Evaluation of
The Childhood Domestic Violence & Abuse Project

JULY 2021

Prepared by:

Dr Ruth Elliffe
Jo Greene
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Barnardos

Because childhood lasts a lifetime

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Acknowledgements

About the authors

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Executive Summary

Overview of the Evaluation

Barnardos wished to sponsor an independent external process review of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project, in order to review the project in terms of its overall aim to assist in increasing the visibility of childhood domestic abuse in Ireland and inform the future development of the project. The review process involved an online survey administered to all CDVA project members, as well as a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with members of the core project team; TLC Kidz project facilitators; National Advisory Group members; and practitioners involved in the Children's Participation project and Community of Practice.

The specifics questions addressed in the review are:

1) What is the current project model and how effective has it been so far in achieving the project objectives?

2) What available resources are being used and are they effective in implementing the project at a National level?

3) To what extent geographically across Ireland has the project reached those providing services to children and families who experience Domestic violence and abuse?

4) What are the strengths of the Project?

5) What are the constraints and challenges as experienced by stakeholders involved in implementing the Project?

6) How successful has the project been on building capacity not only in existing services but in influencing other services that may not have seen their role within childhood domestic abuse?

7) To what degree has the Project achieved progress under the following strands of work;

   1. Provide Support
   2. Enhance Practice
   3. Gather Data
   4. Develop Model

Summary of Key Findings

Drawing together multiple perspectives of those involved in the implementation of the project, key stakeholders and participating members, the findings of the review point to the successful delivery and implementation of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project by Barnardos. This is evidenced by an overwhelmingly positive tone expressed by participants for the CDVA project and its continued work. And, most importantly a marked ability in bringing people along to develop a community of like-minded practitioners with a shared goal and interest in increasing visibility of childhood domestic violence and abuse in Ireland. The review identifies 3 key areas:

1) Keeping children 'front and centre'
2) Reaching a wider audience through education and knowledge sharing
3) A developing project at a key juncture

Recommendations

The key recommendations from the review are as follows:

Recommendation 1	The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project should be continued. We recommend that provision is made to support the current broader remit of the project than once stated in the original aims and objectives.
Recommendation 2	There should be a continued emphasis on capturing the voice of the child and creating opportunities for children and young survivors to participate in the project strands by working towards the development of a Youth Advisory Group.
Recommendation 3	A particularly strong aspect of the project is the Community of Practice model. We recommend consideration is given to the use of a hybrid model involving both online national events and smaller regionalised in-person meetings that focus more on practice wisdom and knowledge sharing whilst simultaneously supporting continued networking opportunities and awareness raising in local areas.
Recommendation 4	Continued focus on increasing visibility of childhood domestic violence and abuse through awareness raising in the community and expansion of Community of Practice membership.

Recommendation 5	Education & training: consideration given to development of CPD opportunities for practitioners, regionalising networking events to enhance collaborative practice and feed into a module for social care students.
Recommendation 6	National Advisory Group: gain clarity & focus around purpose and goals with consideration for the establishment of subgroups as a solution to the expanding width and breadth of the project. Taking time to consider purposive membership in seeking the 'right people' with influence to take it to the next level and give the CDVA project a statutory footing.
Recommendation 7	A National Framework: establish a subgroup to work out exactly what this means and ensure people with influence are involved as well as frontline staff and young survivors – opportunity at this point in the project to create every opportunity for young people to be involved in the process and have their voice heard on a framework response – Pay close attention to the core tenets of Lundy's model and learning from Houghton's work with young survivors.

1 Background/Context

Internationally, the link between domestic violence and child abuse is now recognised as a significant concern with implications for health, social and justice sectors (Stanley, 2011). There is a growing consensus that children and young people living with domestic violence are victims in their own right and that there is a need for this to be reflected more strategically in policy and practice responses to the issue (Buckley, Whelan, & Holt, 2006; Callaghan, Alexander, Sixsmith, & Fellin, 2016; Øverlien, 2010; Stanley, Miller, Richardson Foster, & Thomson, 2010). Definitions of domestic violence have now widened to include the physical and non-physical forms of violence, and patterns of control that are used by the perpetrator to impact both adults and children living in the home (Callaghan, Alexander, et al., 2016; Katz, 2016). An increase in qualitative research including children on their experiences of living in a domestically violent home, has contributed to a richer understanding of children's capacity for agency and the complex set of strategies they employ in their resistance and management of those experiences (Callaghan & Alexander, 2015; Katz, 2015; Øverlien & Hydén, 2009). The evidence indicates that children, once perceived as passive bystanders within the domestic violence debate, are on the contrary more actively involved in an array of actions which they carry out with purpose (Katz, 2016).

This document reports on the evaluation of a project established in Ireland steered by partners representing the statutory child and family agency Tusla and childrens charity Barnardos. The review was carried out by Dr Ruth Elliffe, Jo Greene and Orla Keegan, Trinity College Dublin, over a three month period. Dr Elliffe was commissioned to carry out this evaluation by Barnardos.

1.1 Increasing visibility of childhood domestic violence and abuse

In Ireland, there is a dearth of empirical research pertaining to the experiences of children living with domestic violence. The only existing studies, both qualitative which were carried out just over a decade ago, included children and young people's perspectives who shared their experience of living with domestic violence and the service response (Buckley et al., 2006; Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007). Findings from both studies highlighted a shortfall in services that directly supported the needs of children and young

people living with domestic abuse, with professionals focusing the response on the adult victim (Buckley et al., 2006; Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007). While in Ireland we have witnessed a strengthening of the rights of children[1] in both policy[2] and legislation[3] that is designed to realise the rights of children and better protect them from harm, there is an absence of empirical research that includes the experiences and views of the children, their families and the practitioners who are involved in these processes, resulting in a weak evidence base from which to inform policy and practice responses to meet the needs of children experiencing domestic violence. It is important therefore to capture the views and experiences of children in order to better inform policy and practice responses (Øverlien, 2010).

1.2   Voice, Agency and Capacity

Sociological understandings of childhood and a children's rights discourse have given way to a current backdrop in which children are understood, through which has emerged a greater appreciation of the contribution children and young people can make to research and policy development. This shift in thinking, underpinned by a reconceptualising of children and childhood and as exemplified by the UNCRC, lays out children's rights as active citizens, affording them amongst other things, the right to a voice,[4]. Such developments have informed a growing number of studies that seek to elicit the views of children on sensitive matters including domestic violence (See: Buckley et al., 2006; Callaghan et al., 2016; DeBoard-Lucas & Grych, 2011; Eriksson & Nasman, 2012; Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007; Katz, 2016; Øverlien, 2014; Radford et al., 2011; Stanley et al., 2012. Indeed, the evidence now points firmly to children's capacity to engage meaningfully in research and policy activities once provided with the space and time that enables them to do so safely (Lundy, 2007). Indeed, there is a growing body of work demonstrating the insightful and highly valuable contribution that children's voices can

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[1] In the 2012 Children's Referendum on the Thirty-first Amendment to the Constitution on Children the Irish people voted in favour of protecting and extending the rights of children in line with international statute.
[2] See 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020' (DCYA, 2014)
[3] The Children First Act, 2015 introduced a mandatory reporting system into Ireland which imposes a duty on persons to notify the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) of any child considered to be at risk of emotional or physical harm. Exposure to domestic violence in the home falls under the category of emotional abuse thereby requiring a referral (DCYA, 2011).
[4] Voice, meaning "the right to express one's views freely – including the entitlement to be listened to" (Montgomery, 2009, p. 237)

add to the domestic violence research and policy landscape, that is slowly beginning to re-position the child as a key contributor to the field, whilst also expanding our understanding of children's use of agency (Callaghan & Alexander, 2015; Houghton, 2015; Katz, 2015; Øverlien & Hydén, 2009).

1.3   Involving children in domestic violence research

According to Kirk (2007), there is less need for "adults acting as proxies for children" (p. 1252) and more openness to ascertain the child's voice in research on sensitive matters. The domestic violence literature, once dominated by an adult perspective (Øverlien, 2010), now places a greater emphasis on understanding the subjective experience of children living with domestic violence. A growing understanding of children as competent and capable social actors underpins a new wave of participatory research that values children's participation at various stages of the research process (Houghton, 2018). Despite developments in the conceptualising of children as active subjects as opposed to passive objects, it is their status of 'child' that remains central to the debate on children's participation (Powell & Smith, 2009). A developmental perspective would argue that the child, because of their age and physical stature, represents a vulnerability that requires adult protection. Continued conceptions of the vulnerable 'child' as well as adult perspectives of the child 'victim' of domestic abuse, further add to the challenges to children's participation in domestic violence research and policy making (Houghton, 2018). Policy makers, academics and service providers in the domestic violence arena would now more widely agree with the need to conduct more participatory research with children that includes larger samples that are more representative of both a refuge and a community population (Kimball, 2015). However, including children and young people in research, particularly on sensitive subjects, is not without its challenges (Cater & Øverlien, 2014; Morris, Kelsey, & Humphreys, 2012; Øverlien, 2010).

Conceptions of the vulnerable child can impact negatively on children's participation in research, resulting in a smaller evidence base to develop practice responses to meet the needs of children living with domestic violence (Cater & Øverlien, 2014). Within the literature, the assumption is often made that by supporting the adult victim of abuse, this acts as a protective factor for the child (Kelly, 1996). Although this may be true, others would argue that there is still a need to identify additional support needs that are specific to the child (Øverlien, 2010) and that this can be achieved through a

participatory approach to research and policy-making with children who have lived experiences of domestic violence and abuse (Houghton, 2018).

A recognition of children as victim in their own right involves including young survivors in the service response to domestic violence, and facilitating their inclusion in research through which they can share their experiences and views as victim/survivor, in order to develop responses that are more appropriate to the child's needs (Callaghan & Alexander, 2015; Øverlien, 2010; Stanley et al., 2010). In order to achieve this, Callaghan, Alexander, et al. (2016) maintain that:

> A shift to recognise children as equal victims in the crime of domestic violence and abuse has two important implications – It requires that we listen to children who experience domestic violence and abuse, and it creates space to recognise their own creative and agentic strategies in response to abuse and control within the family. (p. 22)

In Ireland, the inclusion of children voice in domestic violence policy development has yet to exist, however examples elsewhere provide some insight into the conditions that allow for such a process. In Scotland, a group of young people known as 'Voice Against Violence' (VAV) played a key role in informing domestic violence policy, positioning the voice of the child in the political sphere (Houghton, 2015). Voice Against Violence (VAV) successfully used their voice and agency to make a significant change to domestic violence practice and policy making in Scotland (Houghton, 2015; 2018).

1.4 Background to development of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project

The origins of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse (CDVA) project began in Tusla in 2015 when it was recognised that their response to children who have or are experiencing domestic violence was underdeveloped. It was further recognised that existing domestic violence services in Ireland traditionally focused on supporting women experiencing domestic violence and the voice and experience of the child were minimized. A survey of needs of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) services conducted at the time by the Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) team in Tusla, identified six pilot areas for development, with children being identified as one of the areas for development. For those refuges that did offer services to children experiencing

domestic abuse, funding streams were ad hoc and meant that development of services for children could not be planned for in advance in any meaningful way.

Separate to the growing recognition of the need for a broader approach to responding to childhood domestic violence within Tusla, there was a growing recognition within Barnardos of the need to expand on the success of their TLC Kidz programme which had undergone a comprehensive evaluation, highlighting the effectiveness of Barnardo's work with children in recovery. This evidence-based experience of working with children and parents who have experienced domestic violence and abuse, as well as Barnardo's experience in supporting children and families who experience DV more broadly, made Barnardos a logical choice for partnership in the development of the new national project, despite them not being a dedicated domestic violence service. A meeting was held between Tusla and Barnardos, which resulted in Barnardos submitting an application for funding (SP1 form) and securing €100,000 for the development of the CDVA project. This allowed for the creation of a national co-ordinator position to oversee the development of all strands of the programme, a position that has been identified as key for the success of the project, through attempting to traverse the barriers that exist in interagency collaboration in social services sector in Ireland.

The initial stages of the project focused on the development of the Community of Practice events and the National Advisory Group, the development of which was facilitated by the partnership approach to the project which resulted in successful participation of a number of different individuals and agencies in the project. The agreement of a service level agreement and KPIs between Tusla and Barnardos has meant that Tusla have been able to withdraw from the daily organisation and running of the programme. This has given Barnardos greater autonomy in the development of the project and also ensured that they aren't bound by the limitations that sometimes face statutory services within Ireland. However, the project is now in a position to move forward and so it is timely that this evaluation has been commissioned in order to help guide the future directions of the project.

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project

The following section outlines the original aims and objectives of the CDVA project. The overall purpose of the Childhood Domestic Abuse Project is to assist in increasing the

visibility of childhood domestic abuse; to support a collective and collaborative approach to identifying the needs of children; and to delivering effective services in response.

The Project is focused on children who have experienced domestic abuse, and involves –

- supporting the delivery of programmes responding to the needs of children who have experienced domestic abuse;
- identifying and sharing best practice – providing practitioners with opportunities to upskill and enhance their approaches to responding to the needs of children;
- identifying other response models.

Through this work, the project aims to contribute to the emergence of a national response model to support/enhance the holistic development of children and young people across the different domains of their lives.

Objectives
- To organise/facilitate continuous professional development opportunities through related training, and facilitating networking opportunities to support practice development – including a national community of practice;
- To support organisations and steering groups who are/wish to deliver a TLC Kidz project in their locality - through advice, guidance, technical support, and organising training;
- To enhance linkages between organisations within and across statutory and community & voluntary sectors to ensure a seamless response to children's needs;
- To provide opportunities for all workers engaged in programme models working with children who experience domestic violence and abuse to come together, share information and provide evidence, information and data for Tusla Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) unit on needs and gaps relevant for future planning, shaping the emergence of a national response model.

Figure 1. CDVA project activity timeline

2019
01
CDVA Project established
CDVA Co-ordinator appointed

2019
02
National Advisory Group established
19 members
Meeting Dates:
Sept 2019
Jan 2020
May 2020
Sept 2020
May 2021

2019/20
03
New KLC KIDZ Projects
Limerick/Clare: Sept 2019
Cavan/Monaghan: Sept 2020
Carlow/South Tipperary: Feb 2021
Cork City: June 2021

2019
04
Community of Practice
19th June 2019
56 attendees

19th Nov 2019
57 attendees

2020
05
Community of Practice
3rd March 2020
70 attendees

26th Nov 2020 (online)
116 virtual attendees

2020/21
06
Common Understanding SubGroup
May 2020 to July 20201
Consultation with wider services:
March 2021 to June 2021

2020/21
07
Children's Participation Group
August 2020: established
Sept 2020: confirmed definitions
Nov 2020: Launch children's video
Jan 2021: Invite to COP
Feb/May/July 2021:
new CPP group meetings
Aug 2021: feedback from children

2021
08
Community of Practice
20th April 2021 (online)
116 virtual attendees

June 2021
09
Webinar
Webinar on Childhood
Domestic Violence and Abuse
3rd June 2021
1800 registrants

1.6   Purpose of the Evaluation

Barnardos wished to sponsor an independent external process review of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project, in order to review the project in terms of its overall aim to assist in increasing the visibility of childhood domestic abuse in Ireland and inform the future development of the project.

The objectives of the evaluation as proposed by the lead author and as agreed by the Commissioners are as follows:

- To assess the effectiveness of the project model in terms of achieving its main objective of increasing visibility of childhood domestic abuse;
- To assess and measure the geographical reach of the project;
- To ascertain the views and experiences of key stakeholders involved in implementing the project;
- To assess effective collaborative and inter agency work;
- To inform the projects continued evolution and implementation.

1.7   Format of the evaluation report

In Chapter 2 we describe the methodology employed for this evaluation. In Chapter 3 the work completed by the project to date is presented, based in part on a documentary review of the documents provided to the authors of this report. The results of the survey are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 expands on the results of the survey and considers the findings from the focus group conducted with a number of TLC Kidz co-ordinators and facilitators. Chapter 6 builds on the findings discussed in chapters 4 and 5 and considers the evidence from interviews with Community of Practice events and the Children's Participation Project. Chapter 7 concludes the findings of the report by discussing the interviews with the Barnardos Project Team, and a focus group with members of the National Advisory Committee. The report concludes in Chapter 8 with a discussion of the findings of the report and proposes a number of recommendations for the project moving forward.

2   Methodology

2.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods which were adopted in this evaluation of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project (CDVA) and details the study design and the rationale underpinning the methodological decisions which were employed.

The CDVA project is funded by the National Tusla Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence team and is hosted by Barnardos. Both agencies worked closely to agree the direction of the work.

2.2   Research design and procedures

A mixed-methods approach was chosen to review the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse (CDVA) project, which combines the analysis of quantitative survey data and qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.

The strength of the quantitative approach in measuring the characteristics and general motivations of key stakeholders is enhanced through the qualitative exploration of their more nuanced experiences of the CDVA project. Mixed method approaches have not been without controversy and a paradigm debate has dominated discussions with some commentators claiming that quantitative and qualitative methods are incompatible, however recent decades have given way to a more pragmatic position. This is the perspective adopted in this evaluation, and it is considered that a more complete answer to the research question can be achieved by utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods (Bryman, 2012). Conducting a more comprehensive exploration of the research question allows for a more in-depth understanding and stronger conclusions than a method that is reliant on a single approach, permitting a more complete engagement with the research topic (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

The research was conducted using an action research approach; where research participants are regarded as experts in terms of their own roles and experiences. The aim of the evaluation is to help strengthen and improve what is being done and the

emerging insights generated by the research process are shared and discussed with the relevant stakeholders.

The evaluation adopts a theoretical thematic analysis framework. It is regarded as an accessible and theoretically flexible approach and is compatible with constructionist approaches providing a rich and detailed account of data. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data. These themes capture meanings and prevalence and requires researcher judgement to refine and categorise. The theoretical thematic analysis approach taken here codes for the specific research question and where these occur across the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The data under study in this evaluation was generated using various forms of digital technology which are detailed later in this chapter. The Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods (2017) presents a cautious but critical view of the numerous potentials of conducting research using digital technologies. It is proposed that everyday life has been revolutionised by information and communications technologies with socially transformative effects (Fielding et al., 2017). Equally, researchers from a wide range of disciplines have become more familiar with online methods and in the process, more informed about the range of challenges and opportunities they present. Dillman et al., (2014) elaborate on how to effectively conduct internet surveys in the form of web-based questionnaires and have informed the approaches taken in this evaluation (Dillman et al., 2014).

2.3   Research Questions

Arising from the stated aim and objectives, the specific questions this evaluation seeks to answer are as follows:

- What is the current project model and how effective has it been so far in achieving the project objectives?
- What available resources are being used and are they effective in implementing the project at a National level?

- To what extent geographically across Ireland has the project reached those providing services to children and families who experience Domestic violence and abuse?
- What are the strengths of the Project?
- What are the constraints and challenges as experienced by stakeholders involved in implementing the Project?
- How successful has the project been on building capacity not only in existing services but in influencing other services that may not have seen their role within childhood domestic abuse?
- To what degree has the project achieved progress under the following strands of work;
  - Strand 1: Provide Support
  - Strand 2: Enhance Practice
  - Strand 3: Gather Data
  - Strand 4: Develop Model

In order to address these questions, the evaluation team conducted primary research interviews and focus groups, an online survey and review of documents generated by the CDVA project as part of its activities.

2.4 Recruitment for consultations

Research participants were purposively recruited due to their role and involvement in the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project. The final group of participants consulted in this evaluation were identified as key stakeholders by the CDVA Project Coordinator and frequently held several roles on the programme, for example, they were involved as a facilitator and/or as a national advisory group member.

In total, 19 participants were interviewed (see breakdown in Table 1) and a further 107 participants responded to the online survey from the following groups:

- Community of Practice
- National Advisory Group
- CDVA Project Team
- Participation project
- TLC Kidz projects

The participants represented a wide range of backgrounds, including social work, community development, family support services, community agencies, domestic abuse services and representatives from Barnardos and Tusla.

Table 1: Details of participants consulted as part of the evaluation

Group	Number
National Advisory Group	6
Project Team - Tusla	1
Project Team – Barnardos	3
Participation Project/Community of Practice	2
TLC Kidz	7
Total:	19

2.5 Data collection and procedure

2.5.1 Research Design

The process evaluation was conducted over a three-month period commencing April 2021. The mixed methods analytic framework comprised of the following measures: online survey, in-depth interviews and focus groups and a documentary review. Both quantitative and qualitative data-collection methods are now described.

2.5.1.1 Quantitative measures

The research team and Barnardos developed an online questionnaire (Appendix A) collaboratively and it was generated and administered using Qualtrics XM experience management software platform. Specific demographic data regarding respondents such as gender and age were not collected. 157 potential participants were identified by the CDVA Project Coordinator and were sent the survey link by email. The link to the online CDVA project survey was activated on Friday 23rd April 2021 and was closed one week later on Friday 30th April 2021 and the response rate was 68% (n=107).

2.5.1.1.1 Qualitative measures

The fieldwork stage of the evaluation began on 6th May 2021 and consisted of both individual in-depth interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders. All qualitative interviews were conducted between 6th May 2021 and 20th May 2021.

All participants were initially contacted by the CDVA Project Coordinator and subsequent correspondence continued via email with the research team. Participants were emailed a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form and were fully informed on what the evaluation entailed, and informed consent was obtained verbally at the start of each interview. To protect confidentiality, all names were anonymised.

The interviews and focus groups were conducted and digitally recorded using MS Teams and a backup recording on voice recorder was also made for each. No interviews had any significant technical issues, and all were fully completed.

The interviews and focus groups followed an assigned interview guide (Appendix B) and were fully transcribed. A semi-structured format was selected to act as a guide for conversation and allowed the researcher to "keep an open mind about what he or she needs to know" (Bryman, 2012:10) The topics covered in the interviews and focus groups included broad questions about the formation and effectiveness of the project, an overview of its strands, increasing the visibility of childhood domestic violence and recommendations for future measures. Where participants are quoted, their words have been taken from transcripts. Following the completion of the interviews and focus groups, participants were given the option to follow up with any additional information they felt was important and some chose to do so by email to the research team.

2.5.1.2 Documentary review

A review and analysis of documentation relevant to the establishment and operation of the project was carried out and provides additional background and context to the findings. Analysis was carried out on a range of documents provided to the research team that have been generated over the life of the CDVA project to date.

2.6 Data management and analysis

The online survey was generated and administered using Qualtrics XM experience management software platform. The qualitative open text responses were extracted and compiled into an MS Word document which was transferred and stored using a two-step password protected Trinity College MS Teams file folder. All qualitative interviews and focus groups were recorded using MS Teams and associated files and transcripts were saved on a password protected Trinity College MS Teams folder.

The transcribed interviews, focus group and open text response survey data text files were analysed following a thorough process of reading, categorising, testing and refining, which was repeated by the research team until all emerging themes were compared against all the participants' responses. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase guide to thematic analysis, a codebook was generated inductively reflecting content on the themes prevalent in the data. This was achieved by first reading the data and noting recurring features in a systematic way across the entire data. Initial codes were grouped into concepts which were utilised for exploring relationships and addressing the research questions.

2.7 Ethical considerations

The Research Ethics Approval Committee of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin granted the CDVA project evaluation ethical approval on the 12th of April 2021. The evaluation adhered to all the key tenets of a high standard of ethical research; informed and voluntary consent, non-malfeasance, beneficence, confidentiality, and anonymity. Participants were fully informed of the nature of their involvement in the evaluation and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. All interviewees were given anonymity assurances and it was explained at the start of interviews or focus groups that no names of individuals would be identified in the final report. All data generated during the evaluation was only accessible to the research team.

2.8 Strengths and limitations

While every effort has been made in designing, administering and analysing this evaluation to provide the best account of the CDVA Project, there are inevitably a number of methodological limitations which need to be considered.

Firstly, the evaluation team did not make the initial contact with participants. All participants in the interviews, focus groups and online survey were contacted by a gatekeeper. Secondly, it is acknowledged that due to time constraints, some potential participants may not have been able to participate in focus groups, however all participants were invited to participate in the online survey. Finally, the quantitative component of the study relies upon an online survey of key stakeholders which may not be representative of all members of the CDVA project. As Fielding et al., (2017) notes, passive people may not respond to emails or only people who have access to computers and are computer literate may respond. However, the survey achieved a response rate of 61% and the research team are satisfied that this is considered a very good response rate (Dillman et al., 2014).

A key strength of this evaluation is the multiple perspectives at different levels of the project that were consulted for this research. Among those recruited were practitioners who work on the ground to people who are involved with the project at senior levels. A further strength of this evaluation relates to the mixed methods research design. This utilises the online survey to report the characteristics and general motivations of key stakeholders and is enhanced through the qualitative exploration of their more nuanced experiences of the CDVA project using in-depth individual interviews and focus groups.

2.9 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methods employed in this evaluation of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project (CDVA) and details the study design and procedures, recruitment and data collection and management. Ethical issues were considered, and the study strengths and limitations were noted.

3   Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project overview

3.1   Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of developments and activities since the conception of the CDVA project in 2019, drawing on documentary evidence provided to the researchers for the purpose of the review. Activities mentioned below therefore are not exhaustive and merely represent those included within the documentary review. The chapter is laid out into four sections under the headings of the 4 project strands:

1) Provide Support
2) Enhance Practice
3) Develop framework response
4) Gather Data

3.2   Strand 1: Provide Support

The primary aim of work carried out under the first strand of the project, Provide Support, is as follows:

> To ssupport the delivery of programmes responding to the needs of children who have experienced domestic abuse; and to support organisations and steering groups who are/wish to deliver a TLC Kidz project in their locality - through advice, guidance, technical support, and facilitating training.

The TLC Kidz programme originated in Canada and is run internationally under a number of different names. The overall aim of the programme is to support children who are recovering from domestic violence and abuse alongside providing support to their mothers. TLC Kidz is a group based intervention, with separate groups for mothers and children which run concurrently. In an Irish context, the first TLC Kidz group was established in North Tipperary in 2005, as a result of an interagency collaborative approach between multiple agencies stautory and voluntary and Barnardos have since hosted the programme under the umbrella of an interagency steering group. Between 2016 and 2018, the programme expanded its geographic reach with new co-ordinators and groups running in South Tipperary, Waterford and Carlow. Under strand one of the

CDVA project, and with the support of Tusla DSGBV, the project aimed to increase the number of TLC Kidz projects across Ireland.

In 2018, Barnardos commissioned an independent evaluation with funding from DSGBV Unit in Tusla on the TLC Kidz programmes operating in Tipperary, Waterford and Carlow. The mixed-methods evaluation highlighted a number of positive outcomes from the programme, not only for the children and mothers involved in the groups, but also community and organisational outcomes. These included increased communications between families and schools and other organisations, improvements in child health and wellbeing and perhaps most relevant to the current project, increased awareness of the impact of domestic violence and abuse on children amongst the community partners of the programme roll out.

The 2018 evaluation also produced a number of recommendations for the TLC Kidz programme including ongoing support for children and others following completion of the programme, as well as recognising that children not in a space to participate in TLC Kidz lacked therapeutic interventions to support them. From an organisational perspective, it was recognised that while the initial roll out was a result of an inter-agency partnership, the programme as a whole would benefit from greater involvement of an increased number of agencies. This in turn would mean increased demands in the co-ordinatation, funding and training needs of the programme, and so the 2018 evaluation recommended the creation of a dedicated project co-ordinator postion.

On the back of recommendations stemming from the evaluation, the creation of the CDVA project and it's co-ordinator supports the technical roll-out of the TLC Kidz programme. TLC Kidz now sits under strand one of the CDVA project, and with the support of Tusla DSGBV Unit the project aims to facilitate the roll out of the TLC Kidz programme nationwide. Indeed, since the completion of the evaluation, the TLC Kidz programme has been expanded to Limerick, Clare and Cavan/Monaghan. Funding was also secured under Healthy Ireland to deliver the programme in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown.

3.2.1 Support provided by the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project coordinator

The CDVA project co-ordinator provides technical support to areas who are either planning or rolling out the TLC Kidz Project, at the core of which is the delivery of a

concurrent group-work programme for children who have lived with domestic violence and abuse and their mothers. This involves supporting interagency groups in their phases of planning and setting up their steering groups and providing ongoing technical support to TLC Kidz co-ordinators and the establishment of a committed and dedicated coordinator forum.

In response to the global pandemic over the past year the work has involved supporting projects to adapt the programme for online delivery when required by Covid-19 restrictions. By linking with Scottish counterparts Cedar, online practice guidelines have been developed for all the TLC Kidz projects and the training component has been moved fully online. This has included the development of 24 webinars for facilitators to deliver the programme and maintain a high-quality delivery. The webinars were developed in consultation with Linda Finn, UK Consultation for TLC Kidz and are available to all facilitators across Ireland who are delivering the programme. Finally, a National Standards Framework for the delivery of the TLC project is currently under development to help ensure a quality service in each local area.

3.3   Strand 2: Enhance Practice

This section provides an overview of activities undertaken by the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project that sit within Strand 2. Within the second strand: Enhancing Practice, the primary aim is as follows:

> To facilitate the identifying and sharing of best practice, and to provide practitioners with opportunities to upskill and enhance their approaches to respond to the needs of children and finally identify other response models.

> Key objectives under this strand include:

a) To organise/facilitate continuous professional development opportunities through related training, and facilitating networking opportunities to support practice development – including a national community of practice;

b) To enhance linkages between organisations within and across statutory and community & voluntary sectors to ensure a seamless response to children's needs;

An overview of work carried out so far is presented under the following headings;

- Community of Practice
- Children's Participation Project
- Website Oversight Group
- Webinar on Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse

3.3.1   Community of Practice

The term Community of Practice (CoP) was first coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) to describe the process of learning of new members joining established groups, and how new members indicated their increasing knowledge and membership of the group through their "actions behaviours and language" (Buckly, Steinert, Regehr & Nimmon, 2019). The theory posits that as new members on the periphery of the group learn from other more expert members, they begin to view themselves no longer on the periphery but as legitimate members of the community, which in turn reinforces their knowledge and skills in the area. Research has highlighted that participants of Communities of Practice report improved levels of professional connection and collaboration, which fosters greater efficiency and efficacy (Marbery et al. 2013). Buckley et al. (2019) state that Communities of Practices have moved from being a way of understanding how learning occurs within a group context, to an instrument of learning, utilised by organisations in order to promote best practice, improve professional skills and help recruit new members (employees) to the organisation (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

Literature regarding Communities of Practice highlight several factors that influence how successful the community of practice will be in meeting its aims and enhancing learning and knowledge sharing amongst participants. Having the right person involved in the management and organisation of CoPs has consistently been found as an important factor in the ongoing success of CoPs (Bara, 2013; Probst & Borzillo, 2008; Thomson, Schneider & Wright' 2013; Wenger & Snyder, 2000, Choi, 2006; Claussen, Wells, Aspendlieder & Boutilier, 2017). Other factors that have emerged as being instrumental to the ongoing success of CoPs include topics relevant to the community (Tarmizi, de Vreede & Zigurs, 2007, Choi, 2006), voluntary participation within the community (Tarmizi, de Vreede & Zigurs, 2007), a diverse membership (Tarmizi, de Vreede & Zigurs, 2007; Choi, 2006), adequate time between CoP events for reflection (Claussen, Wells, Aspendlieder & Boutilier, 2017), and a membership that is constantly expanding in order

to avoid stagnation (Ikidoa et al, 2013). Walczak & Mann (2010) also highlight factors that may contribute to the underutilization of CoPs in an organisation, including lack of knowledge of existence of the CoP amongst relevant staff, insufficient time in which to participate, and overly complex systems to inclusion and participation in the CoP.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant restrictions on gatherings in groups on the CDVA project has seen the community of practice events moving from in person meetings to online video conferencing technology. However, research evidence suggests that virtual communities may be just as successful at stimulating knowledge sharing and generation as in person communities of practice (Tarmizi, de Vreede & Zigurs, 2007). Virtual CoPs can facilitate access to vast repositories of data, link geographically distant members in similar roles, and provide "a high degree of informality couple with high connectivity" (Hoadley, 2012). It should be noted that research on virtual CoPs consider these CoPs to be web-based resources and message boards, and do not include CoPs conducted over video conferencing software. Walczak & Mann (2010) argue that the success of virtual communities of practices can be augmented by intermittent face to face meetings, perhaps providing guidance for the CDVA moving forward. There is a dearth of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of CoPs that utilise video conferencing technology to facilitate virtual CoPs but given the evidence on the success of more passive virtual CoPs, it may be assumed that more actively engaging forums are equally likely to be effective.

The following section provides a brief overview of the five community of practice events which the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project has hosted since its formation in 2019.

CoP THEME 1: Setting the Scene and Developing a Community of Practice on Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse.
Keynote Speaker: Sarah Morton – UCD
Date: 19th June 2019
Venue: Portlaoise
Attendees: 56

As part of the initial work to establish a collaborative approach, the National Childhood Domestic Abuse project convened a meeting of service managers and frontline

practitioners working with children and families affected by domestic abuse, in order to come together to share their experiences of responding to the needs of children and give consideration to the establishment of a Community of Practice with a focus on children's experience of domestic abuse.

Feedback and minutes taken from the first meeting have since been used by the CDVA project coordinator as a guide in the development of future community of practice events. Themes to emerge from members at the first event were as follows:

1. Sharing of resources between services
2. Interagency collaboration
3. Improved practice and peer support
4. Training/upskilling
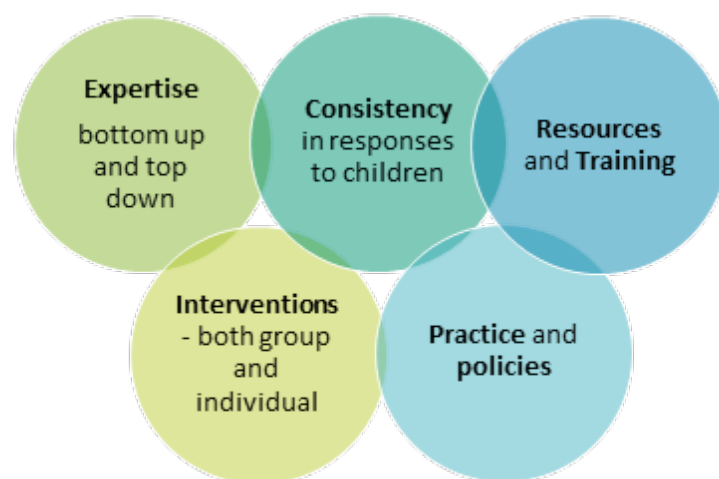
Figure 1: CoP 1 Themes

A desire for upskilling and professional development is reported to have featured strongly among participant with a particular need identified across the following practice issues:
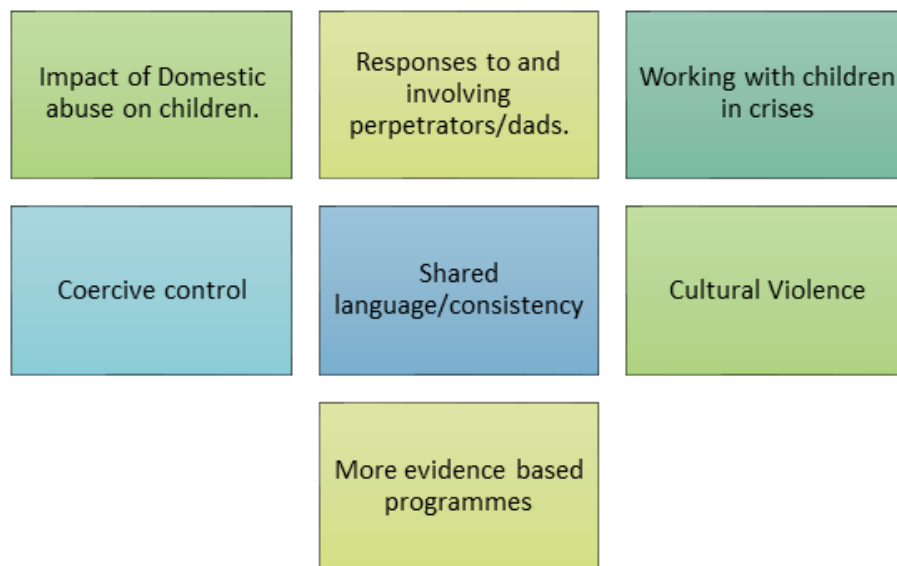
Figure 2: Further Professional Development Topics

Participants also highlighted training and upskilling needs for other professionals and organisations such as judges, schools, crèches, GPs and nurses regarding the impact of domestic abuse on children.
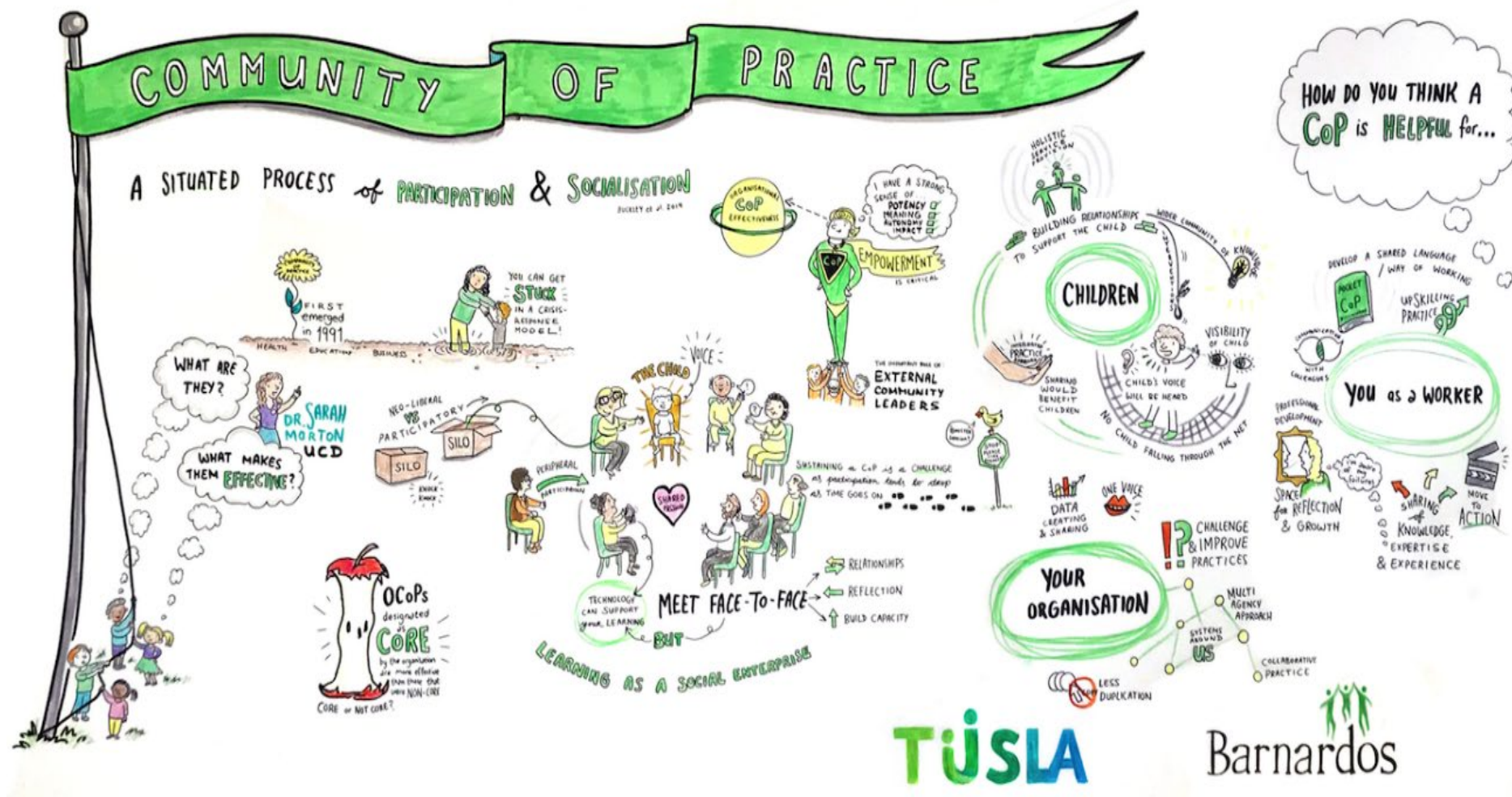
Figure 3: CoP 1 Infographic

Keynote Speaker: Stephanie Holt - Trinity College Dublin

Date: 19th Nov 2019:

Venue: Portlaoise

Attendees: 57

The second CoP event took place in person in a venue in Portlaoise. The keynote presentation was delivered by Dr Stephanie Holt, entitled 'Understanding and defining children's experience of living with domestic violence and abuse.' The presentation explored the way through which children are conceptualised as victims/survivors of DVA in literature, research, policy and legislation examining the multiple lenses through which children are viewed, dependent on the agency remit. The presentation argued for the positioning of children more centrally in the family's experience of DVA and the response of relevant agencies. It further highlighted the importance of listening to children and for their experiences to be heard and the meanings they give to their experience of living with domestic violence and abuse to be acknowledged.
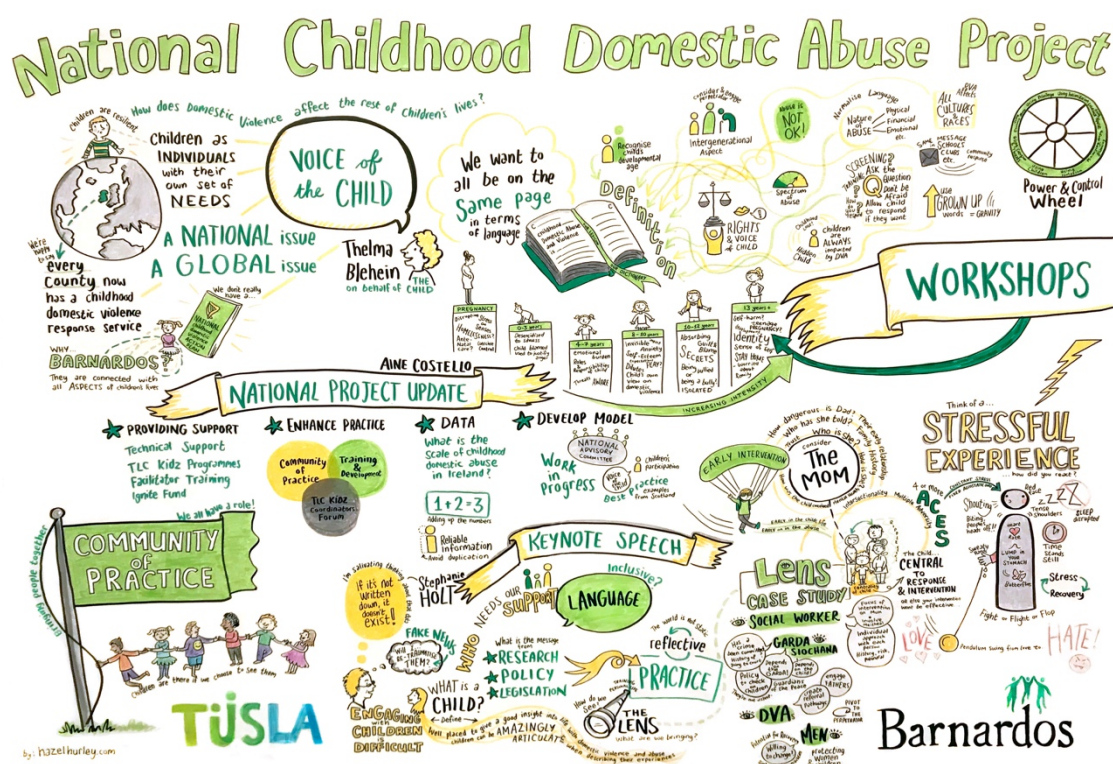
Figure 4: CoP 2 Infographic

Attendees at this event were asked to review the power and control wheel from the perspective of a child victim of domestic violence and abuse and it was later merged by the CDVA project team into one wheel.
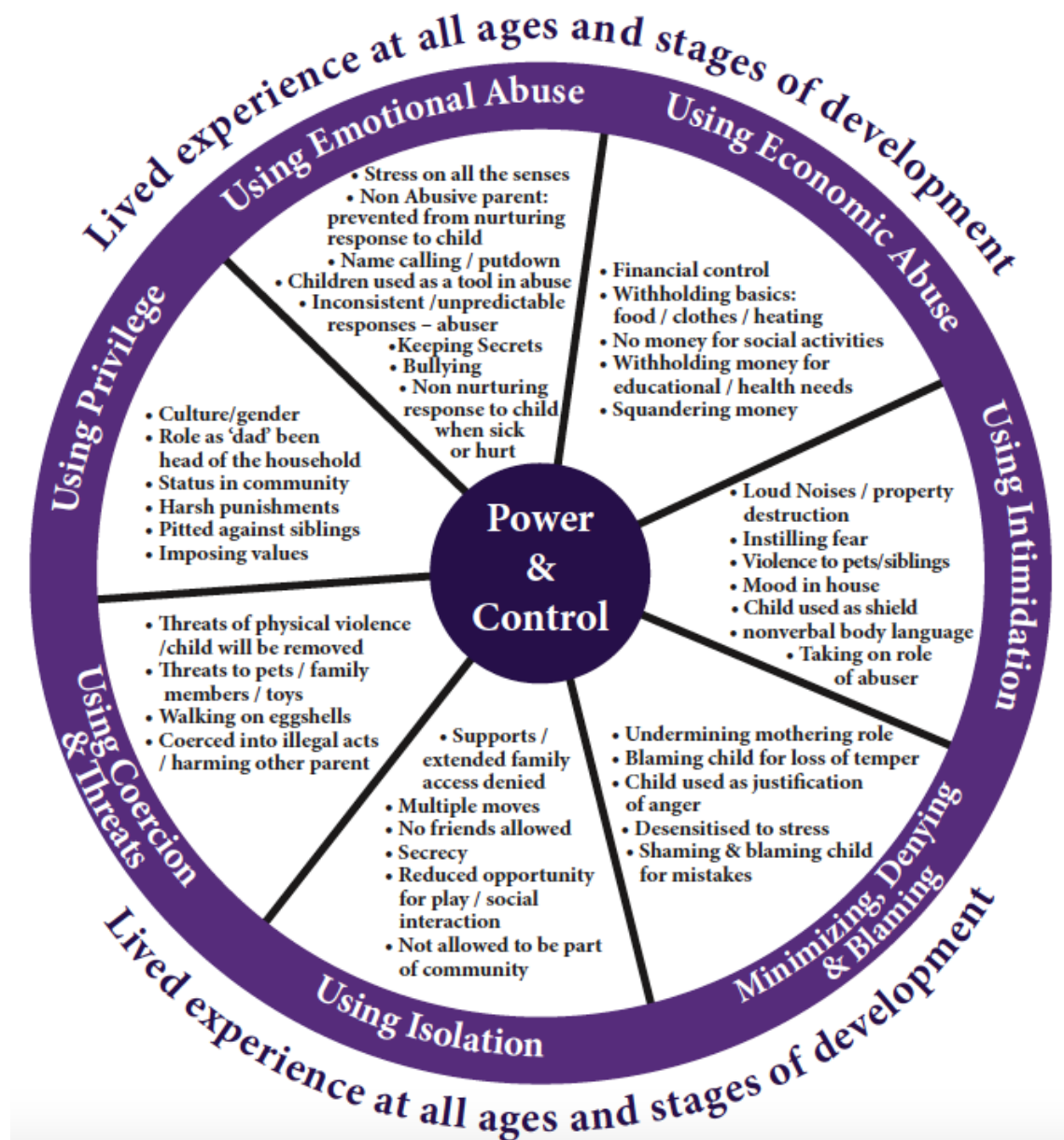
Figure 5: Power and Control Wheel adapted to Child's Perspective

CoP THEME 3: Responding to Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse

Keynote Speakers: Safe Ireland, ADAPT DVA service, COPE Galway

Date: 3rd March 2020

Venue: Portlaoise

Attendees: 70

Drawing on the practice knowledge of community members, agencies were invited to share their perspective and response to children experiencing domestic abuse. Below is a list of the service and title of presentation:

- ADAPT – 'Responding to children who experience domestic abuse'
- COPE Galway – 'Responding to the needs of children in recovery from domestic violence and abuse'
- Safe Ireland – 'The link between gender inequality & gender-based violence'

This community of practice event, the last to take place in person prior to the introduction of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, also included round table discussions in the format of workshops. Feedback from both workshops was gathered and produced in to two separate infographics capturing the perspective of members.

CoP THEME 4: Hearing Children's Voices in Relation to Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse

Keynote Speaker: Claire Houghton – University of Edinburgh

Date: 26th November 2020

Venue: Online

Attendees: 69

This event was the first Community of Practice event to move from in person to an online video conferencing platform, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. In spite of the difficulties that moving platform may have caused, the event was well attended with 69 participants taking part. The keynote presentation was delivered by Claire Houghton of Edinburgh University, and was titled "Participation of Young Survivors in domestic abuse policy and practice in Scotland." Feedback from this community of practice event was collected and collated and made available to members.

CoP THEME 5: Engaging with Fathers who are Abusive in their Intimate Partner Relationships

Keynote Speakers: Dermot Brady, Kingston University London & Dublin Safer Families

Date: 20th April 2021

Venue: Online

Attendees: 116

Once again for the most recent CoP event 116 attendees across a spectrum of services attended the Community of Practice event online. The keynotes on the day were

delivered by Dermot Brady from Kingston University in London and Dublin safer families. This event considered how best to include perpetrators in services supporting children who are experiencing or are in recovery from DVA. Once again, feedback regarding the keynote presentations and questions related to this area of practice was gathered and distributed to members.

3.3.2 Children's Participation Project

The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project in collaboration with specialist domestic abuse services, TLC Kidz projects and Barnardos family support projects across Ireland have set up a national children's participation project. Whilst it is acknowledged that services on the ground have experience in children's participation and hearing children's voices in their own organisation and strive to promote the voice of children in their own local area, there appears to be a gap at a national level that the project serves to address. Located within the work carried out under Strand 2: Enhance Practice, the main aims and objectives of the children's participation project are as follows:

- For children and young people to feel included, have their experiences validated, and their expertise recognised.
- To facilitate children and young people to give voice to their experiences and advise on how to better respond to their needs.
- Empower children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse to feed into the development of a framework for a comprehensive service.
- Develop a better understanding among service providers and policy makers about children and young people's experiences and enhance a more collaborative response.

The delivery of the participation project has been carried out to date by a multiagency committee involving members who work directly with children and young people who experience domestic violence and abuse, across the domain of crisis, prevention and recovery. In 2020, a core group of 12 children and young people were asked what domestic violence and abuse looked like to them. As a result, this helped in the development of a children's definition of childhood domestic violence and abuse.

Figure 6: Children's Definition of Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse

The accompanying video that was produced includes the voice and words of the children and has been a highlight of the project demonstrating a commitment raising the voice of young survivors. Current engagement with children and young people is focusing on the following areas:

- Further exploration of the child's experience of domestic violence and abuse.
- Children's top priorities and concerns with domestic violence and abuse.
- What children say about how to support them through childhood domestic violence and abuse.

Participation projects involving children can be ethically complex due to a number of challenges. Ensuring informed consent, not only from the mother, but also from the father, who in the majority of cases is the perpetrator of the domestic violence suffered from the children can be challenging (Cater & Øverlien, 2014; Morris et al., 2012). It also calls into question the need to gain informed consent from the participating children, and whether they genuinely want to consent or are agreeing due to perceived pressure as a result of their relationship with the professional asking for their involvement. Furthermore, there can be question over whether children may agree to participate simply because their parents have consented for them or are denied the opportunity to participate when a parent does not provide consent (Cashmore, 2006). There is also an ethical obligation when involving children in research and policy that their voice is meaningfully listened to and appropriately used to inform results and policy (Øverlien & Holt, 2018). The CDVA project team address such challenges by bringing an awareness to members of the participation policy underpinned by Lundy's (2007) model of participation and are guided by a framework that seeks consent only where it is safe to do so. There is an onus on agencies to refer to their own policy around consent which may differ across voluntary and statutory organisations.

Thus, the ethical challenges in involving children in research and policy mean that a strong theoretical foundation for their inclusion must be prioritised. The CDVAs participation project was based on Lundy's (2007) model of participation, which was developed as a response to Article 12 of the UNCRC. In the model, Lundy outlines a model comprised of four related components, space, voice, audience and influence, all of which are firmly embedded in the work carried out by the children's participation project. Space refers to allowing children the opportunity to have their voice heard, while voice refers to the ability of children to express their opinions. Both of these elements

refer to the first section of Article 12 of the UNCRC, the right to be able to express an opinion. The audience component of Lundy's model argues that the opinion expressed by children should be listened to, while the influence element states that appropriate weight must be given to those opinions. Both of these elements relate to the second part of Article 12, the right for due weight to be given to their opinions. More recently Houghton (2018) has built on Lundy's model, developing a framework based on voice, agency and power and this has also influenced how the CDVA have approached the children's participation project. Houghton's work also highlights how young people value support and impact in addition to Houghton's three tenets. As part of the Community of Practice events Claire Houghton delivered a keynote presentation, which in part detailed her model, ensuring that knowledge of promoting and including the voice of children in a meaningful way is accessible to all members of the CDVA project.

A more recently introduced piece of work being carried out by the participation project seeks to raise awareness and visibility of the experiences of domestic abuse on pre-verbal children and children in utero. The aim of this is to capture in the child's voice how exposure to DVA when they were in utero and pre-verbal continues to impact them. Owing to the long history of facilitating the TLC Kidz programme, and the resultant well established connections between multiple services, the project will initially be focused in the Tipperary area. Adult members of the project are currently working on establishing a working group with representatives who work directly with young children who have lived with domestic violence and abuse. The representatives include, targeted early years child and family development workers with Barnardos, specialised domestic violence services, community mothers, family support, and infant mental health specialists based in Tipperary. The project is working closely with local Barnardos TLC Kidz project workers and specialised domestic violence services who are identifying mothers who are interested in giving voice to their children who have experienced DVA from a young age.

3.3.3   Website Oversight Group

Efforts to enhance practice through the development of Childhood domestic violence and abuse online presence has begun through the work of a website oversight group. Stemming from a need identified through the community of practice, the CDVA project is developing an online presence for childhood domestic violence and abuse which is to be hosted on the Barnardos website. There is a website oversight group comprising representatives from a number of services. The long-term aim of the website oversight

group is to provide a bank of resources that will support services nationally in their work with children and to help raise awareness of childhood domestic violence and abuse.

3.3.4   Webinar on Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse

The CDVA project hosted a webinar on Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse which took place on June 3rd, 2021 as a Youtube event allowing for a wide-reaching audience and viewership. A total of 1800 persons registered to attend the event with the recording available on Barnardos YouTube channel enabling continued access to the presentations. A keynote by Katie Lamb, a domestic violence researcher from the University of Melbourne Australia, presented findings from a study on 'What are children's/young people's perspectives on reparation with their fathers.' The lived experience of the child growing up with domestic violence and abuse was clearly illustrated by Helen Oxenham: a childhood domestic violence and abuse survivor originally from Cork, now living in Australia, who has gone on to support women and children for decades who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. In addition, this platform was used to give 'influence' and 'audience' key tenets of Lundy's model to the voices of children in the participation project and promote their visibility.

3.4   Strand 3: Develop Framework Response

Within this strand, Develop a Framework Response, the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project aims to contribute to the emergence of a national response model to support/enhance the holistic development of children and young people across the different domains of their lives. To date much of this work has been done via the CoP beginning with work on developing a 'Common Understanding' of what is understood as childhood domestic violence in addition through harnessing the expert knowledge and practice experience of CoP members by collating important data on current strengths, gaps, trends and best practice. Indeed, all three strands of the project are beginning to merge and feed into the development of a framework response.

3.4.1   CDVA National Advisory Group

A National Advisory Group was established in 2019 with the aim to contribute to increasing the visibility of childhood domestic violence and abuse, to support a collaborative approach and to aide in delivering effective services in response to childhood domestic violence and abuse. It is currently comprised of 19 members who

range from front line practitioners to academic, to representatives of statutory agencies, children's organisations and representatives from seldom heard groups. The NAG is chaired by Dr Stephanie Holt, a leading academic in childhood domestic violence and abuse. The advisory group have been meeting 3 times a year since 2019. The National Advisory Group comprises senior personnel who will advise on best practice to support children and young people to overcome their experiences of domestic violence and abuse and enhance children and young people's resilience and development.

3.4.2 NGO Policy Group

The core CDVA project team are members of an NGO policy group for children living with abuse. The purpose of the Children Living with Abuse Working Group is to connect NGOs working with children in these circumstance and NGOs working on issues concerning children living with domestic and sexual abuse towards developing a holistic understanding of the child's supports, protection and journey through the system in order to advocate for improvements and changes in practice, policy and legislation. The group takes a child-centred approach and is evidence-informed of the impact of gender on the issues.

3.5 Strand 4: Gather Data

Currently data is being collected from all TLC Kidz projects and these will feed into the Limes statistics in Tulsa, DSGBV. Updated reports are also gathered from TLC Kidz projects around the country, which gives insight into trends emerging for children, issues arising with delivery and the extent of the community coordinated response in each local area.

To date, through consultation with specialist domestic violence services and frontline practitioners around the country, the following issues have been identified as gaps for children who live with domestic violence and abuse:

- Lack of safe, quality supervised access services/centres.
- Lack of therapeutic support services for children experiencing trauma because of childhood domestic violence and abuse.
- Invisibility of children in the courts and the dangers of parental alienation been used in the court process.
- Lack of evidence based 1:1 interventions/tools for working directly with childhood domestic violence and abuse.

- Teenage dating abuse: the high risk to young people and the barriers to support.
- Child centred risk assessment

3.6   Summary

This chapter has discussed the development of the CDVA project since its establishment in 2019. Under Strand One, Support Practice, it discussed the TLC Kidz programme, its history, and its expansion since a comprehensive independent evaluation in 2018. Under Strand 2, Enhance Practice, the chapter discussed the progress of the project to date under four headings, Community of Practice, Children's Participation Project, Website Oversight Group and Webinar on Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse. It then moved to discuss the project under Strand 3, Develop a Framework Response, before concluding with a brief discussion of Strand Four, Gather Data. The next chapter is the first of three findings chapters and presents results of the online survey administered to CDVA project members.

4 Survey Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the online survey which was circulated by email link to 157 participants during April 2021. 107 (68%) people responded to the survey and 72 (46%) of respondents fully completed the survey. The survey instrument contained a mix of questions with both closed and open-ended responses which covered a broad range of topics relating to participation in the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project. Questions included background information regarding the organisation the respondent works for, the nature of their involvement in the CDVA project and probed respondent's opinions on benefits of participating in the project and what further opportunities for collaboration the CDVA project could provide. Participants were invited to explain further their more nuanced experiences and feedback of the project in open ended responses. These responses were analysed thematically to identify and uncover patterns relating to the specific research questions. The results are presented in two parts, firstly the characteristics of respondents, followed by their engagement with the CDVA project.

4.2 Summary of Key Survey Findings

- 87.0% (n=67) of respondents indicated that participation in the CDVA project had increased their understanding of working with children experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

- Since participating in the CDVA project, 67.5% (n=52) respondents reported they had adapted their approach to working with children who have experienced DVA. Participating in the project has widened knowledge and understanding when listening to children and respondents felt better equipped to support a child's recovery.

- Since participating in the CDVA project, 89.7% (n=70) of respondents strongly agree or agree that they are more aware of other agencies supporting children.

- 89.7% (n=70) strongly agree or agree that they have more opportunities to collaborate.

- 87.7% (n=64) of respondents said their service was effective to a great extent in recognising childhood DVA.

- 60.8% (n=45) of respondents could not identify any gaps in the CDVA project.

4.3   Participant Description

A description of the characteristics of respondents is presented and details information about the region they primarily work in, the type of organisation they work with, the main activity of the organisation and their role within their organisation.

4.3.1   Region

Of the 97 completed responses, 26.8% (n=26) of participants work in Dublin with 7.2% (n=7) stating that they have a national remit. Nationally there was a good spread of responses; there were thirteen (13.4%) respondents from Tipperary, six (6.2%) respondents each from Kildare and Clare and five (5.1%) from Monaghan. Three counties were not represented in the survey: Carlow, Leitrim and Roscommon. The county of work was recoded into six main categories for ease of analysis, the full breakdown of respondents by county is available in Appendix C.
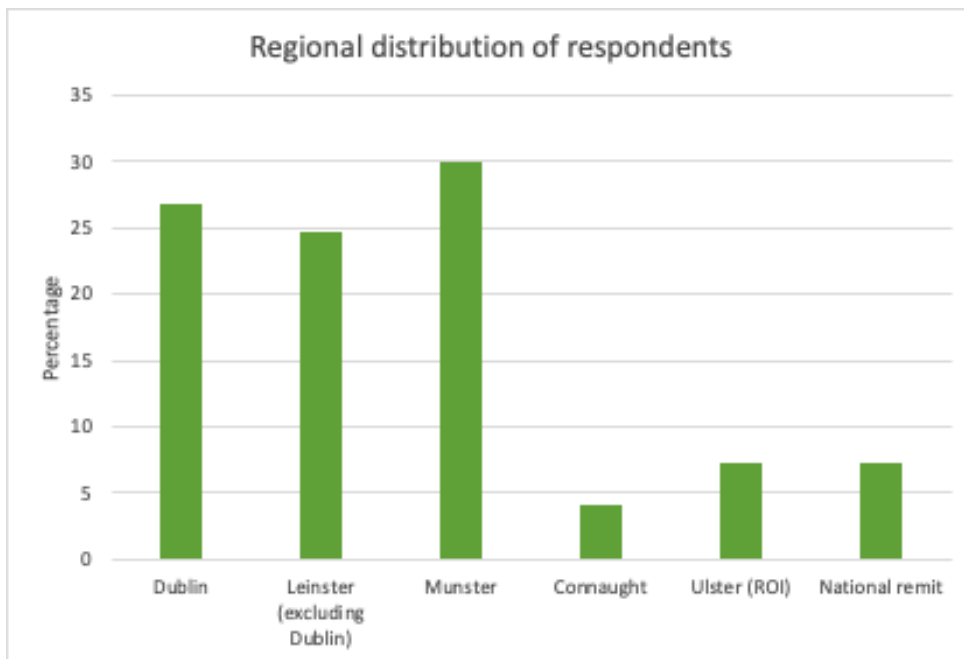
Figure 7: Distribution of respondents by region

4.3.2 Type of organisation

The majority of respondents, 48.4% (n=47) reported working for a specialist domestic violence service. A further 31.9% (n=31) selected community and voluntary sector and 17.5% (n=17) reported working for a statutory organisation.
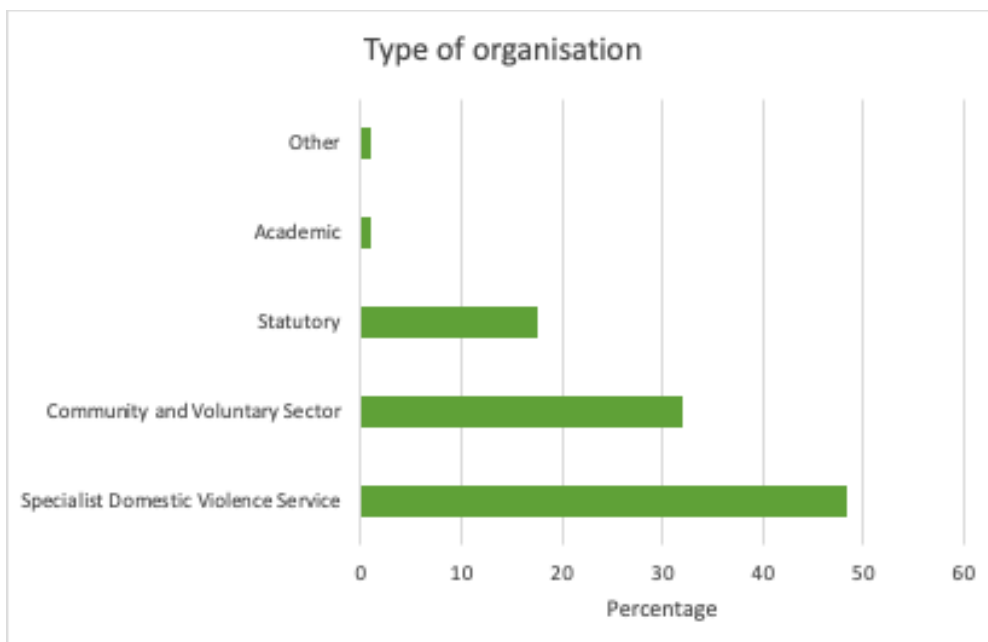
Figure 8: Type of organisation respondent works

Main activity of service respondent works for

Of the 97 completed responses, 55.7% (n=54) of respondents reported working primarily with families with a further 10.3% (n=10) stating they work specifically with women and children. 18.6% (n=18) reported working with adults and 11.3% (n=11) are engaged specifically in children's services.
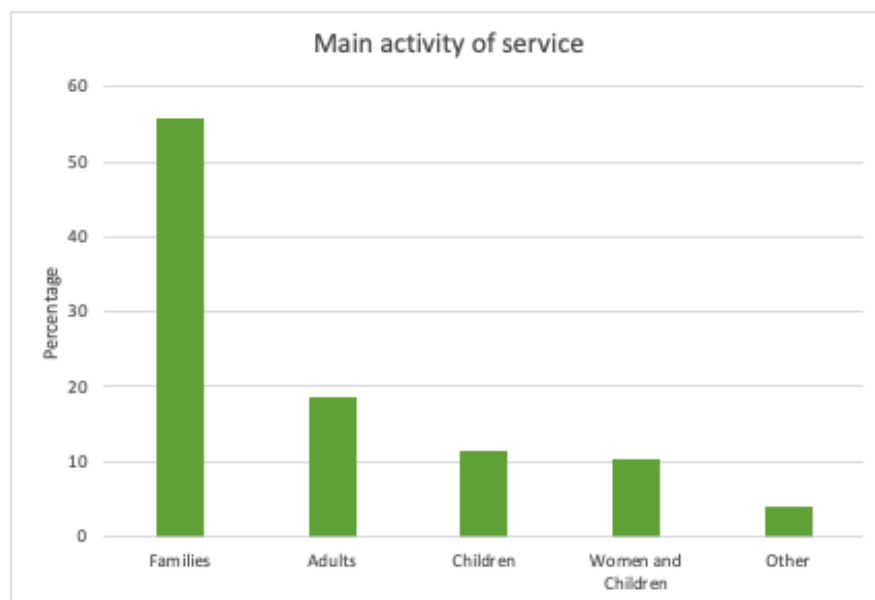
Figure 9: Main activity of organisation

4.3.3 Role of Respondent

When asked to describe their role within the service they work for, 46.4% (n=45) reported they had a management role, with a further 16.5% (n=16) stating that they worked in family support services. Other reported roles included: Key worker (12.4%), Childcare worker (11.3%) and Outreach (8.2%).
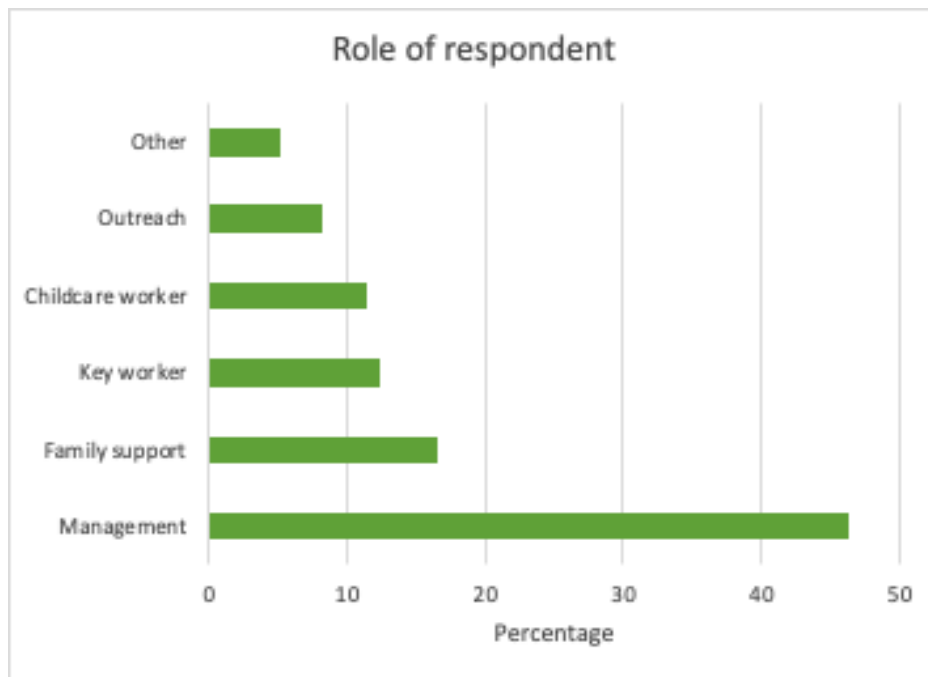
Figure 10: Role of respondent

4.4   Engagement with CDVA Project

This section details engagement with the CDVA project and presents information about participants involvement with the CDVA project. There are questions relating to understanding of CDVA, adapting approaches and benefits of participating in the project. Respondents were also asked about opportunities to collaborate, if they could identify any gaps in the project and to indicate their perception of how their organisation responds to CDVA.

4.4.1   Involvement with CDVA Project

Participants were asked to indicate all the strands of the CDVA project they are engaged with. Respondents could select more than one of the five strands. The majority of respondents, 47.3%, indicated that they had participated in the Community of Practice.
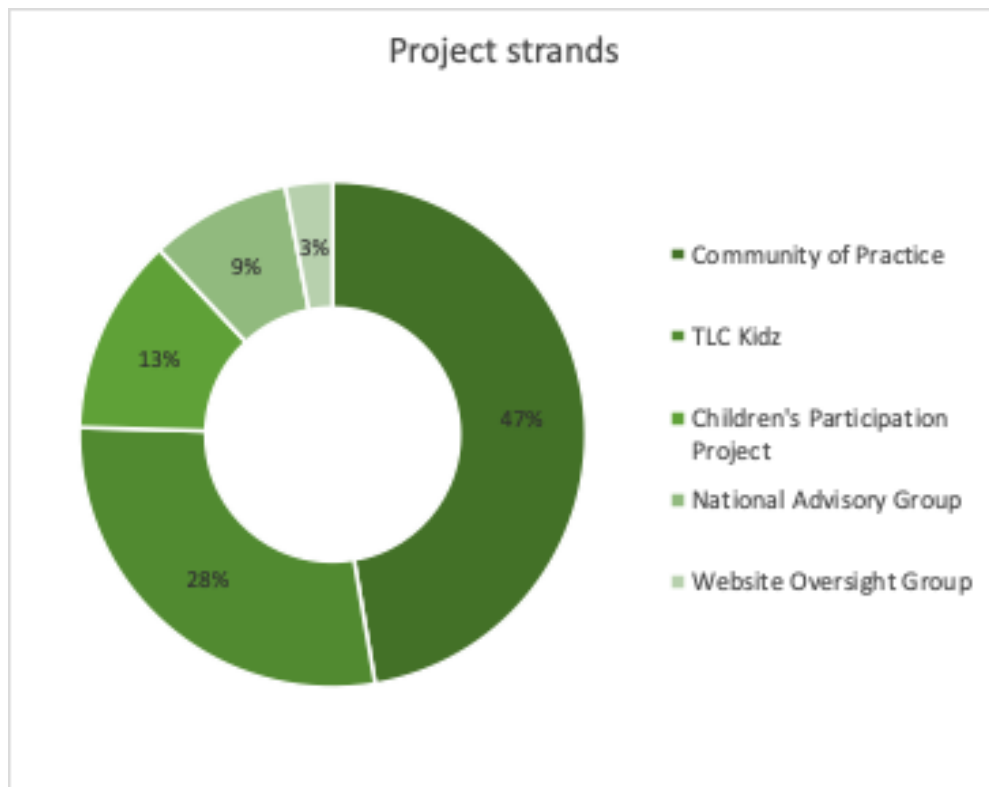
Figure 11: Involvement with CDVA project strands

4.4.2   Increasing Understanding of Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse

Participants were asked if they had increased their understanding of working with children who have experienced domestic violence and abuse since participating in the CDVA project. Of the 77 completed responses, 87.0% (n=67) responded yes, they had increased their understanding. Conversely, 12.9% (n=10) indicated that the project had not increased their understanding of childhood domestic violence. An additional open text response box was provided for respondents to provide more information. Three respondents did so and clarified that as they already had a long experience of working with children experiencing domestic violence, they had not substantially increased their understanding of childhood DVA. One respondent further explained that the project still offered the opportunity to increase general understanding of CDVA by exploring more complex experiences:

> "This project has been useful in terms speaking about DVA in language that a child or family may use and also in identifying in more depth some of the challenges in offering support to children."

Among the respondents (87.0%) who indicated they have increased their understanding of CDVA, it was frequently cited that participating in the project *"highlighted good practice in understanding and supporting children"* and "*the CoP is an extremely useful space to keep up to date on best practice*". One respondent encapsulates how their participation has enhanced their work:

"CoP days have been instrumental in looking at DV through the lens of the child and the impact on them directly, sharing experiences with other staff, working directly with young people and children across many agencies and platforms, having opportunity to engage with guest speakers at the CoP days."

Respondents were asked to consider their level of agreement with three statements regarding the effectiveness of their service in recognising, responding and referring children with experiences of DVA. Respondents agreed that to a great extent their service was effective in referring (72.2%), responding (64.5%) and recognising (87.7%) childhood DVA. 4.1% (n=3) reported that their service was not a lot or a little effective in responding to CDVA.
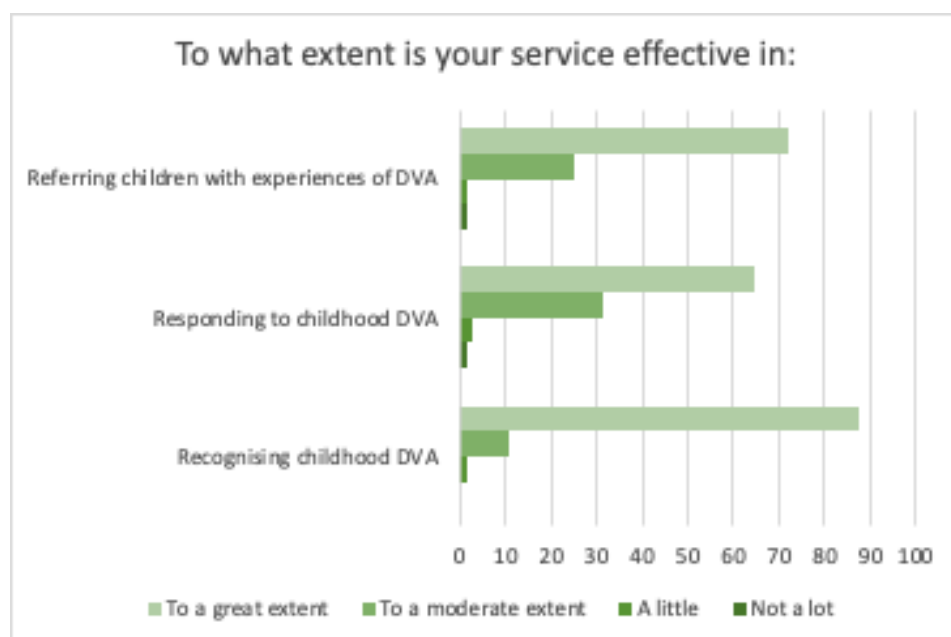
Figure 12: Effectiveness of your service

4.4.3   Adapting Approaches to CDVA

When asked if they had adapted their approach to working with children who have experienced DVA since participating in the CDVA project, 67.5% (n=52) respondents

reported yes, they had adapted their approach. This was experienced in several keyways with many stating that participating in the project has widened their knowledge and understanding when listening to children. Respondents reported feeling *"more creative,"* "*more comfortable,"* and "*more mindful"* with several saying they were more aware of the individual lived experience and they felt better equipped to support a child's recovery: "*I feel more skilled to respond to the child."* One respondent offered the pertinent insight that "*once you see the child's world, it changes your work."*

32.5% (n=25) indicated that they have not adapted their approach. An open text response box invited these respondents to further explain this response. Fourteen respondents provided additional information, many of which, demonstrated that even where participants are not directly providing services for children, the project still influences and informs their practice. Five indicated they responded 'no' because their organisation does not work directly with children however, one respondent acknowledged that:

> "over time the work of the CDVA project may influence our approach
> to child protection and making resources available to parents."

This long-term approach to accumulating and building knowledge underpinned many responses with three respondents reporting that while they do not presently work with children, they are at an early stage of planning for direct engagement with children. A further five respondents explained they already have focused child led services, with one respondent explaining they have "*an extensive childcare service providing various interventions" which* are tailored to individual needs. One respondent comments that:

> "I'm not sure I could say that I have adapted my approach, but I think
> the project has enriched my understanding and knowledge, which in
> turn, improves the service that I offer."

4.5   The Benefits of Participating in the CDVA Project

Respondents were asked what the benefits of participating in the CDVA project were. There were 71 open text responses to this question. These responses were analysed

thematically and fall into three broad categories: collaboration, training and amplifying children's voices.

4.5.1 Collaboration

Creating opportunities to work collaboratively is a key objective of the CDVA project and there was a general consensus that the Community of Practice events facilitate this aim. Many respondents reported that collaborating with other professionals has been "*really impactful*" and provides "*greater insights*" which informs their work. Meeting other practitioners and the "*sharing of knowledge, resources and skills*" has been very beneficial for many:

> "The opportunities to share information with other organisations who are in the same line of work which helps in improving our supports to the children we work with."

These opportunities to network often went beyond enhancing practice and afforded the opportunity to make connections nationally and learn about other services, fostering a multi-agency collaborative approach:

> "The most beneficial aspect for me has been connecting with the different services, talking about our practice and teasing out any challenges we have with families."

This collaborative approach also fostered a positive sense of being part of a bigger response to highlighting and responding to children experiencing DVA. One respondent explained that they feel more connected and part of a "*community of DV workers and interested others coming together, raising the platform of children's voices.*"

4.5.2 Training and Education

Twelve respondents specifically highlighted the positive benefits of access to training and education that the CDVA project provided and spoke of "*gaining new knowledge, skills and experience in the area of domestic violence.*" This was particularly pertinent for those who do not work directly with children who felt that their newly acquired skills

enabled them to reflect on the "*impact and implications on childhood and the child*" of DVA.

4.5.3   Amplifying Children's Voices

Giving a platform to children to provide feedback and insights into the lived experiences of DVA was a recurring feature and one respondent explains: "*For me, it has been hearing the direct voices of children effected by DVA.*" This informs practice as one respondent says they now understand the importance of *"always keeping the children's voice in whatever services are being offered to families."*

One respondent notes that the increased awareness of the importance of positioning the child at the centre has other consequences:

> "I feel it challenges us to do better as professionals to provide earlier interventions and supports for children and young people, but also to challenge the culture of silence in communities around DVA."

Another respondent notes that this implies that they are now "*consulting with children in a more meaningful way*" and the approach of listening to children's voices and experiences has the potential to influence policy responses:

> "I would like to think as time goes by, that children who are impacted by DV will no longer feel invisible and powerless, that they will know we hear them, we see them, and we want to help and support them."

4.6   Collaboration since Participating in the CDVA Project

A key purpose of the National Childhood Domestic Abuse Project is to support a collective and collaborative approach to identifying the needs of children and to deliver effective services in response. To ascertain if this key objective is being fulfilled, respondents were asked about collaboration both within and outside of their organisation since participating in the CDVA project.

89.7% (n=70) strongly agree or agree that they now have more opportunities to collaborate. 89.7% (n=70) of respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement that they are now more aware of other agencies supporting children. Since participating in the CDVA project, 78.2% (n=61) agreed that they are now more inclined to engage with external services. While more people (87.2%) strongly agreed or agreed they had shared knowledge gained from the CDVA project with others *within* their organisation, 76.9%(n=60) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they had shared knowledge gained from the CDVA project with others from *outside* their organisation.
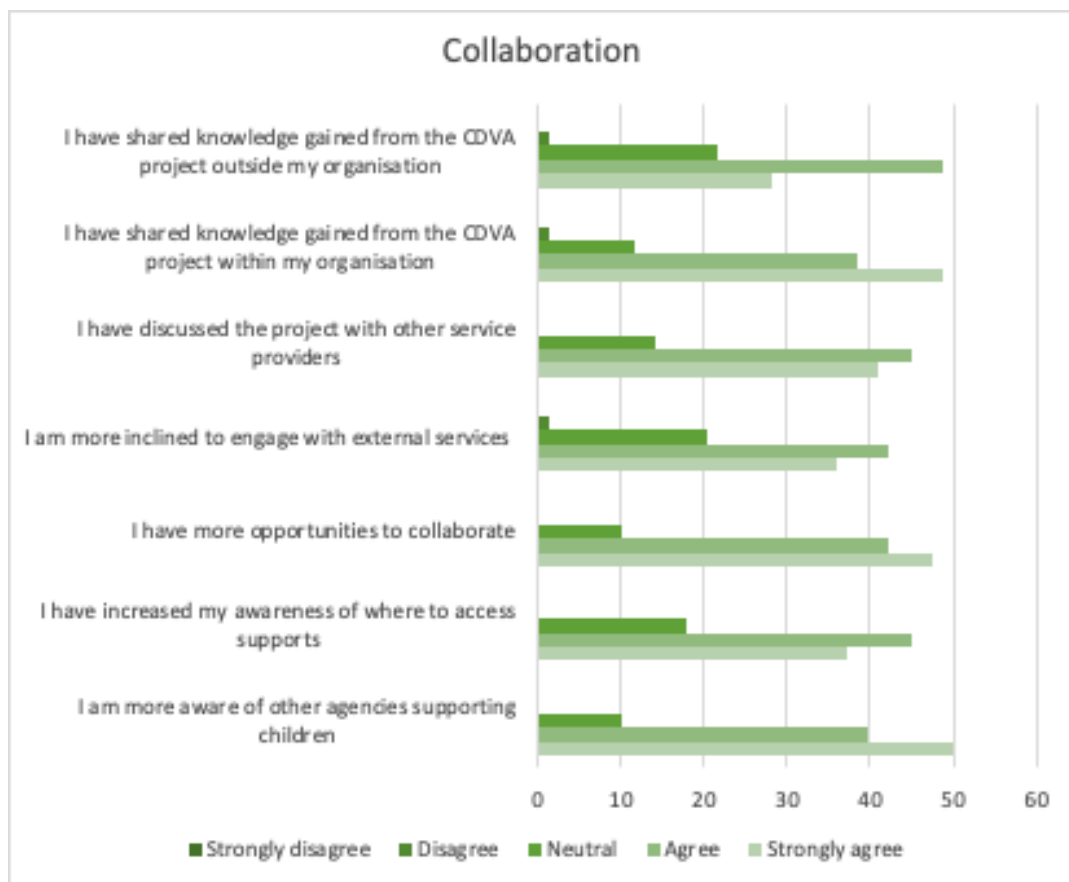
Figure 13: Level of agreement with approaches to collaboration since participating in the CDVA project

4.7   Creating more Opportunities for Collaboration

To support a collective and collaborative approach, respondents were also asked for their opinion how the CDVA project could provide more opportunities for collaboration. There were 46 responses to this question, of which 14 indicated they were satisfied that the CDVA provides adequate opportunities for collaboration, 32 participants made

suggestions for providing more opportunities for collaboration. These responses were analysed thematically and fall into two broad categories: developing inter-agency approaches and continuing events.

4.7.1 An Inter-Agency Approach

When asked how the project could increase collaboration, fifteen respondents referred to developing interagency approaches to raising awareness on both a national and regional level. While national networking was seen as valuable, a recurring theme was the creation of regional subgroups and one respondent explained that subgroups specific to a county could support each other and meet between larger national events:

> [There is a] "potential for creating subgroups per region e.g. organisations would have an opportunity to network/connect with other organisations geographically located within their county/province."

In addition, by creating more awareness of services regionally as well as nationally, it was frequently noted by respondents that this would provide more opportunities for collaboration with localised groups linking into the overall national project.

Many respondents thought it was necessary to foster connections between services as one respondent noted: "*Sometimes there may be two services working with a family and just not connecting together.*" One respondent suggested that developing agreed interagency protocols for sharing information and co-managing risks would achieve the best possible standards within the available resources. By making informed connections on a regional level, local services would be able to work collaboratively and more effectively:

> "Have the various services highlight their service remit, when everyone has a clear understanding of everyone else's role and know they are in their locality, they can brainstorm together on how better to collaborate with one another."

It was also noted that learning from experiences and approaches in other countries would assist collaborative approaches:

> "Good to learn from other countries and see how to have an equal or better collaborative approach to move beyond silo thinking and self-protectionism to a space where agencies can work together."

Further research and developing resources that can be used by any service engaging with children and parents experiencing DVA was also cited as a good method of sharing expertise and knowledge and could also raise awareness of DVA in the wider community. The theme of local awareness continued with several respondents raising the possibility of increasing awareness of CDVA at local level with frontline workers in the form of local workshops and information sessions. Another respondent suggested this could continue with training for early years practitioners and schools to assist recognising DVA and providing an informed approach to supporting children or know where to seek supports. This resonates with a key objective of the National Childhood Domestic Abuse Project to assist in increasing the visibility of childhood domestic abuse. One respondent notes that raising awareness and *"making all services aware of what is going on"* is vital, but also comments that looking beyond the current members is necessary to ensure a holistic approach is taken:

> "Analyse what services and agencies aren't participating and invite them and ask them if there are any barriers" [to participation].

4.7.2   Events

The Community of Practice events were universally seen as a valuable space to facilitate collaboration with one respondent reporting that they are "*helpful and informative*." It was regarded as vital to continue to have workshops with some respondents raising the possibility of providing specific training events or seminars with themed events suggested by one respondent.

Among the respondents who indicated they were satisfied that the CDVA project provides ample opportunities for collaboration, frequently mentioned was the successful transition to online events given the impact of Covid-19 restrictions: "I *think it is fantastic that the*

project has continued to hold community of practice meetings throughout the Covid-19 pandemic". One respondent comments that in fact, meeting online has further facilitated collaboration:

> "I believe the project went far and wide in inviting and encouraging participation. I think, as in many other areas of work, the ability to meet online has enabled a lot more organisations and people the opportunity to be involved."

This ability to adapt and respond to public health guidelines was frequently mentioned by respondents as being a positive step forward for the project:

> "How the CDVA has adapted and taken CoPs online has been innovative and successful, accessible and inclusive to all, the work continues, just on a different platform for now."

Opinions on meetings online post Covid-19 restrictions were divided. One respondent notes that meeting online has many advantages as the necessity to travel to events has been removed:

> "The current forum for these meetings via Zoom has been a real benefit to services, it can be very difficult to attend meetings outside our county as it can mean taking a full day away from work whereas with Zoom it has made full attendance possible, it has also allowed other staff members to attend, so I would hope that this will remain in the post Covid world!"

One respondent reported that there was even greater potential for online events with transnational events now an accessible possibility. There were greater opportunities to exchange information and experiences with people in other countries, facilitating *"learning for more stakeholders without having to travel."*

However, another respondent acknowledges that although moving online was positive and the work of the CDVA project could continue, reverting back to "*meeting as a collective*" was necessary to keep creating opportunities for continued collaboration.

4.8   Are There Gaps in the CDVA Project?

Participants were asked if they thought there are any gaps in the CDVA project and if so, where do they occur. Of the 74 completed responses, 60.8% (n=45) responded no, they did not think there were any gaps in the CDVA project. 39.2% (n=29) indicated that there are some gaps in the CDVA project. An additional open text response box was provided for respondents to provide more information about their response and 25 respondents chose to do so. These responses were analysed thematically and fall into two broad categories: gaps in training and knowledge and the impact of the CDVA project.

4.8.1   Training and Knowledge

Several respondents spoke of their wish to see the CDVA project provide further training and resources, with one respondent suggesting that masterclasses for practitioners and managers was required with "*more examples of practice connecting to the principles informing the work*". One respondent suggested that support services would benefit from inputs explaining how refuges work and therefore foster a more collaborative and holistic response. Increasing understanding of what DVA is and increasing supports for working with the non-abusive parent was vital in order for a child to have hope and belief that their situation can change. The need for the development of Irish resources was also identified as some respondents felt that at the moment, they are too reliant on UK resources and expressed a preference for resources "*in our own words*." A recurring concern was that children's voice should be more to the forefront and one respondent comments on the need for:

> "A formal system to include the voice of the child in more of the work, perhaps an agreed youth body that is available to support the work."

4.8.2   Impact of the CDVA Project

Several respondents point to the wider reach of the CDVA project and comment that there should be more supports and resources available for organisations who work directly with children and young people such as schools and one respondent says:

> "It's important that the information is spread to create a whole community awareness."

It was noted by several respondents that services and resources can vary across the country and the CDVA project could identify these variations and link in with local organisations to provide supports.

One respondent goes further and says that the work of the project can be used to inform policy responses with more far-reaching implications:

> "Highlight to other professionals the needs of children who have experienced domestic violence and abuse.. how we can influence up the line to the decision makers."

4.9   Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the survey conducted as part of the evaluation in two sections, beginning with a description of the demographics of the respondents followed by a description of how the respondents to the survey experienced the CDVA project. It highlighted that the Community of Practice had the greatest reach of the project as a whole, with the largest proportion of respondents (47.31%) stating that they had attended a CoP event. The majority of respondents also reported an increased understanding of CDVA (87%), while 67.5% of respondents also reported adapting their approach to working with children following participation in the project. The benefits of participating in the project listed by the members include increased collaboration, improved training and education and increased amplification of children's voices. The chapter concluded by a brief discussion of the participants thoughts on gaps of the project and the impact of it as a whole. The next chapter details the views and experiences of members involved in the work carried out under Strand 1: Supporting Practice.

5   Findings: Strand 1 - Supporting Practice

5.1   Introduction

This chapter reflects the views and experiences of practitioners involved in the running and coordination of TLC Kidz projects across the country. A total of six participants came together in a focus group to share their experience of involvement in a local TLC project some of which had been more recently established under the work of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project and Tusla DSGBV Unit and others with a more long-standing presence in the community. As outlined in Chapter 3, the work undertaken within the first strand is centred around providing support and guidance where needed to those involved in the coordination and facilitation of TLC Kidz projects across Ireland. Findings therefore are presented with a review of progress achieved under Strand 1 of the CDVA project. This chapter also includes, where appropriate, input from the interviews with practitioners.

Overall, findings from the TLC Kidz project coordinators reported overwhelming positivity for the support provided to them in their roles through the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project. The CDVA project itself was reported to give them a greater confidence in their role and the work they were trying to achieve in supporting children living with domestic violence and abuse. At a more personal level the CDVA project coordinator was described by many of the participants as an invaluable means of support and point of contact both when getting a project off the ground and its continued development.

5.2   Support Network

Having access to a support network made up of practitioners involved in the running of TLC Kidz projects nationally was viewed as key for many of the TLC participants. Consistent with the survey findings, being connected to other practitioners was described by several of the participants as a huge source of support as this participant explains:

> "It's a great support that we could always speak about any issues that come up to us that we could contact each other, and we can speak to someone some other facilitator who maybe faced the same issue in the

past, we could text each other even on our group that we have the WhatsApp group now which is great because if something pops up you can just ask your colleague from different areas." (TLC 4)

Particularly during Covid-19 restrictions when the groups had to move online participants agreed that they were supported fully through the process of adapting the work to an online platform. This on-going feeling of being supported by the group is reflected in the following participant quote:

> "Especially since Covid and all the support we've all been able to access from each other and meetings, and talking about how we're going to run a group over covid, so yeah, it's been really helpful." (TLC 3)

One participant described it as giving them a *'huge bank of support' (TLC 6)* that they could access through the community of practice and coordinators forum. A suggestion to develop the support function during the continued rollout of the TLC Kidz project was the inclusion of a mentoring programme for new coordinators as described by the following participant:

> "So, when somebody like myself comes new into the role that there's a named mentor. So, say if there was a new coordinator in two month's time in [area], this say for example, if I was named as that person's mentor, almost like you, well doing a mentorship piece with that new person." (TLC 5)

5.3 Supporting Practice through the 'National Picture'

Having the work of the TLC Kidz projects located within a broader more formalised structure within strand 1 of the CDVA project was described by one participant who had been involved in the project for several years as giving them a new energy and confidence in their role:

> "It created a confidence that we are going to make a difference here. There's going to be a change, there is going to be a shift in the right direction and so I just felt, I suppose, more empowered in my role.., just in continuing doing what I'm doing… we had a lot of backing behind us now… it was going to be more structured.., it was going to grow, which was going to build, it was going to mean something." (TLC 2)

More generally, the national picture of the wider Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project under which the TLC Kidz projects are coordinated was said by several of the participants as raising the credentials of TLC Kidz, particularly in those areas that were starting up new projects and carrying out work on awareness raising:

> "When I'm doing awareness raising work with different services about the project they love to… hear about all the different areas and they love to hear about the review that was done in 2018 because when they read that it gives a lot of confidence to the project we're setting up in our different areas, you know. So yeah, so I really feel the national picture is really important." (TLC 5)

5.4 Challenges: Awareness Raising and Gaining 'Buy in' from Local Agencies

Participants voiced some of the challenges experienced in the delivery of TLC Kidz projects. In one area, the enthusiasm and support put in place to set up the project did not result in the demand for the service and there were fewer referrals than anticipated, leading them to question some of the wider challenges in getting local agencies on board with the project and how to increase referrals.

> "No matter how much we try to promote the program to other services, it seems they find it difficult to relate what the TLC is about… something about not being able to as Participant 5 said, sit down with the Mum and actually explain the program in some way and I do think of something, as Participant 2 said, something about referrals em, reading a leaflet and saying, oh, I don't know if that's suitable and either not having the conversation or else not feeling confident enough to explain the program properly." (TLC 3)

The hidden nature and continued perception of domestic violence as a private issue is somewhat reflected in the latter quote when practitioners perhaps with a limited understanding or experience of working with DVA may not have the confidence to raise the subject with mothers thereby making less referrals.

Referrals in the same area were cited as currently only coming from Barnardos and it was hoped for a more 'multi agency referral process' (TLC 5) to develop which as the following quote suggests may be down to finding ways to get 'buy-in' from services:

> "They're telling us, this sounds great, this is very interesting, but then we're not getting the referrals, so maybe something around getting the buy in." (TLC 3)

A broader goal of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project in providing support ties in with the overall aim of the project in terms of developing a national framework and increasing visibility of CDVA which the following quote from participant proposes may feed into the community and allow practitioners to feel confident in raising the subject of domestic abuse with families and referring on:

> "To help service providers understand how to talk to a mother about domestic abuse, how to talk to a child about domestic abuse, the principles of working with families where domestic abuse is present. We're wondering… if some practitioners are uncomfortable approaching the subject with the family or uncomfortable talking to them about potential services like the TLC program, I don't know." (TLC 5)

5.5 Summary

This chapter has drawn on the views of TLC project coordinators and facilitators. It details their views and experience of being part of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project, feeling supported by being part of a national project and to a lesser extent the challenge in establishing a multi-agency referral process which is arguably closely connected to the overall aim of the CDVA project in increasing visibility of childhood domestic violence and abuse in the wider community. Chapter 6 will now reflect on the

views and experience of those who are involved in project activities under Strand 2: Enhancing Practice.

6 Findings: Strand 2 - Enhancing Practice

6.1 Introduction

Building on a selection of findings from the survey responses outlined in Chapter 4, the following chapter draws on the views and experiences of practitioners involved in the children's participation project and the community of practice events to offer a richer insight into the workings of those groups and progression to date. The first section of this chapter reflects on the experiences of participating practitioners involved in carrying out the work of the children's participation project with the next section focusing on the community of practice drawing on interviews from a broader range of participants.

6.2 Children's Participation Project Model

Lundy's model of participation underpinning the work of the participation project as discussed in Chapter 3 was cited by one participant as being effective in ensuring a fully participative process in the work undertaken by the participation project which the following quote reflects:

> "The participation project each step involved the children in those processes... so it wasn't just a group of adults sitting on zoom and discussing it.., we were discussing what the children's feedback was." (COP/PP1)

The experience and knowledge gained through involvement in the participation project was spoken of by the participant as impacting on their daily practice with children in refuge allowing more *time* and *space,* key tenets of the Lundy model, for the child to feel safe to engage in work:

> "Sometimes we can be really quick to react to situations and think Oh no, this child needs play therapy straight away or this child needs a referral.. they might only be in refuge a week and you're kind of going well, they're still in crisis... So they actually really need time to just calm and to find a sense of security and safety so I think em the Lundy model kind of allows you to, to provide those pieces in a time appropriate manner." (COP/PP1)

In addition, the participant went on to discuss how it provided them with a confidence in asking children some of those difficult questions and inviting children to talk about their experiences of living with DVA which ordinarily they would have left up to the child to raise:

> "We don't directly talk about the domestic violence, if the child wants to bring it up, that's something we can go through with them that's ok, but I suppose the participation project kind of pushed us a little bit to maybe actually ask more direct questions to the children… what it showed us was that children are really wanting to have that heard." (COP/PP1)

6.2.1 Capturing the Voice of the Child

As described in Chapter 3, the children's participation project produced a short video involving the words of children and young people describing what DVA means to them. There was strong consensus from those interviewed that this was one of the most *powerful* pieces of work carried out by the project and at the core of raising children's voices and providing opportunities for them to be heard in a meaningful way. A number of participants spoke of sharing the video with colleagues, service users and students with one participant commenting on the 'profound impact' it had on those that viewed it.

6.2.2 The Power of Feeling Heard

The significance for children in hearing their own words being used in the video is highlighted by participants in the following quotes:

> "She was actually able to pinpoint her line in it.. you could see like confidence in the pride in it you know which was so powerful." (COP/PP1)

> "I had a young person saying to me, you know, I can't believe that my voice was actually put out there onto a video clip and 'is that really me?'.. 'is that my voice?'.. 'my part of making change?'." (TLC 6)

Equally children who chose to express themselves through artwork were able to see this depicted in the video creating a very powerful mixed medium approach to raising children's voices.

6.3 Ethical Challenges and Considerations: Insights from Children's Participation Project

6.3.1 Parental Consent

The process of seeking parental consent was highlighted by one participant as a challenge to children's participation and limited the number of potentially suitable children that could be approached by the project:

> "The children that I chose I was already working with those children,
> em for that project and I spoke to the moms…, but I think going
> forward the consent piece is an issue." (COP/PP1)

Another participant spoke of their service only requiring one parent consent which reflects more broadly the complexity surrounding seeking parental consent. Even in a service that allow for only one parent consent there were still fears in managing risk of children's involvement in that the father may find out as the following participant explains:

> "I felt a huge responsibility around it because the safety planning and
> would their father find out." (COP/PP2)

Indeed, the process of seeking parental consent and the inherent complexities surrounding it are reflected on by a practitioner in the following quote:

> "I know services tend to do it differently.. if it's like for us, em in
> particular, it's play therapy, music therapy we definitely need consent
> from both parents, em especially if there's regular access going on but
> if it's a case that there's no access…, we might not look for the consent
> obviously but then if there's a barring order in place, we might not look
> for the consent either, because it could be a safety issue, and so it's

kind of case by case we have obviously a general consent policy, but
I think all refuges don't all have the same policy in place." (COP/PP1)

Some of the broader debates around consent were also raised by a member of the project team in the next quote:

"We had some philosophical discussions that, are they really participants or are they owners? You know, they're not just subject to something, you know they're not just participating in a project, they're actually driving it." (PT 1)

The same participant highlighted the issue of seeking ethical approval and how the process of gaining approval from an ethics committee can in fact lead to a skewed sample of children who can participate thus limiting the reach of the project:

"The Tusla kids couldn't participate (*in the Participation Project*) because the ethics rules. Well firstly, would just take too long, but so it was the non Tusla kids who participated in the project because of the ethics which I think is ironic… it challenges our view of what does participation mean. You know, you're opting in to be an active agent in something rather than consenting to be the subject of something….. it understood them as research subjects, as opposed to you know, the drivers of the project. " (PT 1)

A more in-depth discussion on consent examining the issue from a children's rights framework is provided in the concluding chapter of this review.

6.3.2   Informed Consent

Ensuring informed consent was sought from children to participate in the project was described by one participant as a process which required some thought and consideration for the needs of each child. The participant spoke of adapting language to make sure that the child fully understood the terms of involvement in the project as the next quote explains:

> "That took a lot of working in order to find the right formula to make the kids know where it's going and moms know…, and I didn't want them to be involved just because of my relationship or you know they need to do us a favour because that's not what I would be happy with. So in some ways I was happy some said no, and then I was happy just one or two that committed did commit and were happy enough to commit." (COP/PP2)

Similarly, participant COP/PP1 spoke of the need to ensure the child is assenting to participate freely and not under pressure from a parent:

> "Making sure that it is actually the children that are wanting to participate and it's not em coming from the parents." (COP/PP1)

6.3.3 Assessing Children's Capacity to Participate

One participant reflected on some of the challenges in assessing children's capacity to participate through a developmental lens:

> "You can have a 7 year old who is so clued in and would be able to have a big discussion with you. And then you could have a different 7 year old and they might not be able to engage with you in the same way…. it's difficult to put an age limit on it because you could have a 15 year old who you think might actually like to do it. And then you could start that piece of work with them and you find actually they're really resistant to this and they don't want it to engage in it." (COP/PP1)

Indeed, another participant referred to adapting their approach to meet the needs of the individual child to elicit their views:

> "I'm trying to find the right formula to match what, you know, to make sure their voices are kind of heard and brought on, and I know they can do it in many different creative ways, art and the whole lot but like these kids wall are so high up that it really takes a lot of investment to get them to even say what they need to say." (COP/PP2)

6.4 Other Work of the Children's Participation Project & Future Goals

Whilst challenges and setbacks were raised by those involved in the recruiting of youth participants to the project, there was also high praise by one participant with several years working in the field at how effective the interagency and collaborative approach supported the work:

> "It was just something that took off and launched that I never expected that will come from it so I was like Oh my God, like the kind of power of the work and the fast movement was, it was just like we are going to get it done and it got done in weeks, whereas normally these things can take years, years of meetings before something actually ever happens." (COP/PP2)

In addition to the video, the participation project are working to establish a training toolkit to help services become more inclusive of children similar to the one used by Tusla Child & Youth Participation Framework as the following participant explains:

> "We've been looking at, the questions that maybe you would ask a child who's experiencing domestic violence…, to say this space is safe. How to include them in I suppose the discussion. So I think from the Children's Participation Group, we've been looking at ways to really amplify their voice and to make sure that their voice is heard." (NAG 2)

The group is expanding to include more services and continue on with the work and involve children more - *to incorporate the children into it a little bit more again (COP/PP1)*

The need to be child led and allow the young people to direct the work of the project rather than adults deciding on what the next course of action is was seen as important when setting the agenda:

> "Because we might say that court access all those things are really difficult for children, but it might not be…, it's more worthwhile to get it from the children themselves. What they would like to have listened to em what they would like to put out there, rather than us going

> maybe with an agenda around em what we think children would like people to hear." (COP/PP1)

There was a general enthusiasm for the possibilities that may emerge from the participation project and facilitating a lot more scope for young people to steer the direction of the work:

> "You'd love to see them being involved in a bit more proactive or as much as they want to be or they can be because at the end of the day, it's their voice, and that's really what matters…. I'm just always fascinated by where we go, where we can go with it. So I'd love to be able to just think it a little bit more about the bigger picture in terms of opportunities for them." (TLC 6)

Involving children in the production of posters that depict the message they wish to tell about DVA and children's experiences was a suggestion made by one participant in terms of practical work that could be carried out by the PP in the future. Displaying the posters within the community can act as a medium through which to increase the visibility of childhood DVA:

> "I know it's very simplistic, but somewhere along the line like you know, trying to convey kind of domestic abuse… we don't have great information, visual information…, kids to click into and even for mums at times to kind of click in visually, that there is an impact." (COP/PP2)

6.5 Community of Practice

This second section represents the views and reflections from participants interviewed on their experience of involvement in the community of practice and elaborates further on a selection of themes discussed from responses to the survey outlined in Chapter 4.

6.5.1 Setting up a Community of Practice

From the perspective of the core project team building a consensus approach at the start was critical to setting the tone of the CoP. A spirit of collaboration and collective action

underpin the value base from which the CoP has been established and is explained in the next quotes by members of the project team:

> "The tone that was set in the community of practice was very much saying… you have a contribution to make you have experience that's worth hearing about and let's hear about what worked well and what didn't work well. So that collectively we can learn from that experience." (PT 1)

> "None of us have stepped into the space of saying we're teaching the rest of ye, or you're here to learn. We're here to collaborate." (PT 3)

The community of practice model discussed in more depth in Chapter 3 was largely reported across the survey findings and interviews with participants to be effective in achieving progress under Strand 2: Enhancing Practice. This was largely achieved by providing opportunities for professional development and learning through peer networking and expert knowledge from both academia and practice and is reflected heavily in the survey responses. The following quote describes the collaborative approach taken from the start in setting the agenda for CoP events:

> "The nature of a community of practice is that it evolves as the members… it's very much kind of from the ground up, by people identifying if these are the issues for us and that's exactly what has happened along the way, so that's why people have been really invested in staying with the process. " (PT 2)

The relevance of topics covered at the CoP events was highlighted by one participant and is indeed echoed across the findings from the survey that this bottom-up approach is working:

> "They kind of bring up relevant topics I suppose for everybody cause it's what was put out there by the group, what they wanted to have

covered, and they're really coming through and covering that for people." (COP/PP1)

6.5.1.1 Bringing People Along

Bringing people along and maintaining interest in the project was described by participating members of the project team as a challenge as well as managing some of the initial scepticism by some that the project was being undertaken by a Children's charity as opposed to within the DV sector. However, as the following quote illustrates early concerns surrounding this were overcome and have led to high attendance numbers at CoP events:

> "We've retained key people from around the country, continuing to come to our community of Practice, we're five in, and we've had a lot of those key agencies who maybe were asking questions at the start…. they've been common to the majority of the community of practice's to date." (PT 3)

This was reflected in the views of participant COP/PP2 who spoke of being *a bit sceptical when it started* having had several years of experience working in the sector and becoming dampened by projects not taking off:

> "I'm kind of going here we go again, em here is another project that is going to go nowhere." (COP/PP2)

However, after attending one of the early community of practice events the same participant explains in the next quote how their mindset shifted:

> "I enjoyed the mixture of agencies that were there… there was a right mix and you know Mens Aid and others, MOVE and things like that so I was like oh I'm interested in this." (COP/PP2)

The same participant went on to comment on the power and force behind the project and multi-agency involvement which helped to increase their commitment and confidence in the process and spoke of the opportunities that the collaborative aspect of the project would provide for raising children's voices even indirectly by representing the voice of the children who they work with.

6.5.2   Format of Delivery – Online versus Face to Face

As described in chapter 3, the CoP events originally took place in person at various locations that served the needs of the group, however as Covid-19 measures restricted movement and social gatherings the CoP events moved online bringing both new challenges and opportunities for the CoP. A member of the project team reflected on noticing more opportunity during the face-to-face sessions for members to learn about the work of other services:

> "Less so in the virtual communities of practice, but certainly in the early communities of practice that were face to face. You know, I did observe people learning more about organizations outside of their small sector." (PT 1)

Responses to the survey would suggest that such opportunities continued to be made available to members at online events and was clearly evident in the data presented in chapter 4. Several participants in the survey mentioned a range of positive factors associated with having the CoP events take place via Zoom, clearly echoed by participant COP/PP2 in the next quote:

> "I actually prefer online… You don't have all the travelling…I find it easier, I'm a bit more relaxed… I'm not rushing." (COP/PP2)

Notwithstanding the successful shift to moving online and continued growth in numbers at CoP events, one of the participants referred to the challenges in finding 'your voice' on Zoom and refers in the next quote to the difficulty in contributing to discussion in the breakout groups online:

> "It can sometimes be difficult to get your voice across within it as well, and I think that comes across with zoom anyway, it can be really hard to say something, do you know when the cameras on you or whatever, that you might be more comfortable saying when you're in a room with people and in a group face to face with people." (COP/PP1)

Similarly, there was feedback both from the survey data and participant interviews that when delivering the events online, there was scope for a more organised approach to the breakout room discussion by including a facilitator in each room and a more even spread of agency and roles across management and frontline practitioners. This would require some additional planning and preparation which may be easier to facilitate when organising in-person events yet is still achievable to some degree online. This is articulated by participant COP/PP2 in the next quote:

> "You could be in a group and maybe only a few people are doing the discussion and then there's a few that aren't haven't maybe a chance to have their say, em so I don't know if it's something that they could make sure that there is a facilitator in those rooms just to make sure that everybody is getting their chance." (COP/PP2)

6.5.3 Engagement and Learning

Survey responses discussed in chapter 4 highlighted the multiple levels at which the community of practice had achieved progress in meeting one of the broader aims of the project to enhance practice. The following section provides some further context to this by drawing selectively on quotes from interviews with participants across all groups.

6.5.3.1 CPD/Training

For participant COP/PP1 the CoP events were viewed in the following way:

> "It was nearly like a training event every few months… kinda nearly upskill on some things and then discuss things further that you might just not get to clarify in your own job in your own time." (COP/PP1)

Indeed, the range of learning that is provided by the opportunity to meet with and hear about the work being carried out within different services and the insight this gave to understanding more about the workings of organisations is expressed in the following quote:

> "You have people who are working on the ground with em children and young people and then you have others that maybe are Tusla and they look at funding and different things like that so you can kind of piece together how systems work and different things like that so em or where the funding might be coming from or where you might need to put an application in but you just hear different things that are going on and it keeps you really up to date with the sector." (COP/PP1)

Despite there being a vast knowledge and practice wisdom among those within the sector, there was still reference made to the topics covered in the CoP which were of interest and broadened their knowledge base and thinking particularly on the topic of working with perpetrators. Among several of the survey responses was mention of established names lending weight to the project, making it feel more credible. Indeed, having innovative topics and contribution from recognised authors and academics was also viewed as a positive by participant COP/PP2:

> "It's something about learning from them and hearing them speak it themselves and having someone feedback, but I just think you know you cannot get that anywhere, and that's so important. And so for me, that's the kind of the best part and just kind of pushing my ideas a bit further my thinking… it's just it's kind of so fast sometimes that it can be kind of mindboggling." (COP/PP2)

6.5.3.2   Interagency Collaboration/Knowledge Sharing

> "People hadn't had the opportunity so to come together as a group of practitioners and be able to tease out and discuss issues around their practice and I feel that if we look back, that people have really, really welcomed that aspect of where they can share ideas where they make connections." (PT 3)

The above quote reflects on the initial aim of the project team in building a community of practice that would provide a space for practitioners to come together and share knowledge and support on working with childhood domestic violence and abuse. Survey respondents expressed a strong sense of building a community of like-minded people, all with the same aims and working to similar objectives. This body of people are therefore difficult to ignore and reflect the broader strategy employed by the project team which is discussed in the next chapter. The collaborative spirit harnessed early on by the project team which formed the basis of the CoP and opportunity to share practice knowledge and wisdom was expressed in several of the survey responses and is elaborated further in the following participant quotes:

> "The Community of Practice gives me that opportunity to link in with other services and see, ok, this is what's going on over here and I could maybe take that on board and try and incorporate that into some of the sessions that we do." (COP/PP1)

> "The shared learning to support and the support that we give each other.. it just all really does sort of bump up your learning, bump up your knowledge, it gets you thinking." (TLC 6)

> "Communities of practice have been really valuable for opening up more conversations between agencies that might never meet but are really trying to look at maybe shared risk management." (NAG 6)

6.5.4   Awareness Raising: Reach of the Project and Opportunities to Expand

Capturing a clear picture of the geographical reach of the project beyond those directly involved in the CoP events was untenable for the purpose of this review, however some insight into the reach of the project has been presented in chapter 4 drawing on findings from the survey responses and gives some indication to the national reach of the project. In addition, interview participants spoke of the reach of the project both in terms of how information and knowledge gained from the project on work being carried out at a national level was being shared at a local level, and also some commentary on the reach

to a broader set of professionals working with children outside of the DV sector who may benefit from an increased understanding of childhood domestic violence and abuse.

For one participant the national reach of the project was helpful to them in their role as they explain in the following quote:

> "In terms of it… being a new service and being involved with other agencies, it's really good to have the national picture as well as the regional picture to then feedback what's happened in national level… being able to kind of talk about what training is out there, what's happening and feedback to them, then at a regional level, what is happening at the national level." (TLC 1)

Echoing the views of a large number of survey respondents, several participants interviewed felt that there was an opportunity for the project to reach a wider audience by expanding to include a broader range of professions in an effort to raise awareness and understanding of CDVA:

> "I think the Community of Practice is fantastic, but there's so many more professionals that are dealing with children that possibly, you know, could benefit from that increased understanding and increased knowledge and skills…, making it bigger and em rolling it out further." (TLC 4)

Whilst another participant asserted that the CoP should remain as it is and focus on developing a more in-depth understanding of the needs of children experiencing DVA with existing members:

> "They need to continue as they are because there's a lot more people that need to gain the wider experience. "(COP/PP2)

6.5.5   CoP Limitations & Opportunities

6.5.5.1 Education & Training Opportunities to Enhance Practice

Whilst one participating member of the project team commented that the way the CoP had been running was '*beneficial and useful',* they felt there were opportunities to use the CoP to feed into an education piece and create standards of work to ensure more consistency across the sector in the provision of service to children experiencing DVA:

> "To develop the community of practice, we need to drill down a little bit into how do we…. give a level of, of assurance and clear quality to the child care provision… how do we know… that people have the same level of knowledge and can deliver similar outcomes in somewhere else… and so that is a little bit around creating an educational standard for social care staff who want to go and work in refuge, that there is that option within the third level institutions."
> (PT 4)

This participant envisaged utilising the CoP events as a source of practice knowledge to help identify some of the key learning that would feed into the development of education standards as explained in the following quote:

> "That we would begin to get enough information back from frontline staff around, well, what are the key issues? What are the difficulties for them? What are the things that if they knew at the start, would have allowed them to work differently or better." (PT 4)

Continuing with the theme of education and professional development, another interview participant felt there was an opportunity more generally for the development of a training module on CDVA that would be available to all professionals as they describe in the following quote:

> "It's your students, it's your Tusla social worker, it's an early years practitioner, like, it is a domestic violence worker, it's frontline.., I just see everybody really being able to, like, a bit like, you know, if you have to do the children first, which is nearly standard and you need to do it like I just think anybody should be able to click on or even like moms, fathers who may be perpetrators, you know? I just see that it

could have a wide audience that you know could use this and gain a
bit more understanding of it." (COP/PP2)

Indeed, there was a general consensus from participants involved in the TLC kidz project, that the national project could somehow support a broader understanding and awareness of CDVA in the community which may help to support a greater multi-agency referral process and address some of the gap in knowledge and confidence that exist for some practitioners in speaking to families about DVA, as referred to in Chapter 5.

"I'd be hoping maybe that the national project will be able to create a partnership approach with a lot of our local areas in obviously awareness raising around the impact on children, but also the working together, the interagency piece in looking at the referrals." (TLC 2)

The awareness raising was also suggested by one participant to help in referral pathways for children who need a more specialised service to support the impact of DV. It was felt by them that if there was a greater understanding of the impact then waiting lists may not be so long from when they are referred from TLC kidz.

"Making sure that agencies that do come into contact with children do have that level of understanding and that knowledge." (TLC 1)

Another interview participant felt that while *a lot of work and planning* had gone into the CoP events they were quite *broad* and some more work could be done in this regard echoing the view of participant PT 4 that the work could be more *targeted.*

For some of the above to happen as one participant suggested this would need to be done at a higher level in order to give an education piece credibility:

"If the combination of Barnardos and SAFE Ireland.., 'cause it might be given like the backing and the power.. and being seen as like accredited training, or credible training you know, because that's the way it needs to come across. It's like the power behind it. Like who is backing and framing it." (COP/PP2)

The same participant expressed how having access to a training resource would support them in their work and awareness raising on the issue:

> "It is kind of at times a controversial issue that kids experience, you know, domestic abuse, and you know 'cause if I get told another time that a four year old could not be telling the truth about seeing her mother getting hit like, don't, I just don't know how to respond anymore.. I feel like going 'go off and do the training and then come back and talk with me.' " (COP/PP2)

6.5.6 Risk of Losing Sight of the Child

A need to keep the child's voice central to the process and work undertaken by the CDVA project was expressed by several of the participants interviewed. This will be addressed in the following section by looking specifically at findings related to the CoP events and will be returned to again in the next chapter in a discussion on future goals of the project.

6.5.6.1 Staying Close to the Child in Breakout Group Discussion

The risk of losing sight of the child in the breakout group discussion when there is an imbalance of management and frontline workers was explained by one participant in the next quote:

> "You might be the only practitioner whose working with children and young people, and it might be a group of people that are making decisions on finances and funding and different things like that so they can have their strategic plans and you're kind of going well there's a child in there somewhere." (COP/PP1)

This was expressed by another interview participant who experienced something similar in a breakout group discussion and found it difficult to challenge what they described as *going off kilter* as the following quote explains:

> "I just wish that it might stay with the children 'cause sometimes in the feedback rooms I hear that it's going off on to like working with

perpetrators and mothers… that makes me nervous, em, when I start hearing that, because like I feel that it's going to get side-tracked… in some ways that makes me afraid if that kind of tone comes into it, because then it gets into like you know women and domestic violence and the kids are, the kids voice is gone again." (COP/PP2)

6.5.6.2 Direct Work with Children: Drawing on Knowledge and Skills of DV workers more Effectively in CoP Events

"I do think there is maybe needs more space around the work that is being carried out with children and maybe em, a little bit of time given to what services are doing." (COP/PP1)

The CoP could be used as a space for those with a more in-depth understanding of working directly with children and young people in the context of DVA to support a more nuanced understanding and sensitivity to the work that was perhaps missing for some professionals as expressed in the following quote:

"It would be no harm for practitioners, especially in refuges, and domestic violence like dedicated domestic violence services to give a bit of feedback on what supports they provide for children.. sometimes just be a lack of understanding em of the trauma that children have gone through in their experience of domestic violence, and it can be sometimes hard to put that across to other services em like social work, even sometimes families support." (COP/PP1)

Once again, a strong theme across the practitioner interviews was around the need for greater awareness raising among professionals outside of the DV sector and availability of resources to those who are engaging with at risk children and young people in their work more indirectly. This was discussed in the context of the participant's view of *supports not being offered in the most appropriate way* (COP/PP1) particularly when it came to including risk assessment in the work to ensure the safety of children before they engage in therapeutic work. The same participant went on to describe what this might look like and how it could be incorporated into the CoP events:

"Refuges and I suppose dedicated DV services have a really good understanding of the trauma for children and the time and the space that they need. And I sometimes think that could be missing from other services, so I suppose to maybe give a bit of a voice to those services and show like just put it out there about the type of work we do and how we carry it out." (COP/PP1)

Whilst the participant acknowledged that services in the CoP had presented on the work they offer to children experiencing DVA, they would also like to see more case examples and practical tools that they can bring into their own role as expressed in the below quote:

"I think maybe looking at like how an actual session with the child would take place or different activities that could be done em in that space for the children and kind of the benefits of doing it in a certain way or whatever it might be, or even like the assessment piece of em, when you're working with the family, like the risk assessment." (COP/PP1)

6.6 Summary

This chapter discussed participants opinions and experienced of both the Children's Participation project and the Community of Practice events. The chapter highlighted the perceived benefits of the participation project including a sense for the children of feeling heard, before moving to consider some of the ethical dilemmas involved in including children in research, consent and capacity. The chapter then moved to consider the community of practice events, first detailing the establishment of the community of practice and how the project managed to "retain key people." It then discussed the impact of the move from a face-to-face event to a virtual one, owing to restrictions on gathering in groups as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The chapter then discussed how participants view CoP events as a learning tool, which was highlighted in the research evidence of CoPs in Chapter 3. The chapter then detailed how respondents saw the need for a continued expansion of the CoP events whilst also recognising the importance of staying close to the child. The chapter concluded with a brief discussion

on participants thoughts on the need for the CoP events to provide opportunity for a deeper understanding of direct work with children.

7 Moving Forward: Challenges and Opportunities

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the views and experiences of members of the National Advisory Group alongside those of the project team and includes where appropriate, quotes from other participant groups interviewed as part of this report. The first section of this chapter reports on the views and perspectives of six members of the National Advisory Group who were consulted as part of the review process. The work of the NAG sits within Strand 3: Develop framework response; progress achieved under this strand is presented alongside a discussion on some of the broader issues raised by participating members that surround future challenges and opportunities for the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project. The second section reports on the progress the project has made to date under Strand 4: Gather Data, while the third and final section invites the reader to consider the future work of the CDVA project.

7.2 A Collaborative Approach: 'Strength in coming together'

Echoing the general tenet of the previous chapters, feedback from participating National Advisory Group members was overwhelmingly positive for the vast amount of work done by the project team to establish a collaborative approach and multi-agency response to the issue of childhood DVA. One participant reflects in the next quote on the advantages from a management perspective of gaining insight into the response by other stakeholders:

> "I suppose at the top level it's been very, it's been very helpful from our perspective from a collaborative approach you know just in terms of, understanding and recognizing where other stakeholders might be coming from in relation to responding to children and families where there's domestic violence." (NAG 1)

Indeed, the same participant spoke further on what a joined-up response can do for tackling issues at a policy level which are more often under resourced and may benefit from a collective response afforded by the multi-agency aspect of the project, as the next quote explains:

"And you know, being aware that having resources for strategies which are effectively policy strategies tend to be under resourced in most organizations that there's strength in coming together around key pieces." (NAG 1)

The importance and value of *bringing some form of integration or understanding across different structures and realms. (NAG 4)* through involvement of front-line practitioners, senior personnel and others operating at a structural level of research and policy was also highly regarded.

Furthermore, the need to capture *what have been some of the unintended relationships that emerged* from bringing those people together and asking *Is there something in those as well that go beyond the terms of reference (NAG 1)* was questioned by one participant.

7.3   Cross Agency Challenges: Shifting Silos

Notwithstanding the support and positive regard for operating at a collaborative level, silos within the DV sector in Ireland was mentioned by some participants and is expressed in the following quotes:

"There's a lot of silos in this sector, and there are times where it feels territorial, on occasion… Sometimes there can be some conflict, or we have observed conflict or tensions and the funding sources being quite disparate." (PT 2)

"I think, and the Irish context within have a deep, entrenched, conscious, and unconscious kind of structures around silos, and many of us who are doing this work a couple decades… It can be so frustrating to work so hard and not be able to shift those silos, and I think that's both one of the strengths of this project, one of the challenges and one of the frustrations, is you're constantly trying to work to breakdown those silos." (NAG 4)

Some of the early struggles when forming the project are mentioned in Chapter 6 and echo what has been referred to here, reflecting tensions surrounding the distribution of resources and funding in the DV sector. For a member of the project team they reflected that the opportunity for people with a shared goal and interest in addressing childhood DVA had worked well in this regard:

> "There's a place for everybody, and that there's so many children out there with needs that, there's no need for us to be, I suppose, overly territorial but you know the funding landscape doesn't help that, but I certainly think that bringing people together has helped to breakdown some of those barriers as well." (PT 3)

7.4   Project Coordinator Role

A key factor in the success of the project and its ability to bring people together was clearly represented in the high praise for the project coordinator in both the survey responses and participant interviews. Recognition of the vast amount of work involved in coordinating each strand of the project was echoed by a participating member of the NAG:

> "Essentially one dedicated worker who's doing fantastic work and I would just echo the points around the organization that goes into a community of practice or any of the initiatives and projects done is phenomenal." (NAG 4)

However, there was concern raised at the high volume of work that was involved and sustainability as the following quote describes:

> "It's easy to kind of get burned out, you know, so it kind of, you wonder maybe what sort of supports are there for say *(names project coordinator)* and different people to kind of, you know, keep pursuing the project at the level that they're doing." (NAG 3)

This would suggest that as the project continues to grow beyond its original remit, there is a need for greater investment in personnel and support roles to continue with progress at the pace at its current pace.

7.5 The Breadth and Scope of the Project: 'Privileging inclusion over purpose?'

The scope of the project was mentioned by several of the participating NAG members as being a potential threat for the future direction of the project. One member stated that there was a *tricky tension around such a wide scope (NAG 4).* The same participant went on to explain this further in the next quote:

> "It's actually quite concerning that the scope of the project is so wide and deep. But, also then I think there's a real important aspect around attending to the structures and the purpose of those structures, because, you know, in wanting to engage stakeholders in so many, you know, from such a wide range of agencies and positions and roles, then I think it can get quite, you know, dense with people who aren't, you know necessarily involved in actions." (NAG 4)

Similarly, participant NAG 5 reflected that *Any project should be bigger than the people who were involved in it. And so yeah, I think the breath of it is another kind of challenge.*

In response to the above concerns raised, a member of the NAG involved in working more indirectly with children and DVA argued for the inclusion of multiple perspectives in stating:

> "We're all wanting the same thing and we all have slightly different perspectives, and I appreciate that is difficult to chair and manage but actually the, the goal is, is always the same." (NAG 6)

It was acknowledged by participating members of the NAG that having multiple voices and perspectives around the table can be a challenge for the chairperson to manage. A subgroup of the NAG completed work early on in putting together a definition of childhood domestic violence and abuse that would inform the work of the project. In the next quote participant NAG 5 explains the process:

"To agree a common language about what we understood, what we were all talking about because, I've been in enough of these meetings… to know that we're not talking about the same thing half the time, and I think in fairness to the project it, it took the time and stood back and we had the subgroup and there was a huge amount of work done on that language. What do we mean by this? It was fine to disagree on it, you know, and in that kind of unpacking of the language, I think what emerged was something that was much bigger than what was started with." (NAG 5)

The final definition was described by a participating member of the NAG to have been successful in capturing the experiences of DVA in the *context of interpersonal relationships* therefore moving beyond the family relationship which for them was seen as '*key.' (NAG 1)*

Whilst this is an important aspect and has been raised by young survivors themselves as a key issue in the literature, widening the scope of the project was described as bringing with it new challenges in terms of resourcing as described by a participating member of the NAG in the following quote:

"I think one of the real challenges in and where it goes in the future is the breath, the remit and the depths of it. Because you know how you continue that kind of work? How do you resource it?... being at the core of every piece of work and you know it's a lot of pressure on one person I think to carry." (NAG 4)

7.6   Developing a Framework Response

The importance of moving forward with a strategic plan was viewed as critical to the work of the project and development of a framework response that would be applied at a national level. Fundamental to this is the involvement of the 'right people' as stated earlier in this chapter whereby those with influence from statutory agencies will endorse the work of the project.

In the following quote a member of the project team explains how they envisage the work of the project and ultimate goal of developing a framework response:

> "We particularly want to influence the practice framework of Tusla in terms of how they respond to childhood domestic violence and abuse in social work and PPFS… , then that's very influential in terms of how the rest of the community and voluntary sector responds to the needs of children… But if we don't have Tusla senior personnel on board, you know, then, then it'll just become another framework that people can opt into or otherwise… it was always that strategic vision that we have senior people keep people around the table involved in critiquing the process, having an opportunity to critique it and change it or influence it as they see fit. Then they're more likely to endorse it. And then instead of it becoming a nice piece of work to Barnardos is done, it becomes a very strategic collaborative process that you can't really ignore." (PT 1)

However, for one member of the NAG there was some ambiguity around what the model or framework would consist of and expressed a need for further work on establishing what is meant by this before any real work could be done:

> "I think this is a real challenge for this work because there's no clarity about what we're talking about… So there is, you know, talk of a model… developing a framework response, but I would actually suggest that the work that needs to actually happen is, what is that? And similar to all of the work around the definitions. I think there has to be a, what are we talking about when we're talking about a framework or model?" (NAG 4)

Another participant involved in the core project team described a clear vision of what they saw included in a national framework:

> "There would be good recognition and resources for the range of responses that is needed and I think that's key to how we address.. issues, so there should be, you know, some kind of resources and responses at preventative levels and you know, at the early intervention levels. You know, at crisis level, at post crisis. So, I do think that there needs to be that kind of continuum." (PT 4)

7.7 Strand 4

In the next section, findings related to progress achieved under the fourth and final strand of the project; Gather Data are presented drawing on interviews with members of the project team.

Initially a project aim under Strand 4 described by a member of the project team in the following quote was to carry out a national prevalence study of childhood DVA:

> "We had hoped way back at the start that we would get some funding for research to do a prevalence study, so we'd be able to say at the end of the project…, one in four children experience domestic violence abuse, or 20% of children." (PT 1)

Some thought and initial planning for carrying out the research has been done however funding required to carry it out has so far not been secured putting a halt to any developments. Additionally, it was noted by the same participant that more work was needed on getting the right methodology:

> "We had like, done several funding applications at different stages. You know, to different research bodies and we haven't managed to get any funding yet, but on top of that, we haven't managed to get the methodology right." (PT 1)

Whilst, there have been setbacks which are to be expected in progressing with such a vast piece of research, elsewhere systems are being put in place at a national level which over time will capture data on referrals to Tusla that have a domestic violence component as a member of the project team explains in the next quote:

> "The National Childhood Information System has started, I mean it's optional on it but, I understand that... it shortly won't be optional, but that.. social workers and when children are referred in, there is an option to take the source of the issue being domestic violence. So that's

relatively new... we should be able to get in a few years time... a much better idea as to being able to say exactly the number of referrals that are made into Tusla on the back of domestic violence." (PT 4)

Important and relevant data is also being captured through the TLC Kidz projects as described by a member of the project team in the following quote;

> "The data that we are collecting at the moment is the engagement in the TLC Kids project nationwide and the amount of children and mothers... we've been able to see that there's been over… I know there's been one or two new sites in the last 12 months, but there's been over 100% increase in referrals and tracking those referrals and seeing what's working... so that data in itself has been really useful, in terms of planning for TLC kidz." (PT 3)

In terms of gathering data that would help set the agenda and future goals of the work of the CDVA project, a member of the project team refers in the next quote to how this was achieved:

> "Linking with the services last year about what they see are the top issues for children. What are the biggest barriers for children? What do they need from client services on the ground? So and again, that sets a road map for our work as well." (PT 3)

In addition to this however the same participant expressed a need to build a mechanism to capture data more effectively to feed back into the future goals of the project:

> "Maybe information that we capture in identifying patterns and trends, issues and challenges that are coming up? Because that, that's really key information and really important and would help kind of a) shape what needs to happen and where we need to go." (PT 3)

7.8 Moving Forward: Challenges and Opportunities

The final section summarises the challenges and opportunities for the future development of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project, as reflected in the

qualitative data collected from the interviews with members of the project team, the national advisory group and those involved in TLC Kidz projects and the Children's participation project.

7.8.1   Positioning the CDVA Project at a Strategic Level

From the outset the project team have been cognisant of the need for the project to involve the 'right people' as participant PT1 reflects '*to give it the gravitas and the strategic support of fairly significant voices around the table'.* The multi-agency aspect of the project was viewed as key to increasing the credibility of the project described in the following quote from a member of the project team:

> "CEOs from national organizations in the community and voluntary sector, domestic abuse services and Youth Services. It really, I suppose, lends itself towards being taken seriously and being given a voice and it becomes harder to ignore what we're saying." (PT 1)

The power of bringing a number of agencies together to amplify the voice of children and increase visibility of CDVA was echoed by practitioner COP/PP2 who having worked in the sector for a number of years spoke of the challenges often faced in getting a project off the ground and spoke very positively of a multi-agency approach:

> "You need investment in finance, you need investment in trust… it needs to be sometimes wider than one or two agencies for the volume to be there and that for it to be taken seriously, especially around children." (COP/PP2)

Whilst representatives from the Gardai, Department of Justice and highly regarded academics are existing members of the NAG, a member of the project team stated:

> "We still don't feel we've quite got the right people at a senior level to influence practice and policy in Tusla… and we've been struggling to find out who are the right people from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth." (PT 1)

Whilst a need to involve 'key people' was cited by several participants, another participant reflected on the existing positive force and enthusiasm for the project harnessed through the growing number of active members representing such a diverse range of services.

7.9   Revisiting the 4 Strands

When asked to consider where they saw the project going in the future and how it can get there, there was a sense from some of the participants involved in the NAG that greater clarity was needed around future goals of the project which as the following quote suggests could be set out in a strategic plan over a set number of years:

> "That number of four major strands, so I think it probably needs to revisit it as a project, its principles and its aims, and have a very clear kind of set goals over a year or two years or three years. I think the concern for me would be that work like this dissipates or gets lost because of everything from this kind of incredible video of the children's voices. To you know, bringing over international experts, and to look at the role of children within policy." (NAG 4)

Similarly, another member of the NAG suggested focusing on one or two strands of work which they assert may be more manageable:

> "I really do think that there's a huge volume of work there and that, you know, maybe that there needs to be a very clear kind of strategy…. Because there's the four pillars, so you know, dealing with those all the time… would it be more personnel is needed to kind of to assist with that? Or you know to deviate, and I suppose determine maybe which ones to work on for the next period of time." (NAG 3)

There was general agreement by NAG interviewees that more focused goal-oriented work carried out by subgroups, already mentioned in the survey responses may be a solution to managing the breath of the project and maintaining the energy and enthusiasm that was key to the success and sustainability of the project. Participant NAG 5 explains in the next quote how this might look:

"Siphoned off to various subgroups within the group, but that there is a clear pathway, perhaps for the next year or the next one to three to five years…, but I think the energy that the positivity is in the energy and the commitment, but it's easy for that to go astray as well." (NAG 5)

Comparing what was happening within the group as reflective of the broader issues surrounding children in the context of domestic violence and abuse, the following quote raises an interesting point around where some of the challenges lie:

"I think where, where some of the grey areas or the, the fudge or the blur is around, I suppose it kind of reflects almost where children are in the context of domestic violence, which is, well, OK, we see them now. But do we even know what we're looking at here? Are we all looking at the same thing?" (NAG 5)

Similarly, another participant spoke of the need to examine more critically children's participation and voice in the process:

"The thing that's come up repeatedly is the video. And children's voices. But it's almost like all of us are trying to get a handle on what does that mean? Where does that fit? What's the impact of that? How is that used? How's it understood? How did the children that participate, know that their involvement might have actually changed things for other children? So again, we're holding on to this really valuable and important aspect or output of the project, but we don't really know where it fits, in terms of the bigger picture for going forward." (NAG 4)

7.10 Keeping Children '*Front and centre*'

Building on an earlier theme stemming from practitioner interviews the risk of losing sight of the child was also prominent within the consultation with NAG members. A clear resounding message that children are important and maintaining a focus on increasing their visibility in the context of DVA was expressed by one participant in the following quote:

> "Having the visibility of children in the context of domestic violence as a headline for the national group people plus kind of following on from that, that its centre point to all of the work that the coordinator is doing from the data collection to the Community of Practice, to the evidence base, that having children kind of front and centre.. is really important. It's important in lots of different ways, not just the bringing of people together, which is quite powerful, but also the statement that children are important in this context." (NAG 5)

Echoing concerns raised by participating practitioners on the risk of losing sight of the child in the work, participant NAG 2 explains how this might happen if the project does not fully commit to be truly participative by bringing young survivors along the process to see the impact that their voice has had:

> "Something I think that's so important, but I think has also got lost in some of the higher-level discussions that are happening. I suppose that.. might be a bit of a concern down the line, I know we're focusing on the children's voice right now. But I don't want that to be a tokenistic thing. You know, I'd like that to be part of the discussion throughout the project, and one of the challenges that might happen for the young people involved is when they move through the different services, they're no longer in touch with those services. So are those children who have given their very personal information now, going to receive feedback in two years. When something comes kind of from the workings of this group, how do we make sure that they are brought through the full process?" (NAG 2)

Similarly, a need to ensure that the children's voices through the participation project meet an essential tenet of Lundy's model of influence was expressed by a member of the project team:

> "But what's really important is us really amplifying what they have to say. And filtering it through into what we're contributing to the National Advisory Group and what we're contributing to the strategic goal. The strategic plan for the future. And I still think there is a risk that the

children's participation becomes.. episodic, you know, or or about a project, but we have to make sure that we retain it that it is really influencing the shape of policy and practice frameworks." (PT 1)

For one member of the project team, they envisaged that the project could support young survivors to amplify their voice through research which could make a contribution to knowledge and have influence as a piece of research evidence:

"Giving that influence and voice to children, I'd love to see, go the way of maybe embedding it in research as well that we could attach a research element and that the children voices then will be influential, have international significance. You know in terms of what our Irish children are saying." (PT 3)

Indeed, the core project team appear to have a shared vision expressed by practitioners that the children's participation project will evolve and from that will develop a 'children's advisory group' which will feed into the process something similar to the work of young people known as Voice Against Violence described in Chapter 3.

"When you see how well Scotland is able to do it, I'd love it to be as good as that." (COP/PP2)

Another interview participant spoke of the importance in finding ways to bring children along through the process even after they have completed the support piece and suggested ways in which this could be made possible particularly with those who were in recovery and wanted to continue on the journey:

"It's great to consult with children., but what do we do with it afterwards? And I think we need to continue to develop and build on that on that piece…. So maybe they could be like champions, or they could be ambassadors." (TLC 6)

7.10.1   Developing a National Framework: Resourcing, Governance and Leadership

In considering the development of a national framework, a member of the project team commented on the challenge of raising the platform and establishing it on a statutory footing:

> "In some ways, I think the representation on a national, you know, to come up with the national framework document is, is probably the easier part of it in some ways… The bit that I struggle with more is, is to figure out how we get to a point where there's a statutory responsibility for some   kind   of   national framework or strategy for children who experience domestic violence." (PT 4)

The same participant went on to consider the leadership role that Barnardos can play in operationalising the framework at a national level:

> "I'm not sure whether the national framework stuff is something that should be retained within Barnardos only, or whether it's something that is owned by, if you like, by a whole conglomerate of organisations with Barnardos as the leader administrating a kind of support." (PT 4)

There was full consensus from participants across the range of groups that the CDVA project should continue, however questions were raised regarding the resourcing and future of sustainability of the project as participant NAG 1 explains:

> "And I think that the opportunity here is, if not to mandate the current project. But there is some planning for you know, succession, or for some mechanism and also the resourcing of some extension." (NAG 1)

Indeed, the need to take steps to move forward in a direction that will raise the platform of the project paying respect and ethical consideration to 'impact' is asserted by a participating member of the NAG:

> "It's only conversation and it's only definitions and it's only paperwork, if there isn't an embedded nature of the project going forward and a proper funding stream attached to it, because then all you're doing is,

> you know paying a token disrespect, I would say to children's experience if this isn't in some way platformed in a proper way." (NAG 5)

7.10.2 Regionalising

Finally, a common theme to emerge from the interviews and consistent with the survey findings, was the suggestion of regionalising the work of the project in an effort to allow it to expand and reach a much broader set of professionals who may be working more indirectly with families experiencing DVA but would benefit from the knowledge and collaborative approach provided by the community of practice model:

> "So at the moment it is open to practitioners from the domestic violence services. And anybody else kind of directly delivering a service around domestic violence, whereas there's hordes of practitioners out there who really want to be part of it who are working around the issue all the time. But if you open it up to all the practitioners, then it's, it's going to be as a national, it's obviously going to be, unwieldly to manage, so it may be about regionalising." (PT 2)

7.11 Summary

Chapter 7 has primarily highlighted the findings from the interviews conducted with the Barnardos Project Team and the National Advisory Group. The chapter was divided into three sections, with the first section discussing the NAG. The respondents spoke of the benefits of participation in the NAG which included the shifting of the silos that are present within the DV sector in Ireland. The participants also spoke of the importance of the coordinator role, which was also highlighted strongly in the literature in Chapter 3. The members of the NAG and PT also highlighted the challenges of increasing the breadth of the project while retaining focus on childhood experiences of DVA. Finally, the section highlighted how the participants believed that for a national framework to be successful it will need to be endorsed and supported at the highest levels. The second section of the chapter considered Strand 4: Gather Data and highlighted the difficulties in progressing Strand 4, owing to the complexities of involving children in research. While progress on this strand has not progressed as much as other strands, participants highlighted that DVA is now an option on Tusla's NCIS system for reason for referral, and data is regularly gathered for the TLC Kidz, providing some insight into the success

of the project at increasing awareness of CDVA. The chapter concluded with a section discussing the future directions of the CDVA, highlighting how members of the NAG and PT feel that there is a need to retain or bring on board key people, particularly within statutory agencies in order to increase the "gravitas" of the project. The respondents also highlighted the need to review the fours strands of the project with an aim to create a renewed medium-term plan. However, members of the NAG and PT that both of these actions must be done in the knowledge that the experiences and voices of children experiencing or in recovery must be held as central to the development of the project. The chapter concludes by considering the development of a National Framework and how to ensure the ongoing sustainability and viability of project, with the suggestion of regionalisation of some aspects of the project emerging as a suggestion. The next and final chapter draws together some conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation.

8 Discussion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter draws on the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data sets to provide a critical analysis of pertinent findings in the context of research evidence reviewed in Chapters 1 and 3. This analysis is set against the starting point for this evaluation, as reflected in the aims, objectives and research questions. The main objective of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project is as follows:

> *To assist in increasing the visibility of childhood domestic abuse; to support a collective and collaborative approach to identifying the needs of children; and to delivering effective services in response.*

As well as this overall objective, a number of short-term objectives that fall within the remit of the evaluation were identified. In light of these, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the current project model and how effective has it been so far in achieving the project objectives?
2. What available resources are being used and are they effective in implementing the project at a National level?
3. To what extent geographically across Ireland has the project reached those providing services to children and families who experience Domestic violence and abuse?
4. What are the strengths of the Project?
5. What are the constraints and challenges as experienced by stakeholders involved in implementing the Project?
6. How successful has the project been on building capacity not only in existing services but in influencing other services that may not have seen their role within childhood domestic abuse?
7. To what degree has the Project achieved progress under the following strands of work;
   - Provide Support
   - Enhance Practice
   - Gather Data
   - Develop Model

8.2 Overview of Main Findings

The preceding chapters have presented the findings from this evaluation, drawing on the perspective of those involved in the implementation of the project, key stakeholders and participating members. The evidence points to the success so far in the project team's ability to bring people along and develop a community of like-minded practitioners with a shared interest and goal, however the direction it goes in next has to be determined.

Responding to the first research question related to the effectiveness of the project model, the grounding of the CDVA project in a focus on multi-agency collaboration and collective action, reflects an understanding that tackling the issue of childhood domestic violence and abuse requires a shared responsibility and multi-agency response. The overwhelmingly positive tone across the findings for the community of practice is further evidence that a bottom up approach has proven successful in bringing people along, harnessing investment and commitment which in turn has resulted in a powerful force of enthusiasm and passion for increasing visibility of childhood domestic violence and abuse and is strongly present in the following quote:

> "I think the power, the power at the moment is in, is in the attendance.
> It's in the diversity of the group that there are so many people who
> have not just an interest, but a commitment to the area." (NAG 5)

In response to the second and third questions, allocation of resources to continue with the project and expansion of the project team have been highlighted by participants as fundamental to the continued success of the project. Since its conception the project has grown and evolved to become a platform that successfully captures key issues concerning childhood DVA including both familial and inter-personal relationships. However, the work is beyond that of one coordinator and requires additional support to respond to the broader remit that it started with and raise the platform to a higher level with a National mandate.

Responding to the fourth question, participants spoke positively of the project team and coordinator in providing support and bringing people together breaking down some of those barriers that had existed in the sector when it came to collaborative practice. A resounding strength of the project was the ability to capture the child's voice which was

described by many as a powerful piece of work. Whilst, the general tone was encouraging there were some concerns raised by participants which focused heavily from an organisational perspective on the breadth and depth of its focus which raised questions about the management of such a wide scope, its purpose and end goal.

In responding to question 6, the need for greater awareness raising was a common theme to emerge and points to the continued work of the project in increasing visibility and understanding of childhood DVA among those outside the sector and in the community. Finally, in response to question 7, a great deal of work was evidenced in progress achieved under strands 1 and 2, however the breath of the project has led to a much broader set of subgroups and work being carried out under strand 2. Strands 3 and 4 present as more longer term goals of the project with a suggestion of refocusing attention to one or two strands in order to give a greater sense of purpose and focus to the work. The final significantly positive outcome of the project to date has been the inclusion of children's voice which was described by many as 'powerful'. A resounding message from participating members was the desire to continue with children 'front and centre' and create more opportunity for them to be included in the process on a longer term basis. Indeed, the CDVA project is in a position and key juncture in its development to focus more specifically on capturing the child's voice and increasing opportunity for children's participation. Whilst the issue of consent is admittedly a much bigger issue beyond the scope of the CDVA project there is still the potential to work collaboratively with statutory agencies to help overcome key ethical challenges that can limit certain children and young person's opportunity to participate and have their voice heard at this level.

Based on findings from this review, there are a number of key themes that have emerged as important for participating members. In moving this discussion forward this chapter will focus on the following three key areas:

4) Keeping children 'front and centre'
5) Reaching a wider audience through education and knowledge sharing
6) A developing project at a key juncture

8.3   Keeping Children 'Front and Centre'

A resounding message from participating members was the desire to continue to keep the work child focused and create more opportunity for young survivors to be included in the process on a longer term basis. Indeed, the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project as it develops, is in a position to look more strategically at ways of increasing opportunity for children to participate and create more space for young survivors to have an input across the 4 strands of work. However, there continues to be ethical challenges particularly surrounding the inherent complexity with seeking parental consent and the need for two parent consent in certain circumstances that can pose additional risk to the child participant. There is a justifiable need for greater ethical concern when including children in research, especially when it comes to more sensitive topics and fears around re-traumatisation. However as Overlien (2010) suggests, risk may be outweighed when it is in the best interest of children that the research is conducted, and argues that "research not only needs children, but children need research" (2010, p.90). In addition, children may wish to participate for altruistic reasons in a desire to help their peers in similar situations but are not given the opportunity when adults decide in their best interests that doing so may put them at risk (Eriksson & Nasman, 2012). Research ethics committees represent the child's best interest however, often overshadow children's right to be heard when bureaucracy and legalities make it such an onerous and lengthy process that prevents agencies from seeking approval for children's involvement. Hence, limiting the opportunity for a wider cohort of young people to be involved as was the case in the children's participation project.

There has been a call in recent years for children to be provided with the same victim status as adults in domestic violence policy and for the development of a more strategic response to children living with domestic violence by professionals (Callaghan, Alexander, et al., 2016a; Richardson-Foster et al., 2012). However, at the same time challenges to conduct more participatory research with children on their experiences of domestic violence which can inform policy and practice responses, prevent any real progress being achieved in this regard (Houghton, 2015). There is a gap therefore between research evidence and policy that can inform a practice response that is evidence based. Holt et., al (2018) contend that greater links between research, policy and practice is critical in creating effective responses to domestic violence. A knowledge base that reflects the current experiences of those experiencing domestic violence in the context within which the policy is being employed is paramount to addressing practice

needs. The CDVA project through the children's participation project has the opportunity to lead on this work in the Irish context and draw on the knowledge and skills of members to work collaboratively in supporting the development of a youth advisory group that would provide opportunities for participation at multiple levels and strands of the project.

8.4 Reaching a Wider Audience Through Education and Knowledge Sharing Beyond the DV Sector

Historically, domestic violence and abuse has been largely conceived in policy and practice as an adult issue with the needs of children viewed merely as secondary to that of the adult victim (Callaghan, Alexander, et al., 2016). The UK Domestic Violence Bill 2020 now formally recognises children as victims of abuse in their own right and marks a shift in how children are conceptualised as victim/survivor of DVA. Notwithstanding such developments that help to raise the status of children in this context, there remains a gap in the knowledge and awareness of professionals working outside of the DV sector. Several participants in this review expressed the need to engage more with those working indirectly with the issue. There is work still to be done therefore on reaching a wider audience of professionals and indeed society as a whole when it comes to increasing visibility and awareness of childhood DVA and should remain a key objective of the project. Suggestions on how to proceed with this focus largely on developing an education piece that may support the work of practitioners; for example those involved in the running of TLC Kidz projects in raising awareness and creating a more multi-agency referral pathway. There is also scope under the same objective to feed the knowledge and practice wisdom of members into a module for social care workers with an interest in working in the DV sector, filling a gap in the current curriculum delivered at third level institutes.

8.5 A Developing Project at a Key Juncture

Whilst the early work carried out by the NAG subgroup on defining what is understood as childhood DVA has successfully captured a broad range of issues to work with in this platform, it has increased the scope of the project beyond how it was originally conceived. A spirit of inclusion and collaboration grounded in the approach taken by the project team has supported the natural growth and expansion of the project, however

some participants questioned how such inclusion may be made more purposeful and as the project evolves greater clarity and focus is needed. This will ensure the continued participation of current members while bringing the project forward.

8.6 Recommendations

The key recommendations from this evaluation are as follows:

Recommendation 1	The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse project should be continued. We recommend that provision is made to support the current broader remit of the project than once stated in the original aims and objectives.
Recommendation 2	There should be a continued emphasis on capturing the voice of the child and creating opportunities for children and young survivors to participate in the project strands by working towards the development of a Youth Advisory Group.
Recommendation 3	A particularly strong aspect of the project is the Community of Practice model. We recommend consideration is given to the use of a hybrid model involving both online national events and smaller regionalised in-person meetings that focus more on practice wisdom and knowledge sharing whilst simultaneously supporting continued networking opportunities and awareness raising in local areas.
Recommendation 4	Continued focus on increasing visibility of childhood domestic violence and abuse through awareness raising in the community and expansion of Community of Practice membership.
Recommendation 5	Education & training: consideration given to development of CPD opportunities for practitioners, regionalising networking events to enhance collaborative practice and feed into a module for social care students.
Recommendation 6	National Advisory Group: gain clarity & focus around purpose and goals with consideration for the establishment of subgroups as a solution to the expanding width and breadth

	of the project. Taking time to consider purposive membership in seeking the 'right people' with influence to take it to the next level and give the CDVA project a statutory footing.
Recommendation 7	A National Framework: establish a subgroup to work out exactly what this means and ensure people with influence are involved as well as frontline staff and young survivors – opportunity at this point in the project to create every opportunity for young people to be involved in the process and have their voice heard on a framework response – Pay close attention to the core tenets of Lundy's model and learning from Houghton's work with young survivors.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information and Consent Form

An Evaluation of The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project.

Who I am and what this study is about.

My name is Ruth Elliffe and I am a lecturer in the School of Social Work and Social Policy in Trinity College Dublin, with a particular interest in children and young person's experience of domestic violence and abuse. In 2019, Barnardos childrens charity established The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project, whose primary aim was to increase the visibility and understanding of childhood domestic abuse. This study aims to evaluate how successful the project has been in elevating the experiences of childhood domestic violence and how effective it has been at promoting and enabling collaborative, inter-agency work.

What will taking part involve?

Participants in the study will be asked to complete a survey that should take no longer than ten minutes to complete. The survey will be sent to the participant electronically and will be submitted online.

A small number of participants will then be contacted by members of the research team and asked to take part in interviews and focus groups. These will take approximately one hour and will be conducted on Microsoft Teams. At any point you can stop the interview or withdraw from the focus group.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because of your experience and participation in The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project. The questions will relate to your experiences of the delivery of programmes responding to the needs of children who have experienced Domestic Violence and Abuse.

Do you have to take part?

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and if you choose to participate in this study you may withdraw at any time. There will be no excuse necessary and there will be no negative impact for you by declining or withdrawing your consent.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

Participation in the project will contribute to a better understanding of the process involved in The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project, which can be used to influence and improve practice in working with children and young people who have experienced Domestic Violence and Abuse.

It is not anticipated that there are any risks involved in participating in the research. All data collected will be anonymised before being disseminated and participants may withdraw their consent at any point in the research.

How will information you provide be recorded, stored and protected?

The interviews will be conducted and recorded on Microsoft Teams, which is supported by Trinity College Dublin's IT system. All recordings will be stored securely in password protected files on OneDrive and Microsoft Teams. The storage of the non-anonymised data will be fully compliant with GDPR guidelines and the Data Protection Act 2018. All interviews will be transcribed verbatim by members of the research team and held securely in password protected files, in a separate location to the recordings. Any paper files generated will be held in a locked unit in the PIs office. Files will be destroyed after a period of five years, in line with Trinity College Dublin's data retention policy.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The data generated through this evaluation will be used to compile a report that assesses the effectiveness of The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project. The results will be used to generate recommendations for the project moving forward. The findings from the research may also be used in conference papers, articles, agency reports, briefing papers and other academic material.

Who should you contact for further information?

If you have any further questions about your participation, or would like any further information about the study, you can contact any of the members of the research team.

Dr Ruth Elliffe (PI)   Email: relliffe@tcd.ie

Jo Greene   Email: jogreene@tcd.ie

Orla Keegan   Email: keeganor@tcd.ie

An Evaluation of The Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project.

Consent to take part in research

1. I………………………………… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

2. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

3. I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

4. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

5. I understand that participation involves my participation in an individual interview.

6. I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

7. I agree to my interview being audio and video recorded.

8. I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

9. I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

10. I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the final report, conference papers, articles, agency reports, briefing papers and any other academic material.

11. I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

12. I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in on password protected files on OneDrive and Microsoft Teams for a period of five years, in line with Trinity College Dublin's data retention policy.

13. I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a period of five years, in line with Trinity College Dublin's data retention policy.

14. I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

15. I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Dr Ruth Elliffe (PI)   Email: relliffe@tcd.ie

Jo Greene   Email: jogreene@tcd.ie

Orla Keegan   Email: keeganor@tcd.ie

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant   Date

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of researcher   Date

Appendix B: Online Survey Instrument

Survey Instrument
Method of delivery: Online survey using Qualtrics
Opened 22.4.21
Closed 29.4.21

Review of the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project (CDVA)

Electronic consent:

Please indicate that you have read and understood the information sheet.

Clicking on the "yes" option indicates that:
You have read the information sheet
You voluntarily agree to participate
You are aged 18 or over

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by selecting the "no" option and exit the survey

If you have any queries regarding this survey please contact the research team at RELLIFFE@tcd.ie

☐ Yes, I consent

☐ No, I do not consent

Q1 Which county do you primarily work in?
(Drop down menu of 26 counties + national remit)

Q2 What type of organisation do you currently work for?
(Drop down menu of organisations and box to enter other. Limited to 1 selection)
    NGO – Community and Voluntary Sector
    NGO – Specialist Domestic Violence services
    Statutory
    Other Please specify …………………………………….

Q3 What is the **main** activity of your current service?
(Tick which applies. Limited to 1 selection)
    ☐ Working with Children

    ☐ Working with Adults

    ☐ Working with Families

    ☐ Other Please specify …………………………………..

Q4 Which of the following best describes your role within your service?

☐ Outreach

☐ Key worker

☐ Family support

☐ Childcare worker

☐ Management

☐ Other Please specify ……………………………………..

Q5 Which of the following strands of the CDVA project have you been involved with
(*Tick all that apply*)

☐ Community of Practice

☐ Children's Participation Project

☐ National Advisory Group

☐ Website Oversight Group

☐ TLC Kidz

Q6 Since participating in the CDVA project have you increased your understanding of working with Children who have experienced DVA?
Please elaborate your answer in the box provided

☐ Yes   ☐

☐ No   ☐

Q7 Since participating in the CDVA project have you adapted your approach to working with children who have experienced DVA?

☐ Yes   ☐

☐ No   ☐

Q8 What has been the most beneficial part of participating in the CDVA project?
(Text entry box)

Q9 Since participating in the CDVA Project:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am more aware of other agencies supporting children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have increased my awareness of where to access supports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have more opportunities to collaborate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am more inclined to engage with external services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have discussed the project with other service providers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have shared knowledge gained from the CDVA project **within** my organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have shared knowledge gained from the CDVA project **outside** my organisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q10 Do you think there are gaps in the CDVA Project and if so, where do they occur?

     ☐ Yes ☐

     ☐ No

Q11 How do you think the CDVA project could provide more opportunities for collaboration?
*(Text entry box)*

Q12 In order to help us identify future goals of the project, please consider the following:

	Not at all	A little	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	I don't know
To what extent is your service effective in **recognising** childhood DVA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent is your service effective in **responding** to childhood DVA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To what extent is your service effective in **referring** children with experiences of DVA	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q13 Is there anything you would like to add in relation to the project?
(Text entry box)

Appendix C: Survey Responses by county

Respondent by county
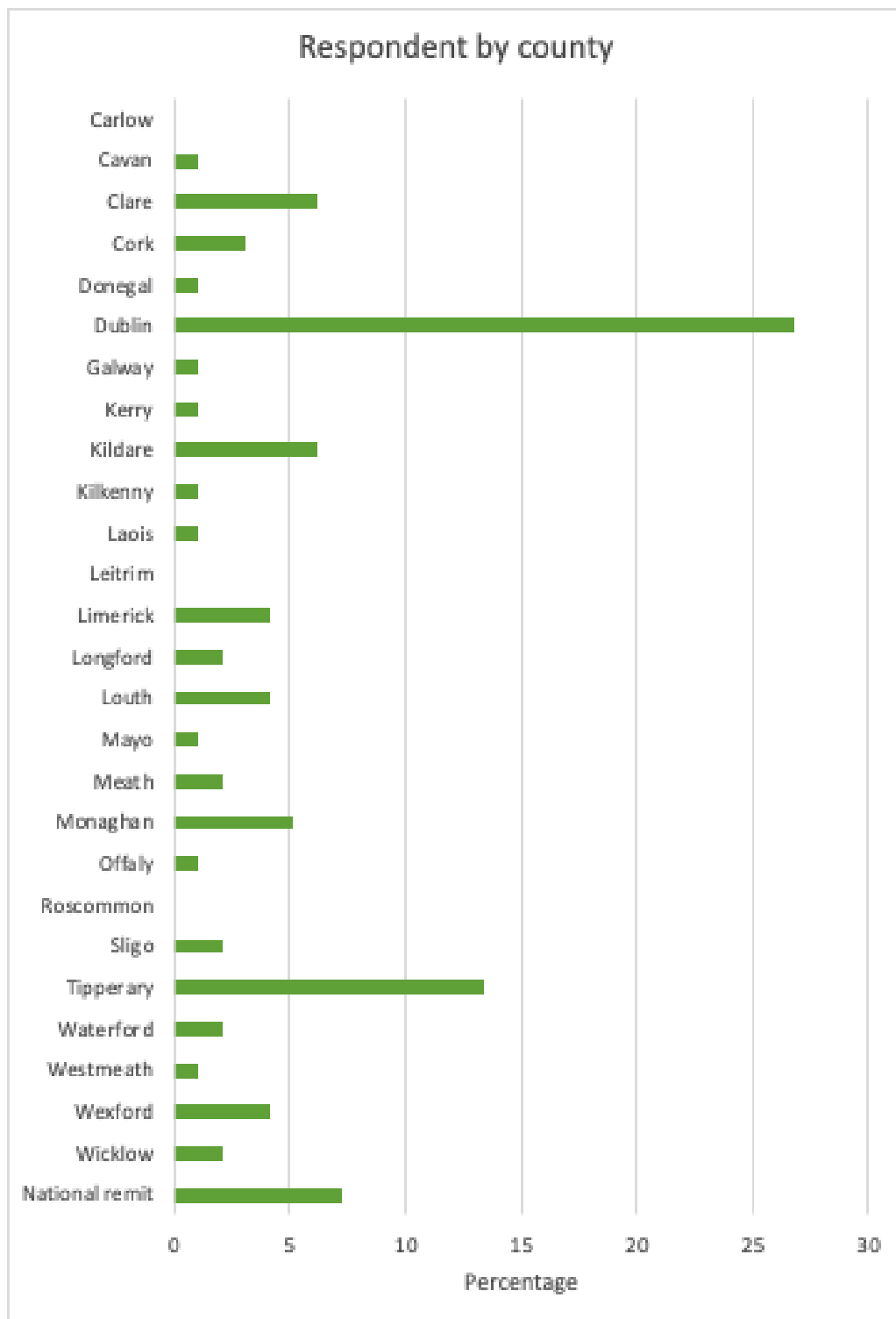
Barnardos' vision is a country where no child has to suffer and every child is able to reach its full potential.

Barnardos' mission is to deliver services and work with families, communities, and our partners to transform the lives of vulnerable children who are affected by adverse childhood experiences