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Background

Child and adolescent to parent violence (C/APVA) is a form of family violence that falls under the cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse. ([Condry et al, 2020](#)). The [University of Brighton](#), suggest that 1 in every 10 families experience some form of parent abuse. C/APVA has tended to be a 'hidden' form of family violence, both by families who experience stigma and shame for the actions of their child, and because of a lack of recognition in government policy and service planning (Condry, 2020). Parents often don't recognise this as being domestic abuse and are worried about criminalising their child.

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Why it matters

Child and adolescent to parent violence is a complex problem and the boundaries between the child and the adult can be unclear. The violence is often, although not always, contextualised within existing family problems and many children who are violent towards their parents are, or have been victims or secondary victims of domestic violence or trauma including child abuse.

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Information

Occasional conflict is normal between parents and their children when teens are attempting to separate themselves and establish their own independence. In some families experiencing C/APVA there is a history of domestic violence and abuse. In other cases, the violence is contextualised with other behavioural problems, substance abuse, mental health problems, learning difficulties, or self-harm and in some cases, there is no apparent explanation.

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In one study of adolescent to parent violence, the abuse was described as involving a pattern of aggressive, abusive, and violent acts over a prolonged period. As well as physical assaults, those parents said their children had smashed up property, kicked holes in doors, broken windows, had thrown things at their parents, and made threats. Parent abuse occurs in all social, cultural, and economic groups.

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Women who are single parents are often the targets of abuse, however, all family members including siblings can be at risk. It is also important to recognise the language used when dealing with C/APVA and that children/adolescents aren't referred to as a perpetrator. According to a [recent report](#), the 'hidden problem' of child and adolescent to parent violence has seen a significant increase in Covid lockdown (Condry & Miles, 2020).

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What to do

Before any intervention is attempted by practitioners, there needs to be a considered approach reflecting the whole family's dynamics. If an intervention is undertaken which aims to halt the violence without reflecting on the wider family issues, then the situation can be significantly exacerbated. The [Home Office](#) have produced multi-agency guidance including advice for agencies on how to respond.

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Questions to consider

Has assessment taken account of all wider presenting issues?

Has the child's behaviour moved beyond what is safe for the parent, other family members or the child themselves?

Is a safety plan needed for the family?

Contact [The Wish Centre](#) for Respecting Young People Programme information. The RYPP is a programme for families where children between 10 and 16 are abusive or violent towards the people close to them.

