



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Children, DVA & Coercive Control

26th November 2021

Stephanie Holt

Trinity College Dublin

- DCSCYPSC DVA EVENT
- 16 Days of Action Opposing Violence Against Women

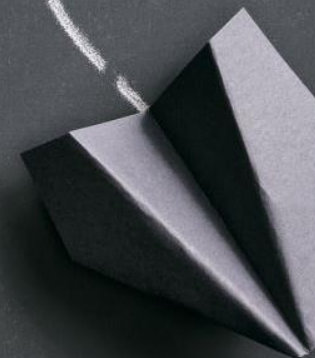
Overview:
Irish
Research on
Children,
DVA &
Coercive
Control

Recognise, Respond,
Refer (HSE National
DSGBV Training Manual)

SEE, HEAR, ACT
(Women's Aid Northern
Ireland 2019-2029)

Children as Experts

- Language
- Positioning
- Action



Irish Research on Children & DVA: Language

- Buckley, Whelan & Holt (2006) Listen to Me!: Children's Experience of Domestic Violence
- Hogan & O'Reilly (2007) Listening to Children: Children's stories of domestic violence



LIVING WITH 'WHITE NOISE'

- *....you[re] just getting over what happened before and then it hits you again and you feel...you're like spinning the whole time. If it's not happening, you're waiting for it to happen. When it's happening it's almost a relief because, here it is, what I'm waiting for. And then when it's not happening you're waiting for it again.*
 - Young Adult 18+ *Listen to Me!* 2006

They hear it,
see it and feel
the violence
and abuse





POSITIONING CHILDREN

‘Human beings who live with, experience and make sense of’ domestic abuse’ (Callaghan & Alexander, 2015)

Children position themselves as an integral part of the family’s narrative of living with DVA.

They are not merely a footnote to their parents experience.



Children, DVA & Risk

- Mere presence of children increases risk
- Presence of children in refuge
- Presence of children in police call outs
- Children, DVA & Child Protection & Welfare

Hiding &
Being
Hidden: Out
of Sight?

• WORRIED

SHOCKED

SAD

SCARED

CONFUSED

Advice to professionals

“Under the bed... because that’s their safe place” Ed (10 years)

“If one Guard took the one person outside, like the Daddy, took him outside for a walk to calm them down then the Garda might take them(child) downstairs to their mummy”
Grace (9 years)



Children, DVA & CPW

**MAKING
THE
CHILD'S
WORLD
SMALLER**

Being
heard....or
not.

- I think the social workers got a statement off me and Amy once or twice to say we didn't want to see him but [that] didn't do much [good]. I think it was a female Judge, she said 'I can't physically make you go, you know but you kind of do have to see him'. *Shelley (16)PSC 2009*
- Them (Contact Centre) making the decision that it wasn't safe for me to see my Dad made it easier for me..I knew that they weren't just 'listening' to me, that they had actually heard me and that made me feel very safe. I'm not sure I could have made that decision myself...I don't think I should have to. Sara 13. CCE 2013

INACTIVE LISTENING

- I don't really believe in fathers, like I think they're a bit useless but that's just because of our experience but maybe some of them could be, you know, ok, and they should be investigated properly, and have proper detailed statements from children whether or not they want to see them, instead of assuming it was good for ya and you'd miss out otherwise. They thought we were missing out..but how can you miss something if you never rightly had it.. I've never had it so I can't miss it. It's not rocket science...if anyone had really bothered to listen they could have figured it out pretty quickly, but their starting point was all wrong. *Eva (16) PSC*



ACTIVE REFLECTION

- My 'relationship' with my Dad? I don't have one....I feel like I am a pebble at the bottom of a stream and my Dad is this angry stream bashing me against all the other pebbles. Sara 13


SEE HEAR ACT

Acknowledge that often the biggest victims of domestic abuse are the smallest.


Make their world bigger

- Empowering research/practice contexts where the adult becomes the listener in need of knowledge;
- Child is the teller with expertise that needs to be shared;
- Research/practice context is one that accepts the uniqueness of each child and their lived experiences;
- Prioritises hearing their voices in an unfolding story which is after all about them.





Prioritising
children's
voice and
agency

- *Don't assume you know 'what is good for me' without asking me. Don't assume you 'know me' without getting to know me. And for God's sake if I manage to tell you what's wrong with me, please listen to what I have to say, don't interpret it, just listen.*
 - Eva, 16.
- 



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Thank you

Email: sholt@tcd.ie

