

## Child Protection and Domestic Abuse: What new research tells us about thinking and doing things differently



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Recorded webinar



Claire Burns, Director of CELCIS

Okay, that's half past nine. So we'll make a start. I'm Claire Burns, I'm the Director of CELCIS. I'm so grateful that everybody's made the time this morning. It's a glorious day here in Glasgow unusually, so hope is too where you are. We always complain about the weather then we cannot stand the heat walking up the road from the train station. So I'm really delighted to everybody's taking the time to join us this morning. This is a third of the CELCIS Emerging Insights series. It's on child protection and domestic abuse: what new research tells us about thinking and doing things differently - a subject matter that I know all of us consider to be really important in really effectively tackling the determinants of children's care and protection needs. We are delighted to be joined by - I think what we both know as national experts in this field. Professor Brid Featherstone, Professor of Social Work at the University of Huddersfield, and Professor Kate Morris, Professor of Social Work at University of Sheffield, who many of you will know from working in child protection, and particularly that need to shift to a social model of protection (Protecting Children: A Social Model by Brid Featherstone, Anna Gupta, Kate Morris and Sue White). I'm sure that book is on many of the people's shelves that are on the call today. So in these online webinars we are offering a space to consider some of the current and most critical issues in relation to child protection. And in this context, we offer a space for those with a responsibility for care and protection to think, learn and engage together about emerging issues. I'll come back in a second around Brid and Kate, but just in terms of some well-being issues - given the focus of the webinar, what is shared and

discussed is potentially upsetting for people. So please take time out if you did it during the webinar and afterwards. Trauma can affect us all in different ways and sometimes unexpectedly, so please take the opportunity - your cameras are off - but if you need to step away for a minute, and if you feel you need to speak to someone about how you're feeling you do have the details around that. We've provided the numbers for both the Samaritans and Breathing Space, if that's something that you need, or please get back in touch with us during or after the seminar if you need some support. We'll be using MS teams Q&A function to collect questions and we're hoping that there will be time for quite a lot of questions towards the end, and that's what's quite we'll up to now. I'll be getting fed those questions throughout. And then I get to choose what ones I most want to ask, but I will try and reflect the questions that are coming up. The session will also be recorded. And attendees can choose whether they have the camera on and off. In fact, I think that's the last time I think the cameras are off, so sorry about that.

So the focus of the seminar: it's been estimated that more than 25% of children and young people live with an adult who has experienced domestic abuse and violence. And for any of us who work in the sector will know we often see that in the backgrounds or as key issues in relation to children who we are supporting in communities or who are living in some of our care settings. It was a feature of 42% of incidents involved in serious harm to children in 2020 in England and a key factor in why many children come into care or and involved with the protection systems. Today Kate and Brid are going to be talking about the research that they're doing on rethinking domestic abuse and child protection: responding differently, a recent project which has brought together a team of researchers, domestic abuse specialists, and experts in supporting policy and practice change. And I would have to also say, as being part of the advisory group, there has also been people with lived experience who are influencing and supporting the research as well. The research involves case study sites in England and Scotland, and includes speaking to families as well as policymakers, practitioners, and practice leaders. And it's hopeful that this will inform and advance responses to those being harmed or those who harm to support children and their families. As I said, I'm fortunate enough to be on the expert advisory group for the research and we had a meeting last week. But I was completely engrossed and engaged, as I am with every meeting that I am on, but I was completely engrossed and engaged with what they were presenting and the questions that were raised. So I'm really confident that that will do the same for you. And they will be testament to the number of very annoying questions that I ask them. So on that we'll hear from the speakers for the next 25 to 30 minutes. Then I'll ask some initial questions and then I'll start feeding them questions from the floor. So without any further ado, I'm going to pass over to our speakers today. Thank you,

[Professor Kate Morris, Professor of Social Work at University of Sheffield](#)

I will mute after you handover because I've got builders on the roof.

Professor Brid Featherstone, Professor of Social Work at the University of Huddersfield

That's Ok, I'll have children playing shortly in the school up the road, which is always a nice backdrop to my meetings. Thank you very much, Claire, and thank you for that introduction. And thank you very much for agreeing to be on our expert advisory group. And I do hope that we will be as challenging today as we were last week, I hope. And I'm going to give very briefly the background to why we're doing the research and to a previous piece of work - The Change Project - that really informed the research. And so very briefly, and apologies if you have heard all of this before, but to set the scene, I'm going to give you the case for change. So as Claire has already indicated, domestic abuse is a significant driver of what people call demand in child protection, i.e. referrals. It's very significantly represented in child protection plans, or as in Scotland, you call them registrations of children at risk. And, sadly, children coming into care - adoption, actually - when I did the work on adoption, very high numbers of women who had children adopted, had experienced domestic abuse. And sadly, we'd have increasing engagement with child death reviews where domestic abuse has been a feature. And you would think in that context, that there would be an absolute outpouring of research and thinking and practice innovation around this area. And we will be referring to some of the practice innovations that are around like, say, Safe and Together or some of the trauma informed work with men that seems to be appearing more recently. But generally, we would argue, and one of the reasons that we set up The Change Project and I applied for the funding to Nuffield is that thinking and doing in this area appears very stuck. And there is evidence, quite strong evidence, from women and men who we've interviewed over the years of dissatisfaction with what is being offered. Moreover, the whole push in Child Protection Policy and Practice is that we're there for children, that children are at the heart of what we do. But actually, what we have found, and some excellent research that's been done alongside our work, is the children are often seen in very one dimensional ways, i.e. they're all harmed by domestic abuse and it's all the same. Whereas in fact, when you talk to children, it's a lot more complex than that. So we have a situation where it's a very serious issue. Everyone agrees it's a very serious issue. But actually, we haven't been developing our thinking either about the complexities of the women and men that are involved in the system, the complexities of children's lives and experiences. And moreover, while there is evidence in practice, because otherwise you couldn't cope, there is evidence of differentiation on the part of practitioners and managers, between different levels of risk. Actually, there is very little evidence about what basis people are doing it on and there aren't, you know, there isn't much engagement with kind of typologies of abuse or typologies of risk. And crudely put in an article that we wrote some time ago with Greg Ferguson, we argued that we were outsourcing the protection task in practice to multiply disadvantaged women. The practice response has been, your children are being harmed by this, you're failing to protect, they're at risk of emotional abuse, and therefore you need to sort it out, get rid of him and make sure he doesn't have any contact. And we'll talk about the dangers of this public story around heterosexuality in a minute. But that's been what's been happening. And yeah, we outsource the protection tasks to mothers

who are often multiply disadvantaged women, as we know from the research in the child protection system. And crucially, from our perspective, we offer those who are harming who are often men, neither challenge nor support, they often literally disappear from families lives, and therefore actually, they're not disappearing, they're appearing in another family, maybe even more alienated. We don't routinely – there has been some very important work around family group conferencing and domestic abuse, but it's very peripheral and not embedded at all. We don't actually use family and community networks, either his networks or her networks or community networks to challenge secrecy and silence and to provide ongoing support and challenge around the times the professionals simply aren't involved. And quite frankly, to finish this bit, we often appear to be relying on professional conversations with each other at the expense of proper engagement with those who are being harmed or those harming. So in the file audit that we carried out as part of The Change Project, we found that the default position was to go straight into professional meetings rather than spend time in the family home talking in depth with those being harmed and those harming, around what on earth was going on. So why? Why are we so stuck? Very briefly, we argued, and The Change Project reinforced this, that there was a reliance - that we have poor conceptual tools, in a context of a lack of curiosity. There was kind of like an assumption that we all know what domestic abuse is, we all know what causes it. And we all know why people are behaving in the way they are. And therefore, there is kind of one size fits all thinking and one size fits all policy responses. There has also been, as Catherine Donovan and Marianne Hester have talked about, a public story, a fixed public story, which is about it's heterosexual, it's about men doing things to women. And whilst that is a really important part of the picture, and we wouldn't deny that in the slightest, actually, as we've seen in some of the child deaths in England recently, we do need to take and same sex violence in intimate relationships more seriously. And we need to look at the complexities between men and women as well. And it's not a top down linear process. There is, of course, as we know, highly gendered dynamics at play in relation to a female workforce who are struggling with and not getting supported to work with men that they're often afraid of, and who may have experienced.....

I'm back, oh, you're back. Sorry, sorry, sorry, I don't know what's out there. Really quickly, just to seize it before I get thrown out again. And we have been trying to move on from what we call stuck thinking. And we're not alone. There's lots of people across the world trying to do this. And a key issue for us has been engaging with the insights from intersectionality. Many of you will know on the call, intersectionality is a way of thinking and practicing that emerged from black women in the States who argued that demands that were being made around domestic abuse, didn't take into account their class, their poverty, and their engagement with the racist state or the lack of engagement with the racist state. And so therefore, they cautioned us against approaches that might speak to the needs of one group of women in our society, but actually really, really didn't engage with those from other communities. And just to give you a little snapshot of that, a really

good study that's been done in Scotland by colleagues, Valeria Skafida, John Devaney and Fiona Morrison, actually highlighted some of the implications of intersectionality, for looking at who was at risk where it found that it was young women aged 20+, who were in poverty were much, much more at risk. And this was a nationally representative study, I'm going to really hurry now. And so there's been a deconstruction of this idea that it's all women and all men, and that we need to think more carefully about this. And we need to think about the implications of different types of men, different types of masculinity, the relationship between domestic abuse and poverty and childhood trauma, all things that we've been a bit wary about doing. And we've been a bit anxious and thought, Oh, my God, they are going use that as excuses. And moreover, we need to think, and we're arguing that there is a difference between understanding and excusing that we really need to hold on to. And also we think that there's a really important, really important story to be told about how poverty impacts upon intimate relationships, how it affects women's choices, and circumstances and constraints. Finally, we ask that we beware of the single story around domestic abuse. We have mentioned already the Johnson typology, which distinguishes between violence that's about controlling a situation, i.e. situational violence, which some of which we saw during the COVID pandemic, and violence that's about controlling people, a person, which is the worrying type of domestic abuse and intimate terrorism, but arguably, we often talk as if they're all the same, and there are variations in between. What we're trying to do in our new project, is we're trying to do what Mennicke, which is to stop thinking in a top down way about this is violence, but actually start to engage with the words and experiences of those being impacted and hear from them. There are tensions there, as we'll see in the questions. And maybe we throw that into the discussion if it doesn't come up. There are tensions between an expert led understanding of domestic abuse and a bottom up understanding of domestic abuse, particularly when people are caught in webs of control and abuse that they don't fully appreciate. Finally, really key moment for Kate and I was our involvement in The Change Project during the pandemic. We had 30 Plus agencies from across England, who we worked with around thinking and doing differently, and broadly, it was a really, really important partnership, we had a restorative counsellor, we had Owen Thomas from Future Men engaged, Research in Practice funded the work, and we basically went on a journey with practitioners, often senior managers or commissioners around domestic abuse across the country. We went on a journey around thinking, looking at work around intersectionality, looking at work around economic abuse, and crucially, crucially, doing differently. So we heard from a whole range of projects where people were trying sometimes very small tweaks to practice and sometimes big system designs. And so there were very extensive outputs from that. So there were outputs from that interviewing managers, so Alyssia from Doncaster, about the couples work she does, looking at some of the research inputs. And crucially, we heard from both men and women crucially heard from both men and women, about their understandings of what was going on, but also their understandings of service responses. So there's a whole suite of resources you may want to engage with. So a whistlestop tour interrupted at a key moment. But thank you.

Kate Morris

Thanks, Brid. Can you hear me? Yeah, great. Okay. And sorry about the banging in the background. It's a new roof. Couple of things to say, really, I absolutely get what Brid says about we are stuck, but Brid hasn't been stuck. And we should acknowledge the fact that Brid has spent a very long time holding a mirror up to was all asking us to think and do differently. So I do want to give Brid, enormous credit for the driving force she's been in terms of this project. I'm going to talk a little bit about the Nuffield project, and just describe it to you, just so that you have a sense of what we're up to, but also that you can anticipate some of the outputs. And hopefully, well, I think we can say confidently, we think they will be useful to practice as well as to policy. So I'll talk you through that. And then I think we've got time for questions, haven't we, Claire. So the part that Nuffield - and credit to Nuffield - have funded what is quite a brave project really, it's quite complicated. It is about doing research differently, as well as thinking differently. And I think Brid and I would want to give credit to Nuffield, for being brave enough to back us on this. It's a partnership, it's a partnership with SafeLives, you'll be aware of them - a very large national domestic abuse and violence charity, Future Men, Research in Practice and Sharon Inglis is contributing who's a restorative practitioner. And we've got three universities involved, which is Huddersfield, Kingston, and Sheffield. So quite complex partnership. But at the heart of that is what Brid was mentioning there really, which is trying to have some conversations across the different positions in this space, trying to bring together a partnership that reflects the different experiences. And if we are going to unstick our conversations, that does mean some difficult dialogue across what might be very different groups and very different positions and perspectives. And we've tried to construct a research project that reflects that. And we're already discovering that that has its ups and downs, really. The research aims. So what we have are three core aims. The first is to address the gaps in our knowledge about the nature, type and characteristics of domestic abuse and violence in child protection. And one thing we learned from the file audit in The Change Project is we all think we know and we don't. There is so much shorthand in this space. We saw referrals that just said DV we saw referrals where there was no description of what that meant for the child, the woman and the man, or indeed any family members. There's a great deal of assumed understanding in this space. And so we're really aiming to develop a rich and nuanced understanding of domestic abuse in the context of child protection. We want to examine the relationship between domestic abuse, child protection and intersecting inequalities. How these inequalities shape and inform experiences and responses. And we think that that's quite challenging to do as a research project. We think we're in the foothills of that we will do what we can in the life of this project. But I suspect we'll throw up more questions than answers in relation to that. And finally, our aim is to co-produce with practitioners, with families and with some policymakers, new approaches really, some thinking around new frameworks for policy and practice. So to do this work, we've got a series of steps, a series of stages. We have three case study sites - and a huge thank you actually to those case study sites. I think

Brid and I would say we've had unparalleled access to practitioners, to families, to case files, to the work that's underway in those sites. And, you know, social workers and other professionals in this space, we are so heavily scrutinised, aren't we? You know, surveillance is big for us through all sorts of regulatory frameworks. And the easiest position, I think, for practitioners to, is to say no to researchers, because actually they're fed up have been looked at. And I think it's respect to them that they've let us in as extensively as they have. So in each of those case study sites Rick Hood (Professor of Social Work, Kingston University) and colleagues at Kingston will do what's called a latent class analysis. It brings together all the data that's around what's coming in - I'll put this really crudely but hope it makes sense - understands that administrative data to tell us if there are patterns in terms of what's coming in and interventions. So we've ended up with - the best things to describe them as is clusters, really. So when we think about families where there's domestic abuse, and they're coming in through Children's Services, through an assessment around a child in need, or child protection, Rick's been able to analyse the administrative data. So it shows us what the clusters are. And so in the site that I'm working with, for example, there's six clusters, ranging from the first cluster, which is very much would be seen as a straightforward domestic abuse referral, right through to close to six, which is multiple and complex needs. I don't want to get too embroiled in that today, but it's a way of understanding supply and demand in this space. And we seem to make a contribution for those local authorities in understanding how they commission and rollout services. Alongside that Brid, myself and Claire, the research assistant working in the case study sites are doing some really detailed work in the field. We're testing out those clusters to see if they make sense. But also, we're really trying to capture the family's journey through the services and to do that we're talking to practitioners, senior managers, family advisory panels, parents panels, whatever.... Whatever we can get our hands on, whoever was willing to talk to us really - those specialist services in those sites. And also what's proving to be really, really valuable, we are able to do a case file analysis. So to take a sample of files using that analysis that Rick's done and really have a look at that family's journey in and out of the service. How did they get into the service? What did they receive? And how did they exit the service. So from all that, and from our work. It's so hard to explain it, Brid in one kind of chunk. But we also have running alongside this a community of practice supported by Brid and Research in Practice, which is a really dynamic and established group of practitioners who have been with us really since The Change Project, and a huge thank you to them. But working with them, and some work with family forums, which I'll talk about later, if folks who are interested. We're really trying to arrive at that nuanced understanding. So our first output will be that rich account of how domestic abuse and violence in child protection is been understood, what family experiences are, what's shaping and influencing that in the field in terms of frontline practice. We'll have individual site reports, but also we'll have a composite report that we'll be able to share, and we anticipate that will arrive in autumn. This isn't a comparative study, so we're not taking each case study site and comparing them against the others. Instead, what we're saying is from these

three sites that are very, very different, we can gather some learning that we can generalise really and pull out. And we are already bumping into I think some really important learning points, even though we're only partway through some of that field work. The next stage really is that Rick and Lois the research assistant working with Rick are going to apply an inequalities lens to the administrative data. I've got to say and I'm sure Brid would echo me on this, this is really complex, multi-level modelling that Brid and I are not expert in. Rick is going to go as far as he can with this to see if you apply that inequalities lens which is thinking about things like indicators and multiple deprivation, ethnicity, gender, whatever we can gather really. How does it help us understand what the outcomes are and the interventions are for families. So Rick will do that work. He's confident, I think, that he can do it in two out of the three sites. But we think in one site, it may be more difficult because the data may not be there for us. But we'll give that our best shot. And that will produce another layer of analysis that will help us understand. So once we pull together all this different these different strands of data and fieldwork, we will then work with the community of practice, and work with the family forums to generate the frameworks for policy and practice and those outputs will arrive in spring next year. Alongside all this, we've produced a literature review, there are blogs there all sorts of things like that they're on our website. I'm mindful of time, but I do want to just mention the family forums.

I think the important point we'd want to make today is we had hoped we would be able to bring together a Family Forum that worked with us during the life of the project that represents the very different experiences and, and positions of family members. That hasn't been possible, because we've tried to be very responsive and to co-produce and co-construct this where we can, a very strong message from family organisations is that that's not appropriate or possible in this space. There's a whole conversation we can have about that. That's interesting to have. But we absolutely respect that message. So what we have is a much more dispersed model of family engagement with thinking about working with men though Owen at Future Men, we have SafeLives helping us work with women and the pioneers that they have. Sharon Inglis is doing work with families who've been through the child protection system. So we've also got other thinking and strands emerging. That's the overview. And I wanted to spend the last couple of minutes talking about just some of the themes that are emerging. But I think Brid and I would want to put a really big health warning on this in the sense that they are very early, emerging messages. And if we come back in six months, if you are interested, we may change those things. They may not hold water once we start to do the really much more detailed analysis. But I think the themes we are seeing that emerge at the moment, and we can talk more about these, if you're interested is there is absolutely something about the workforce. There are emerging messages about the workforce and Brid has particularly reflected on this, and they want to contribute something about skills and knowledge. But there's also something about moral distress in this space, about how practitioners have felt profoundly uncomfortable about the way they are being expected to practice in this



space. And it leaves a level of distress and sadness. And I've seen that reflected in some, quite frankly, heart rending summaries in case files. But there's also, you know, an absolute reality in our workforce of women and some men who have experienced domestic abuse and violence, and where does that fit in how we develop and construct services. So there's something about the workforce. There's a very strong theme coming out about men, and how we work with men, how we understand men, how our systems do and don't pay attention to men. And this isn't just about developing a set of skills to work with men, this is something much more profound, and systemic. And again, we can talk more about that. Just a quick aside, I am really struck by how we have developed criteria for services for men that are developed in such a way that the very men that need those services can't access them. Because they are perceived to be too risky and too harmful. There are a set of questions, I think, for us about where those men go and what those men do in the absence of services. And the final thing is, interestingly, I think coming and again, this may or may not roll out. But there's something about the severity of the domestic abuse and violence set against the risk. And the interventions and the risk doesn't necessarily equal the level of severity. So we're seeing situations where we would see the domestic abuse and violence as almost life threatening. But the Children's Services intervention has been very low key. And that's been about things like the man has left the family home, so the case has been closed. The man has been sent to prison, the case has been closed, and not reopened when he comes out of prison. I can give you numerous examples of that. But there doesn't necessarily seem to be a connection between how we choose to intervene, and the harm being experienced by family members. So those are just some of the themes that are starting to bubble up. I'm going to stop there, because we've kind of done our 30 minutes. But I know Brid and I'd be happy to talk about those if they're of interest, Brid, is there anything I've missed?

### Brid Featherstone

No, no, no, you know, I've been really thinking a lot about this moral distress. And I've been, one of the things I just want to point out is that where you have a lot of churn in the workforce, and you have a lot of workers who just move on all the time - and I totally get why that might be happening, by the way - they're often not confronted with the consequences of what they might have done previously. Whereas where you have a more stable workforce I am meeting workers who not only are deeply distressed about what they're doing with domestic abuse in the here and now. But we're also meeting the consequences of their failure to act or their actions in particular ways years ago. So they're meeting children who they did or didn't take away from their mothers who are now having their children taken away. So there's a whole pile of stuff that I think we really need to talk about in relation to how we support workers with this very big area of work. And, you know, to throw the cat really among the pigeons, whether child protection is the right place to be dealing with a lot of this domestic abuse work whether we need to rethink this because it's really, really problematic. Yeah, it's problematic.

### Claire Burns

Thanks very much to both of you. I've just going to say, because we do have some time, because I know it's a little bit rushed. And I've got some questions, as you can imagine, but is there anything else that you do feel that you would want to share that you haven't covered before there's questions?

### Brid Featherstone

Yeah, I wanted to just flag up some good things, as well as some questions. One is that there is a little bit of an opening around this idea that the story with men - and it is a story about men - that it's all about power and control, and that they're highly rational and that they absolutely know what they're doing. And so you devise programmes to challenge that faulty thinking. There is a bit of an opening, with things like the Drive Programme, which is looking at say childhood trauma, some people are starting to make links with substance misuse, because the research on the links between substance misuse and harm are very, very, are very strong. Again, this is not about excuse, this is about understanding. The Drive Programme is also engaging with the reality, the research reality that's been thrown up about the links between serious mental health issues and high harms. And for men, there are particular issues about mental health, they don't go for help early enough. And by the time that they come to the attention to services, things are often at a very high level of risk. And so the siloed thinking that we've been engaging with, which has been compounded in the case of men, by they are all excuses that they can't use drink, or they can't use childhood trauma. There is some thinking about that. And then just finally, we were really interested in programmes that are trying to move with the responsibilisation discourse away from a focus on women, so Safe and Together is really trying to think about how to work in this space. And that's certainly something that we're mulling over how successful is it to be able to do that and to move things on. Yeah, because Safe and Together seems to be very strong at contextualising, women's choices and mapping what's going on in the family, all the things we've said have not been happening, and helping to understand what the experience might be like for children and how, how successful will that be going along the line, particularly in relation to really engaging men? Because as Kate says, that's the really big one for us.

### Kate Morris

Yeah, and I think, If Owen was here, correct me if I'm wrong, Brid, I think he would also say, we have to really understand the difference between experiences that young men are having, compared to their fathers, and that there are just profoundly different influences with all sorts of consequences. I'm not putting a value on that. There are just very different experiences between generations. And certainly in our field work we can see differences in practice and differences in lived experience, between older women, younger women, older men, younger men. And social media, of course, has a role all that.

### Brid Featherstone

And you'll be sorry, you open this up, Claire, because you can never stop me talking once I start, but just really quickly, I had a moment of profound, and it sounds so obvious in retrospect, but I was talking with a woman, very experienced practitioner. And both of us just looked at each other. And we said, social workers and professionals are dipping their toes into what is this huge, huge whirlpool of intergenerational trauma often, of gender relations that are really, really complex, and that are shifting and changing. And we were talking about working with young people we were talking about, and how, and the kind of, we really, really don't always understand what we're doing and what they are experiencing and what's going on for them. Particularly in the context for young women of multiple vulnerabilities where, you know, they're hearing somebody say, I love you. And they're thinking, well, nobody will ever love me, I'm not valuable... I, you know. So us coming along with our highly rational approaches, this is domestic abuse, this is coercive control, isn't even tipping the edges of kind of so much pain and need and hurt in a world where they're told all the time that they're worthless, and that they're not given messages around value. It seems obvious, but I think we both kind of looked at each other and went, Oh, my God.

### Claire Burns

Yeah, I think that I can share that as well, because it feels like even you just said that, how that's impacted on me thinking about our expectations of what the social work task is, and what social workers are doing, you know, in such complex circumstances. So readiness support, you think it's such a complex task that we're asking of people, and some days, an almost impossible task, for individual workers to engage with, to engage with the family. So I think that's probably had the same impact on me as well, just thinking, you know, it's huge.

### Kate Morris

And then I think, for me, that means that's kind of obvious, then what we're going to do, we're going to talk to each other, because that's the kind of slightly safer space. So then we go off and have a strategy meeting, or whatever it is, I mean, I cannot believe the number of multi-agency meetings that occur in an early encounter for a family with services. But also, I think that it reinforces Brid's question that I absolutely share, which is, doesn't that tell us we might have a problem in the wrong place? Doesn't that tell us that the Child Protection System is not fit for purpose when it comes to domestic violence and abuse? And that some of the complexity we're managing, is that it's the wrong service in the wrong system? And it's never going to fit? So I think we have to have these really difficult but important conversations. And because it is overheating the child protection system, there's no two ways about that. And that results in I think, at times, short term, quick fix decisions that aren't necessarily right for children aren't necessarily right for families or communities. Practitioners may have no choice in that. So you can't load this on the shoulders of individual practitioners by any means.

### Brid Featherstone

And the women, the women I spoke to, particularly in the adoption inquiry, know that it's unjust, they know that they are being punished over and over for being beaten up. And the worst thing is to lose your children to adoption, because that's so final. So there's this deep reservoir of anger and frustration and dissatisfaction, as well as a feeling of unjustness, which isn't good because we were trying so hard to do develop relationships, aren't we and to be a relationship based profession. And this is a legacy of distrust and anger actually.

### Claire Burns

I am happy that you had that additional time to speak and it's much more important that we hear from you. So just to pick up some of the kind of key themes. And the first one - this is interesting, because this has actually been my first question on all the webinars - has been around the involvement of lived experience. And I think everybody would accept that that's something that as a profession, we've had to be called to task on. You know, we've had to think much more carefully about how we do it. But I'm also interested in your view that, you know, I think we need to develop a thought about how we do that in a more sensitive and nuanced way. And I think, Kate, I've said to you last week that I think there's lots of learning in this project in and of itself about how we engage with families and get their insight. So can you say just a bit more about that,

### Kate Morris

So in a very early stages, we spent some time talking to family members in a range of different settings, some representing groups, some individuals. And I'm using the word family here really loosely, essentially, it's just a, if I had to list everyone impacted by our interventions, it would be a very long sentence, so I'm just using the word family like that. And there was a number of, really, I think, for me, important learning points in that one was that this is a really, really difficult topic. And so talking about it, in a group you don't know in a system you haven't been part of, is really tough. And so one of the messages was, please use and work with existing family led arrangements, rather than creating your own for the research project. Equally, don't parachute in, take our views take our experiences and disappear, because that exploits our lived experience. So we are very clear that the families that the research project is connecting with are there to help us be better researchers. They're not there to provide data for the project. In the case study sites, there will be all sorts of ways in which we will interview, hear from, include family experiences, and that is part of the data set. The work with families through the national project is much more about helping us ask the right questions when we go into the field, think about the analysis in different ways, think about the meanings emerging from the data in different ways. So don't don't .. I have forgotten the author Poverty Safari,

Brid Featherstone

Darren McGarvey.

Kate Morris

He talks in there doesn't he about, you know, folks visiting, a tourist approach to lived experience. And we're trying really hard not to do that. So it's about going back to groups. It's about maintaining a very respectful relationship about how we use their reflections and expertise, how we're accountable to them for how we use their reflections and expertise and SafeLives are doing a lot of work to help us with that. So that's that kind of engagement with families in that sense, two levels. But also, we are still thinking through Brid, you know, you might want to talk a bit about this from the adoption inquiry experience. You know, one of the moments for me, it wasn't part of the adoption inquiry, but when the most powerful contributions it made was to bring together those different perspectives in a common conversation. And from that new meanings and new understandings emerged. I think we'd hoped we might be able to facilitate that. But we've had a really strong message that that just is not...There isn't a safe or respectful or appropriate way to do that at the moment. That may change over time. And when we started practitioners like Sharon, maybe building through her work, forums and panels where that becomes possible. But at the moment, that was just essentially the message was it is a bridge too far. Brid, do you want to add to that?

Brid Featherstone

Yeah. Because I think it's one of my disappointments about the project, as you know. With the adoption inquiry for those who don't know, and I don't know that we knew exactly. Well, anyway, we brought together adoptive parents, birth parents, and adopted people and professionals into the same space for a day. So we held about seven or eight of these events across the UK, because it was a four nation project. And it was extraordinary. And there were some where people were in conversation, a birth mother and adoptive parents, obviously not matched, you know, different people from different groups, and a person who had been adopted themselves and a social worker, and myself sitting there and the conversations were really profound, and opened up all sorts of issues. I would have loved us to be able to do some of that in this inquiry. So to put it bluntly, put together not necessarily people... Yeah, well, women and men, young people over 16 and professionals and to have a conversation about what do we mean about domestic abuse? How do we understand it and what should we be doing about it? That hasn't proved possible. People are too... Yeah, it can't. It's too complicated and it's felt too risky and people have quite clearly told us no. So I am disappointed about that if I'm honest.

Claire Burns

Yeah. And sorry were one of you wanting to come in there? No. And I think again, I'd said this to you last week, I think so much in that regardless of the context how we're learning

about how we best engage children, families, individuals, in these really kind of sensitive complex environments. And I think for us as well, at CELCIS, our responsibility is to be feeding that back to government because there's quite a push, in every sector to say how will we engage with lived experience. But we have to also listen to them about how that works best in terms of the participation. So lots there, I wanted to ask you about. I was really interested that piece around families, journeys through the.. I think you didn't say systems, you were saying services, which I think again, for families is much more grounded. And given your point about thinking about, the backgrounds of men in terms of child trauma, substance misuse, that becomes even more significant because it's about where were the missed opportunities to engage. So I wonder if you could just say something more about, we often think about a domestic abuse issue or event in and of itself, but actually, you're saying we have to look at the background and the missed opportunities. So can you say a bit more about that?

#### Brid Featherstone

Yeah, do you want me to just say quickly about what practitioners have said to me Kate before, because you've engaged more with the case files I'm behind on that. One of the things that practitioners and managers have said to me is that things have tended to be very episodic, but they have occasionally gone back and really looked at what on earth was going on with this and all these different referrals, and been able to build up a chronology of all of the referrals and of the points of opportunity and missed opportunity. And again, this is really depressing, but they say, we don't do that we do a quick fix, we operate at this point with what's happening now, in this context. And I think going back to our big question about is domestic abuse right for the child protection system, crudely? One of our answers is that at the minute people are managing by engaging in quick fix. They are managing this real big complexity by engaging in quick fix. And that's particularly an issue around how they engage men, but it's not just men.

#### Kate Morris

I suppose I'd add to that Brid by saying - and it's one of the things I found really thought provoking and I don't know if Claire's found this in Doncaster oops, actually it's okay, because a case study site. Is that there's something about then the children and the young people, the level of resistance they have to intervention. So the very kind of subjects about our attention, the very people we're saying in terms of priority to help the very group that's at the top in our child protection system, which is the children and the young people, are saying, we don't want you in our lives. You've let us down so often. We've witnessed this so often, we have kind of gone through the pain barrier, in terms of what's going on in our household and in our family. And you haven't been there for us, you haven't made a difference, a sustained difference. So actually we don't really want to engage. And that is starting to emerge, then when you do the file audit, it starts to emerge in terms of those young people that go on to become parents. Yeah. And so it's not that ... I wouldn't want folks to listen to this and think we're only thinking about the

adults, we're thinking profoundly about the children and young people. And nobody in the family is experiencing sustained, significant change. That makes things better. When you find a situation where that's been achieved. It's fantastic to find. It's great to see practice making a difference. I think we're seeing fewer and fewer of those kind of positive outcomes and more of the worrisome negative outcomes at the moment. That may change but at the moment, that's my reflections, Brid, that for many families, it's a problematic experience rather than a positive experience.

### Brid Featherstone

I think it's....And this is different research. It's Brenda Herbert, who has just finished a PhD using an intersectional lens, talking to children. It's a beautiful piece of work, where she worked with children in a kind of very long standing way over a period of time. And one quote that really stuck when I heard her presentation was this young lad saying to her, I don't like that social worker. He's not nice to my mom, or she's not nice to my mom. Yeah, so yeah, so her work is very compatible with ours actually, really worth engaging with.

### Kate Morris

And the other thing Brid and I have been talking about, Claire more recently, is... So we are starting to pick up, as we kind of get more and more involved in the field, family journeys that are very affluent families coming through the service. And the experience of affluent families, tells you a lot about the experience of families in poverty. It is Carol Robinson, I think, who's now at York, the social policy scholar who said, to understand poverty, you need to study the rich. And I think she's absolutely right. And the extent to which affluent families are buying themselves out of intervention, by using all sorts of privately funded services to bypass the child protection system, are engaged with in quite a different way, by practitioners. It's really revealing around kind of the limits of our practice. And so I think there's probably, Brid and I would say, there's probably something that we will write coming out of this about affluent families and domestic abuse and child protection. There's, there's some messages in there.

### Brid Featherstone

And this is a big health warning, but I'm really interested in affluent men and coercive control. I think there might be something going on there where we're not engaging them. Whereas the traveller man down the road with more than one child is really the focus of our concern.

### Claire Burns

Yeah, that's so interesting. We could, I would imagine we can talk all day, just about that. You know, I think lots of people would have, I think one of the questions that's come through and at the certainly, and I think this is a really tricky question, to ask you, but I am going to ask it anyway. And people have been saying that you've been saying is the

child protection system, the place where this should be located. Do you have a sense about what an alternative would be? You know, and I think it does pick up on some of the issues. And we've and many of the things the research projects in Scotland, is that families are saying, we want to be engaged in our communities, you know, by universal services. So I wonder if you could just say something more about where could it be located and what kind of model do you think would work? But I appreciate that that's such a tricky question.

#### Brid Featherstone

Yes, isn't it? Yeah, yeah. There was a big debate between Mimi Kim, Who's the woman in California (Dr. Mimi Kim, Associate Professor at the School of Social Work, California State University) and Joan Pennell about this wasn't there, Kate, about this. Because Mimi Kim thinks, particularly for marginalised communities, that the state has very little to offer and locates everything outside the state. Whereas Joan talks about a creative interventions within the state and widening the circles of support and countervailing tendencies. Oh, I don't know, I can't answer this at this point. I think we have to keep talking about this.

#### Kate Morris

So I think...I think we're at the stage of starting to understand what we shouldn't be doing. Yeah, and understanding that much better. And we're starting to understand the kind of object of our activity. That's from some complex Swedish methodology, I can't remember what it is, is the wrong object. I think. I think that we would both say really strongly, we are never going to arrive at one size fits all. That we are not going to arrive in a position where we can say with confidence, this particular framework and this particular set of systems and services will solve this. What we think we can arrive at and we're not there yet are principles that guide in govern our responses, but I think communities and families have to be seriously engaged in building the services they receive. And we don't do that. The only way often for families to engage is through the complaint system. That's a completely deficit model of engagement. Yeah, I think one of the things we will find from this case study is there are very different levels of family engagement in the sites and family input into services. I think we're going to see that play out in the practices very early. But I think we are going to see that play out a bit in the practices and in the thinking that's going on amongst frontline practitioners and how they engage with families. But you know, we're in our infancy, aren't we, in terms of, you know, families should be commissioning services, evaluating services, holding us to account, reconfiguring services. And instead, we become more and more distant from them.

#### Brid Featherstone

The word accountability keeps coming up for me, because I know, quite right, quite understandably, people accuse me of confirmation bias. But I am constantly meeting in all sorts of forums, women who've been through our systems, and who are dealing with the



consequences of years of both family trauma, but also system led trauma. And we're trying to support them to, to mitigate that and to overcome feelings of distrust, and kind of injustice. So yeah, so yeah, I mean, we did try in the Protecting Children – a Social Model to try and think about a different way of starting with different questions. So starting from questions that concern families themselves, rather than questions which we see all the time, certainly in England, like, what kind of multi-agents working do you need? I mean, we're constantly tormented by this reply. Every time there's a child death, where there is domestic abuse now. We're constantly tormented by the same people being wheeled out to talk about multi-agency working. And they're not asking really fundamental questions about why is this going on? Who's most impacted? What do they think about it? What do they think would help?

#### Kate Morris

I think if we use the example of services, for men, it's quite a nice kind of snapshot of the very issues we're talking about now. So it is becoming increasingly apparent that the eligibility criteria for the services for men keeps out the very men that we're all worried about. And we were talking about this at the advisory group last week, that you have this tick list, you know, that men have to acknowledge some responsibility that they have to not be currently presenting a risk or whatever it might be. The message from social workers is they're not the man I am worried about, yes, fine, you know, if they can have some help and support some therapies and counselling... The men that the practitioners are worried about are the men that are not eligible for those services. And we have to ask ourselves, why are we building services with those exclusion criteria if we're saying we're wanting to solve a problem, that's about very risky, harmful people in a household? It doesn't, it doesn't make sense. I can't square that circle. So there's a conversation to have. And that's just a snapshot of the limits of the child protection system. When you look at the complexity of the problem.

#### Brid Featherstone

I'll just really quickly say one of the reasons I feel so tentative and unsure at the minute is one of the things that we are still engaging with around the domestic abuse research is there is a tension between - which goes back to the family involvement. If you say we want to start from the words and experiences of those impacted, and we want to build a system based on them, there is a tension between that and the reality that often, particularly not just but, for women, they're often caught up in situations where they don't realise it's domestic abuse, or it's very early on for them. Or they, they think, Oh, he really loves them. That's why he doesn't allow them out all that kind of thing. So there is a really big tension that I don't know how we're going to get through. A worker said to me, once recently, in an interview, she said, they don't know what we know. And they were talking about coercive control. And the trouble is, she's right on one level, but it doesn't make for a very democratic or open conversation. If you start off with this is what domestic abuse is. This is what coercive control is. And then you're talking to men and

women and they're saying, well, that's not that doesn't fit for me. I don't agree with that. That's a really big tension that I think that we're still battling with to be absolutely honest because I my impulses are always to go with the bottom up, hearing from people involved themselves what they want happen. But I am butting up against all this stuff around domestic abuse, which is I suspect why the family involvement stuff didn't work in quite the same way as we had hoped. Because, you know, particularly men will deny or minimize, all that kind of thing.

### Claire Burns

And it's so much that you could unpack even from that, again, I think, Kate, and I was actually going to say, I think you have answered a lot of those questions in the Social Model, you know. In actual fact, a lot of people have been asking to get the reference for that book. So we'll make sure that we pass that on. Because you and I have both referenced it and so has Kate. So we'll make sure that people get that that in reference. I think you did start to get us to think about how are we thinking about the principles, the narratives, what's driving us? Because I think Kate, you are also saying we've got a number of different narratives that are pushing against each other, you know, risk and vulnerability, and narratives about men. And so the system is trying to function within this really complex environment. So, yes, so much that we could unpack even there. And, again, I wonder about if you could say a bit more than around the support for the workforces. So how do we begin to support workforces who, as we are recognizing, are doing a really complex task, and working in a system that's not really working for them or the families? But that's the system we've got. So, you know, anything around that?, I think I've heard quite a lot from you as well, that it can't just be CPD, that reflective space that working around trauma... I think you're saying is equally important. So I wonder if you could say a bit more about that.

### Brid Featherstone

Yeah, yeah. Do you want me to go first Kate? Yeah, no, you're absolutely right, Claire, it's got to be much more organic and ongoing than sending people on a course. Well, one of the things again, with my optimistic head on, somebody said to me, which I thought all this be fantastic. It's not just about supporting the workforce, in relation to it. But it's also about acknowledging that for many people in the workforce, many of us will have been in situations where we have learnt a lot about violence and abuse, or we've experienced it ourselves or through our families. And how can we use that as a resource? How can we, how can we get engaged with that, because at the minute, it's often a source of shame, my manager will say to me, I saw a workers name attached to a referral around domestic abuse, and I made sure it got off the system, I didn't want it on the system for them, or I've found out a way of dealing with it differently so that they got the help, but that they didn't get the record. But if we moved into a different space, where we talk more openly about these things, and didn't see it, as domestic abuse happens to people out there who are particularly problematic, failing, feckless. It's actually a big, big problem in our

society, and how do we use our resources, as a workforce to understand this, going back to the point, but co-production, Kate has spoken brilliantly about how the family work is going. I also think to be honest, the community of practice is really... I'm really proud of what we're doing in the community of practice around... Because as we said, we started from and actually The Change Project started from some very senior women saying to Kate and I – we had worked with them for years, particularly around poverty practice, saying to us we really hate what we've been doing to women in the domestic abuse space, we're going to retire feeling really crap about this. And so we met for a few weeks, in Leeds, it was, in fact, they were from all over the country. And Rick then very kindly said, we'll fund a piece of work around this. So we are co-producing with people with a great deal of experience as well around services that they know haven't worked. So I think that's an important piece as well, because too often research is about doing to practitioners and doing to managers, rather than working with them. Sorry, I always talk too much you should never ask.

#### Claire Burns

Not at all this is what we're looking for. And it's really an interesting, I don't know if Kate wants to come in, but it's actually for me, you're talking about workforces experience, but I think we then begin to get experience of engaging with the services as our parents get older. I think there's lots that we can actually draw on by saying: what's our experiences of trying to engage a system which is difficult to penetrate, even when you know it and you work in it? So I think there's also something for me about how do we begin to pull in our own experiences of trying to engage services and get services as well. So Kate, I don't know if there's anything on workforce development that you want to come in on. I have another questions that people are asking

#### Kate Morris

Just to add really. I think we have to make it absolutely legitimate for want of a better term for a worker to say this hasn't worked. We have failed this family and failed this family for the following reasons. So that the case summary explicitly says we were unable to make a difference because of X, Y and Z, we actually made matters worse, because of A, B, and C. And I think allowing workers to reflect on the limits is really important. And we are certainly in England, so preoccupied with Ofsted, and with auditing, and with a positive story for social work, that we're shutting down practitioners, but actually, the learning in this complex area has to be about being okay about saying it's not working, we are not getting it right. We're committing multiple errors over decades, with families that result in the following kind of outcomes. Because we've allowed, I think.. We've got to allow learning to emerge from what we're not getting, right. But if we don't let workers talk about what they're not getting, right, that learning isn't going to emerge. It's difficult for practice supervisors, for managers, I get that, you know, I really haven't been one myself, I really understand you don't want a set of files full of now negative narratives

about your service. We've got to have a full and frank conversation in the space, and part of that is letting practitioners talk about the limits and the distress they have about the limits.

[Brid Featherstone](#)

I couldn't agree more. I think that's really important.

[Claire Burns](#)

I think that's so impactful Kate and about, how we create the context that allows that, that social workers don't feel it that they're on their own, or they're going to take the blame. What's a regulation inspection? I think it's probably slightly easier up here. But I mean, my colleagues would tell you, there's still you know, the pressures of inspection and who's taking responsibility if something goes wrong, certainly there has been some, you know, some progress around learning reviews, where there are significant case reviews to try and make that whole process of learning be the focus, rather than about blame. So I think that just something really important that you've picked up there around how we support the workforces, and not in an individual way, but how are we thinking about that collectively? So, yeah, another couple of questions. You'll need a lie down after this, but people are talking about how, what have you picked up so far about the ways in which Signs of Safety or Safe and Together are you? How helpful are these models? And what are some of the issues around either, you know, scaling these in a way that's impactful or with quality? So if there is anything you can say around that?

[Kate Morris](#)

Brid, do you want to talk about Safe and Together?

[Brid Featherstone](#)

Yeah. Do you want to give a personal anecdote about scaling questions? Yep. Safe and Together, I think has opened up a much needed conversation about what happens, particularly for women and has brought in a high level of granularity into conversations. So if you remember Kate said, you know, we often have DV, those DV in this family, and it's impacting the children. And a whole range of things happen as a result of those bold statements, but they're actually they're not telling you anything. So I do think Safe and Together has opened up really, really important questions and conversations and workers are really, really enjoying working with that, particularly because it helps to understand and build better conversations with women. Definitely. I am not - and it could be me, it could be me, I totally hold my hands up - I'm not completely sure about how much it's promoting conversations with men, the kind of conversations I would like. I think it is helping to map perpetrator behaviour, as they call it. It is helping men to understand about parenting choices, but I think it still holds to a kind of rational power and control model in relation to men. But I might have got that wrong. But I do welcome it as a way of opening up conversations. And the thing about Signs of Safety and Safe and Together

though is if no matter how good these systems are. And I watched a scaling model yesterday, we used in the most incredibly inaccurate way and unhelpful way. If you are in a risk averse context, Mary Baginsky's Working with Signs of Safety showed and there's another work I was looking at recently, no matter how good these models are, if you dip them into a risk averse context and you don't change culture - you have to change culture - they cannot be a substitute. So I've seen Signs of Safety where women have been scaled at, you know, eight to nine in terms of the risks ie Very few risks, and yet their children have been placed on a child protection plan. You know, I've seen those things happen. So, health warning, they can help they offer support to better conversations. Often they offer help to workers who are terrified and worried and feeling really overwhelmed. But if you don't shift the culture, if you don't have good leadership, if you don't open up possibility of making mistakes, if you operate in a risk averse way, they will be misused as well. Would you agree Kate?

Kate Morris

Absolutely. Because I think the question you're flagging Brid, the question underneath it is, what is the actual purpose do these programmes, these models, these interventions serve? And I think quite often, in fact, Sue White used to say, this didn't she, you know, this is about giving certainty, in a profoundly uncertain world. And so if it enables workers... gives them confidence to deal more appropriately, with a particular situation. I kind of feel I don't mind what the model is. If it gives a false certainty, and reinforces what we know, already profoundly unequal experiences, then you have to ask some questions about that. There's a debate, isn't it? I mean, my background is did a lot of work in family group conferences, they were a really good example of the challenges of working in this space. Because if you look at a lot of the FTC work in this space, it's not restorative. It is about.... Yes, it's about widening the circle. It's about bringing in an extended family perspective, and in many ways, is really helpful to children and to family members. It doesn't put right or wrong, the restorative element of FTCS from that kind of Maori origin, which is really challenging, and thought provoking, got lost in translation. But as a model, it provides an important way of having difficult conversations with families, and it appears to do so in a really positive way. So, you know, I would absolutely endorse it. So as Brid is saying, in some situations, some of these approaches facilitate better conversations without a shadow of a doubt. We have to dig underneath and ask why is it needed?

Brid Featherstone

Yeah, but the other thing as well is we wrote an article a few years ago, which was the first article we wrote on the social model called let's stop feeding the risk monster. And, you know, honestly, these things can just be colonised by the risk monster and turned. And I think that that, again, there's a theme emerging here for me, that again, feeds people's distrust, because they'll say, Well, if I'm scaled at eight or nine, and yet my child is still on the Child Protection register, What's that about? You know, there's so yeah,

### Claire Burns

I think that's actually been so challenging for me and for CELCIS to think about what we've seen around implementation, because I think kind of where you are going is saying where we've got models that support practice and support really good practice, so where there's a level of specificity or that can support workers to have those kind of conversations that you're talking about, Kate. But how are we making a distinction between that and techno-rational responses to the complexity that we're working in? And I think that's been really helpful for me to think, hey, we'll be distinguishing. And I'm talking about that, because I think one of the questions was around implementation and the complexity of implementation. Again, what you are saying is that we're often trying to bring one model in and change, but it doesn't change the whole how the whole system has responded to risk and vulnerability. And that's why it often feels, and again, then we keep introducing things that for social work, particularly keeps feeling like it's another thing that's failed. So I wondered if there's just anything you want to say in response to that. And then we've got one last couple of questions.

### Kate Morris

I suppose I want to be a bit careful, because sometimes some of this is helpful whilst we try and think about the big picture and the big questions. So, you know, for many practitioners, for many families, some of these approaches have led to a better relationship. And that's that is appropriate and legitimate. And I don't want to dismiss that in any way. Because whilst we're thinking through the big questions we did, ought to make sure the immediate is less painful.

### Brid Featherstone

I've been at a lot of conferences where, you know, there's been research findings presented about this didn't work and I've been sitting beside practitioners and I remember in the old days of Sure Start sitting beside people who were saying, you know, It's really made a difference to my families, it's really made a difference to my work. So I am a qualified fan of Safe and Together, because I do think it's opening up really, really important conversations. And it's getting us into places that we need to be in. I just have some questions about it. And you're right. Irrespective of the model, I would always say we've got to look at culture and context. And that's really, really vital. But Kate is absolutely right. There is nothing worse than researchers standing up and saying, well, you know, the overall evidence is this. And you're sitting there thinking it made a big difference to my life or to my family's life.

### Claire Burns

I think that technique has been so important Kate and Brid to just say, you know, as we're trying to answer these big questions about how do we change our system that we need to keep an eye on what helps the day to day practice in the workforce for families,

that kind of incremental improvement is really important? And I think, again, one of the questions were just around, where you saw good practice, what did that look? Because again, we have to remain hopeful.

[Kate Morris](#)

I think I have seen some fantastic examples of family engagement in modifying and refining services. So really active family forums that middle managers are meeting with and listening to and paying attention to. And are being used by all involved in a creative and imaginative way. So I think parents panels, family forums, things like that. We've seen examples of where that... It's not changing the underpinning system. But it is modifying practice and making services more accessible, more appropriate.

[Brid Featherstone](#)

And if you remember, at the beginning, I was saying about The Change Project, we did a series of outputs, including interviews with managers and commissioners and workers around what they were trying to do around domestic abuse. And they are available that and we've got the links for them, they were open access. And, she'd be the first to admit that it's kind of like still not mainstream, and it's not embedded in the overall work of the council. But some of the work that Alyssia Lee and her colleagues are doing at Doncaster is absolutely revolutionary around domestic abuse. They're using Johnson's topologies. They're working with couples safely, they've been evaluated really well. They're also doing quite a lot of work in the community now around community navigators. So she's a complete star, that woman she really is. And she would be the first to admit that it's not becoming core business. It's not embedded, but and there's a good interview with her on the, on the website.

[Kate Morris](#)

And I think there are examples of really effective use of family group conferences to modify the worst excesses of some of the Child Protection Systems. And I think so I think there's a body of work there. That's really interesting. I think we will probably see some highly innovative work from some of the kinds of smaller, more focused....Some of the things that Owen has been doing. Brid, in terms of Future Men, where they are doing some really important work with young men who are very disillusioned, disenfranchised communities. So I think we will also see green shoots there. And we can learn collectively, from some of those small community based charities. You know, there's the Unity Gym work in Sheffield, you can see these green shoots there. I am interested in what can be developed in terms of young men and men. And I think it will be interesting to see whether we can see some community led developments there that might make a difference.

### Brid Featherstone

And none of these would brand themselves as working with domestic abuse Owen would say we're definitely not at all I'm working with domestic abuse in a straightforward sense. But the work he's doing every day is around child safeguarding and working with domestic abuse. Conversations with young men all the time are around those areas. So there's something as well about how we've ring fenced things unsaid or that's domestic abuse, or that's child protection. And I think again, there'll be another conversation coming out of our research about the role of family support and early help in relation to domestic abuse. We haven't even touched on that today. But there is that that is being raised.

### Claire Burns

Yeah, just conscious of time them are kind of coming to the end, but I was actually sitting here thinking my colleague Joanne who's on the call, I thought she would be sending me finish on the hopeful, always finish on hopeful. There's a question come through, I'm feeling good because it's like she's sitting on my shoulder and I have predicted what she was going to say. So I suppose I think what I'm really taken away for your final comments is that bit about the hopeful piece around community responses about engaging with men, but particularly engaging with young men. So it's the early family support. And I think what you're also pointing out is still the power of individual workers, though, and how they engage with families and if they are supported well, you know, that they can make a difference to the individual families, we are supported where we do so. I think that's what I'm taking away. So I suppose I've just asked you for your final comments for the audience, and just to thank you, there's been so many questions come through. I hope I've done my best at trying to bring these bits to the surface that people might just want, you know, this has been such an engaged audience in the work, you know, engaging with us, like by experience last week, so I'll just leave people to make your final comments.

### Kate Morris

So first of all, thank you. These conversations are so helpful, because we're kind of working it out with thrashing it through. So a conversation like this is so helpful. So a huge, thank you. And I, I think we are at the start of important conversations that are going to lead to significant change. So I am hopeful. I am hopeful and not, you know, as Brid will tell you, I can be an absolute Eeyore sometimes - we're all doomed. I'm not saying that, because when I have these conversations, I realise how much potential there is to do things differently. And so I am hopeful. It's been a really, really helpful conversation. Thank you,

### Brid Featherstone

I agree. Thank you so much. This really helps us with clarifying, because we're in the midst of trying to get the work done. And two year research projects are incredibly challenging, because you have to set up all the ethics and the data, and then go out and...



Oh, anyway, so there's loads of actually the doing of the work, as social workers will be very familiar with, ironically, we're doing the work and while we are we having time to think about it. So this is really helpful. I am hopeful as well. And I just wanted to say I've done a lot of work in the past, and more recently, actually, with Owen around training workers on engaging men. And you know, there are loads of workers out there who don't come in with lots of... Young women as well, who don't come in with lots of preconceptions, they just see it as core business, they don't have this anxiety, you know, well, why wouldn't I talk to the man? Why wouldn't I ask him what's going on? So, you know, sometimes you think, Oh, God, be careful, and you know, naivety and all that. But on the other hand, you know, there are different generations coming through now with different ideas about relationships between men and women. And we definitely, Owen and I, definitely picked up on that, that there were workers who were just saying, of course, I engage the man.

### Claire Burns

Yes, thanks again. And people have a number of comments just about really picking up that piece around workforces experiences and how we're working with that, and the shame of that. So just want to acknowledge that somebody has asked, you know, but I think you've covered it, but it saves so much to us, I think, as well around, we've got developments around a new National Social Agency in Scotland about supporting particularly recruitment and retention, but support, but I think what you said as well as the world is very different from when we came at the social work as well. And how are we supporting social workers? You know, you are taking that graciously, thankfully. But we need to engage. There is a new reality for people you know, as well as not losing some of our fundamental skills as social workers as well. So yeah. So on that note I think it's just to say you'll have a bit of a rest now and but just thanks so much, Kate and Brid that's been so impactful and so engaging, and I hope it's not the end of the conversation between CELCIS and Scotland and yourselves as well because you've got so much to offer us.

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Links:

<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/rethinking-domestic-abuse-in-child-protection-responding-differently>

<https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/content-pages/change-projects/rdac/>