



## Child to Parent Violence Project 2017-18

PAC-UK, Adoption UK & Department for Education  
**Working together to support adoptive families**

*Providing a systemic approach to parents experiencing  
Child to Parent Violence (CPV)*

### What is Child to Parent Violence (CPV)?

It is a pattern of physical, psychological and emotional behaviour used by children and adolescents to gain control or power over their parent/s or carers. In families who experience CPV, it is the children or young people who hold the power within the relationship.

CPV is a serious issue for many families, which is often misunderstood or overlooked. It can be a difficult and seemingly impossible task for parents and carers to acknowledge that this is happening in their family.

As an adoptive parent seeking help for a child who is displaying such behaviours can be a very shaming experience which can, in turn, prevent parents from accessing the support they need.

### About the CPV Project

**PAC-UK** and **Adoption UK** are working in partnership to deliver a project that:

- increases awareness nationally about what is meant by 'child or adolescent to parent violence'
- provides training opportunities and learning to professionals across Social Care, Health and Educational settings that increases confidence and knowledge in aspects of CPV/APV
- researches and evaluates the impact of the interventions provided through this project, such as One Day CPV Awareness Raising Workshops, Peer-to-Peer Support, 10 week CPV group interventions, direct work and local support groups
- works in partnership and learns from adoptive families about what works, ensuring that the adopter's voice is enshrined within the project and beyond
- provides a service that is timely and cost effective to families and commissioners

### Aims of the CPV Project

**The project is DfE funded until 31st March 2018.**

The CPV project is being piloted with adoptive families in Bradford, Hartlepool and London, after which it will be offered to Local Authorities, Regional Adoption Agencies and all families who have children placed in permanent families.



## Attachment disruption, early life trauma and other risks leading to CPV

The term “developmental trauma” is used to cover a number of specific difficulties that can arise when a child’s relational and emotional development is affected by neglect and abuse after birth (and possibly before birth too). We now know from scientific research that this type of trauma, also called complex trauma, can impact on every area of a child’s development, from their physical health to their thinking, feeling, behaviour, sense of self and ability to form attachments. We know that as a result of this, children experience ongoing difficulties with attachments, with self-regulation and with the development of age appropriate competencies.



Healthy attachments are essential to a child developing well at home, school and in the wider society. ‘Attachment’ can be described as a deep and supportive bond between a child and their caregiver that binds them in space, endures over time and creates a sense of safety and stability. Although nobody is born attached, we are born with the drive to form attachments, primarily with our birth parents/primary caregivers. Attachments are formed in infancy through the meeting of physical and emotional needs. All babies have needs. If a baby’s caregiver recognises and meets those needs consistently in the first year of life, then the baby begins to trust that their needs will be met. This trust creates a secure attachment, which gives a child a safe base from which to explore the world around him and return to when he needs comfort and safety.

Many adopted children will not have had the chance to build attachment security and that can make life hard for them.

They will have experienced attachment disruptions caused by maternal deprivation, neglect, illness, multiple carers, abuse and/or frequent moves through the care system. As a result, they tend to have an insecure attachment style that shows up as an anxious, avoidant, or disorganised way of relating to close others. They are also likely to have difficulties with self-regulation and with developing age appropriate competencies.

The above results in a series of challenging behaviours; for example, they may be loud, demanding, clingy, aggressive, controlling, lying, stealing, safety seeking, or they may “switch” off and dissociate. This is not their fault; it is how they learned to survive in an unsafe world. When children come into their adoptive families, they cannot easily change the way they think, feel and behave. Only through a process of intensive therapeutic re-parenting (often combined with child-parent therapy) can they be helped to feel safe enough to relax and learn new ways of relating to others and the world.

There are other factors to consider that impact upon children who display controlling, aggressive and violent behaviours. Children who have been exposed to domestic violence often learn destructive lessons about the use of violence and power in relationships. Children may learn that it is acceptable to exert control or relieve stress by using violence, or that violence is in some way linked to expressions of intimacy and affection. These lessons can have a powerful negative effect on children in social situations and relationships throughout childhood and in later life. There is also some research that suggests that aggressiveness may be inherited.



## Blocked care

Parenting (or teaching) a traumatised child can mean giving a lot but getting very little back. When this happens a defence may be to shut down emotionally. Going through the motions of caring – feeding, supervising, teaching - without joy or a sense of reward becomes the norm: parenting is only a chore! If a parent's care gets 'blocked' like this their stress levels need to be reduced by looking after their own needs, taking time out, having hobbies and seeking the support of somebody who listens. This self-care can help to re-ignite the parent's delight in their child and their parenting may become more rewarding again.

## What is NVR?

NVR stands for Non Violent Resistance and was developed by Haim Omer and his colleagues at the University of Tel Aviv. It was originally developed as an approach to parenting and caring for young people who are violent, risk taking, aggressive or self-destructive. This approach is now being used in a variety of settings including in communities and schools and also with adults.



The concept of NVR, as its name suggests, is based on the non-violent resistance principles of those activists such as Gandhi or Martin Luther King and their approach to the oppressive regimes they were living under. They decided to take a counter intuitive approach, such as symbolic protests and non-cooperation; along with some innovative thinking and a great deal of patience these eventually bore fruit.

The great advantage of NVR is that it requires no commitment on the part of the child or young person. The NVR approach lies entirely with the person who is on the receiving end of the unwanted behaviour: the parent, carer or partner. To that end, NVR offers a number of practical ways that people can use to help the person increase their 'parental presence', increase their determination to take a firm stance against violence and achieve better control. It also allows the parent or carer to regain confidence in themselves, to better their own mental health and to rebuild rapport and trust.

In addition to the NVR approach, communication models and strategies as well as self-care are considered crucial in all aspects of the response to the issue of Child on Parent Violence.

## Adopters



The aim is to provide adoptive parents with knowledge, skills and strategies that assist parents to increase their parental presence and be confident in de-escalating conflict.

The hope is that families will feel an increased level of confidence in taking a firm stance against violence.

Support is also offered via providing training and consultation in schools and other educational settings with the aim of increasing knowledge and understanding of Child to Parent Violence amongst educational staff. PAC-UK's Education Service can provide this bespoke service.

## Services available within the CPV Project

PAC-UK and Adoption UK are working with parents in a number of ways as the project aims to meet individual needs at different stages. The CPV Project aims to provide a “step up/step down” tiered service as described below.

### One Day CPV Awareness Raising Workshops

Child to Parent Violence is now recognised as a real risk factor in adoptive and other permanent placements. Non-violent resistance (NVR) is an approach that helps parents learn how to deal with these violent behaviours in children. This workshop will set out the principles of NVR; it is highly recommended for all parents of permanence but particularly for those whose children are violent.

Participants will become familiarised with the principles of NVR and learn how to build ‘new authority’ in the family and re-connections between parent and child.

For information on this workshop please visit [www.pac-uk.org/training](http://www.pac-uk.org/training) and click on ‘Workshops for Adoptive Parents’.

### Peer Services

For over 10 years Adoption UK’s Parent Consultant Service has provided support to nearly 800 families where parents were struggling with parenting their adopted child or teenager. The Parent Consultants, all of whom are adoptive parents themselves, are trained and experienced in providing skilled support to families who are facing the challenge of parenting children with complex behaviours. Parenting these children requires a different approach to traditional models of parenting birth children.

The Parent Consultants support parents with developing and sustaining a therapeutic approach to their parenting, resulting in more positive outcomes for the whole family.

Who is the service for?

Any adoptive parent who is experiencing difficulties with, for example:

- challenging, defiant or destructive behaviour
- aggression, violence and controlling behaviours
- breakdown in communication, resulting in distance between parent and child or between parents.
- coping with the intensity and stress that can come with parenting a traumatised child
- blocked care – parents who are no longer able to find a positive connection with their child.



Unlike many support services, this service is provided by telephone or Skype. This allows parents to access the service at a frequency and time that fits within their often busy schedules and minimises the impact on the family.

For further information about this service or to make a referral visit the Peer Services page on the PAC-UK website at [www.pac-uk.org/peersupport](http://www.pac-uk.org/peersupport) or email [peersupport@pac-uk.org](mailto:peersupport@pac-uk.org)

## CPV Parent Groups

The CPV Parent Groups are designed to teach, provide a space for sharing, and build connections and mutual support between parents. Skills that are taught help them resist out-of-control and violent behaviours whilst developing a collaborative solution-focused approach to problems (for example: de-escalating conflicts, increasing parental presence, announcing their decision to make a stand, 'sit-ins' and developing support networks). Parents also learn to counter giving-in to their child's demands or responding in a reactive way which can lead to even more violence.



The CPV Parent Group is underpinned with NVR and consists of 8 - 12 weekly 3-hour sessions which include short presentations, sharing, discussion and optional role plays. Structured homework tasks help reinforce the ideas from the sessions and help parents make an active connection to situations with their children at home.



The groups are facilitated by PAC-UK Child and Family Therapists who are experienced in working with adoptive families and hold a variety of skills including training in NVR. Parent Graduates co-facilitate the groups. They themselves are all adoptive parents and are trained in NVR as well as in other relevant skills including therapeutic parenting techniques.

Adopters tell us that the role of the Parent Graduate in the Group based CPV Parent Group is crucial as this ensures that the adopter's voice and experience helps to shape and design the service delivery.

Support between the group sessions is an integral part of the service: weekly telephone or Skype is offered to all parents who enrol in a group. At the end of the taught group sessions further support is offered by means of a local monthly CPV group support which continues to be facilitated by a therapist and/or Parent Graduate.

In addition to this, we can also offer support to children in school through PAC UK's Education Service.

## Individualised/Direct CPV Support

This is intended for parents who need more intensive, one-to-one support (or who are unable to attend a CPV Parent Group).

A CPV service can be tailored to deliver bespoke, direct and individualised support in either a clinical setting or in their family home.

The direct service will be based on the same principles as the group based model (NVR, Communication, Self-Care, Educational Support and intensive group support).



## What our families say about our range of CPV services

*“There has been no advice as valuable as the ideas and delivery of this course, even if some of it feels alien – hang on in there.”*

*“Exceptionally good, knowledgeable and experienced course facilitators. Every adoptive family needs these people. Top marks.”*

## Local Authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA's)

The partnership between PAC-UK, Adoption UK, DfE and Local Authorities ensures that adopters and professionals are at the heart of our services. This partnership working is enabling us to raise the awareness of Child to Parent Violence at both a local and national level, and provide effective support to families that is enriched by proven therapeutic interventions.

## Training for professionals across health, social care, education and support services



Raising awareness of Child to Parent Violence is a crucial aspect of the project. Direct training to all staff in Social Care, Health, Education and Support Services is available through PAC-UK and Adoption UK. In addition to direct training, we are developing an online “knowledge hub” for professionals.

This service will also aim to contribute to well informed research. Outcome and evaluations of the CPV Services accessed by parents/families will be gathered and analysed to evidence the impact of such interventions for parents and families.

For information on relevant Training and Workshops, please visit [www.pac-uk.org/training](http://www.pac-uk.org/training) and click on ‘Workshops for Professionals’.

For professionals wishing to seek additional support on behalf of a family or to make a referral, please refer to the PAC-UK website for details on how to refer a family to the CPV Service.

*“Behaviour considered to be violent if others in the family feel threatened, intimidated or controlled by it and if they believe that they must adjust their own behaviour to accommodate threats or anticipation of violence.”*

**Paterson et al. (2002) Adolescent violence towards parents:  
Maintaining family connections when the going gets tough**

## Evaluation of the CPV Project

Measuring the impact of the CPV Project upon families' lives is of the upmost importance in enabling us to understand the project's effectiveness. Feedback from adopters will help us shape the service and it's sustainability beyond the project which comes to an end.

We are delighted to work in partnership with Julie Selwyn, Professor of Child and Family Social Work, who will evaluate the project which will then inform our model of future service delivery. To assist us in evaluating all aspects of the CPV Project, we will be asking families and professionals whether they would be happy to participate in this evaluation by completing pre- and post-intervention or pre- and post-training questionnaires.



Professor Julie Selwyn conducted a piece of research on adoptive families in 2014 which was summarised in 'Beyond the Adoption Order: challenges, interventions and disruption'. Among the key findings of Professor Selwyn's research was the presence of Child to Parent Violence in many more adoptive families than expected.

Below is an extract from Professor Selwyn's research:

*"We had not expected child to parent violence to feature so strongly in parental accounts of challenging behaviour. We had expected ADHD and attachment difficulties to feature as causes of disruption and although parents described great difficulty in managing these behaviours, on their own they were not difficulties that broke families. Parents gave many examples of being beaten, attacked, threatened and intimidated. Knives had been used by 19 young people to control their parents. Young people also removed mobile phones, TV remotes, and curtailed parents' social networks in efforts to control. Young people were mainly violent to their mothers, but fathers, siblings, pets and in one case, grandparents had also been assaulted. Child to parent violence was shameful for families. It was not a topic that could be easily raised with social workers, friends, or extended family members."*

Additional research in 2015 from the Responding to Parent Violence Project Funded by Daphne III European Union further added to the growing concern about the increase in Child to Parent Violence cases:

*"CPV is one is the most hidden, misunderstood and stigmatised form of family violence. It involves teenage and younger girls and boys who use physical, psychological, emotional and financial violence and abuse over time to the extent that parents/carers live in fear of their child. The idea that parents, who are responsible for children's welfare, can become victims of abuse from their own child is extremely challenging not only for the parent experiencing violence from their child but also for practitioners and wider society."*

For more information about any aspect of the CPV Project please contact Jo Mitchell, CPV Project Lead and Head of Child and Family Service (Leeds) via phone **0113 264 6837** email [jo@pac-uk.org](mailto:jo@pac-uk.org) or visit [www.pac-uk.org/cpv](http://www.pac-uk.org/cpv)