how officer experiences, understands and responds to children at incidents of DA.

'I think that is why you become a police officer rather than a nurse, or something like that. [...] What you need to do kicks in and you move on to the next thing' (LPT15, female, L790-792)

Social Awareness (SOA6) – lack of empathetic concern for others. Highlighting the differences between police officer and nursing profession which is considered a caring profession. Demonstrates attitude to job role and organisational culture. Impact on how officer experiences, understands and responds to children at incidents of DA.

Perceptions of risk and response to DA

'[Y]ou are very aware of your own body, your own mind, conscious of the fact that you shouldn't carry one incident to the next because you are dealing with a totally different incident, a totally different person, so it is almost like you come to the end of an episode and you stop, rewind and start again, and just reset, so I guess having good mental awareness of your own body' (LPT18, male, 475-479).

Self-awareness (SA1) – recognising how you respond to cues in the environment; knowing inner resources, strengths and limits. Demonstrates high EI and awareness of how emotion influences thinking and behaviour. Enhances ability to think about emotions of others. Highlighted by Goleman as an essential competence

*Witness or
Victim? Officers'
perceptions of
children at
incidents of DA*

‘[S]ometimes the kids, to be honest, they are not forgotten about, but you know, you think, what are we going to do with these kids’ (LPT3, male, L889-890).

‘[Y]ou could come to a house where there are children who are not in the thick of it but they have obviously witnessed what has happened and again you have to consider how they are feeling, what they are thinking [...]’ (LPT18, male, L675-677)

for law enforcement officers (Chapter 3).

Self-Management (SM5) & Social Awareness (SOA6) - lack of empathy and empathetic concern for children. Inability to adapt response to meet the needs of children present.

Social Awareness (SOA6) – Officer demonstrates empathy and empathetic concern for children. Awareness and understanding of how DA impacts children emotionally and psychologically, beyond physical forms of abuse.