Adolescent to parent violence: key findings for police services

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This project aims to raise awareness of the issue, and develop recommendations for effective police policies to support practitioners and help families experiencing APV.

Legal issues and practical implications

- Lack of an official recognition of the problem of adolescent to parent offending. Not officially defined as domestic violence if the adolescent was under the age of 18 at the time of offending until 2013, and of 16 from now on. Children of a younger age still lack an official definition.

- Consequent lack of police policy specifically guiding police forces on how reported incidents should be responded to.

- Consequent lack of specialist knowledge and training to respond to the problem.

Practical issues. Necessity to remove perpetrators from the home to protect victims in high risk cases clashes with parents’ responsibility for providing a home to their children. Often no alternative but returning the adolescent to their home address.

Obstacles to prosecution. Parents’ reluctance to report and potentially criminalize their child, parents reporting and later refusing to make a statement or making a statement and later withdrawing it. Difficulties in pursuing an unsupported prosecution and to go against the parents’ wishes.

What are Police forces’ main challenges?

- Practical issues. Necessity to remove perpetrators from the home to protect victims in high risk cases clashes with parents’ responsibility for providing a home to their children. Often no alternative but returning the adolescent to their home address.
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It is crucial that APV is formally recognised, allowing the police to deal with it in a more consistent and appropriate manner and to facilitate training, policy and practice in this complex and sensitive form of family violence.

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